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# 14
# LEARNING ASIAN AMERICAN AFFECT

K. Hyoejin Yoon

*It is through the terrain of national culture that the individual subject is politically formed as the American citizen: a terrain introduced by the Statue of Liberty, discovered by the immigrant, dreamed in a common language, and defended in battle by the independent, self-made man. The heroic quest, the triumph over weakness, the promises of salvation, prosperity, and progress: this is the American feeling, the style of life, the ethos and spirit of being.*

Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*

## MARCH MADNESS

In March 2006, Kristi Yamaoka, a sophomore cheerleader for the Southern Illinois University basketball team, fell fifteen feet from the top of her squad's human pyramid and landed on her head. She suffered a concussion, fractured a neck vertebra, and bruised her lungs. The Southern Illinois University Salukis were less than four minutes away from their 59–46 victory over Bradley University (Ford 2006). But Yamaoka's fall suspended everything in a tense and freighted fermata: the fourteen thousand fans, her squad, the basketball players, the coaches all watched as the paramedics immobilized Yamaoka's head and neck in a brace and lifted her onto a stretcher. A roar rose up from the bleachers when Yamaoka waved to the crowd, assuring it that she was okay. The band began to play the fight song and the cheerleading squad commenced its routine as if to confirm the collective relief. Then, as Yamaoka was rolled across the floor, still strapped to the gurney, she began thrusting her arms in the air in automaton precision, joining her squad in the fight song. The television cameras captured this emotional drama as it unfolded: from the audience's stunned and anxious reaction to its triumphant cheers; the worried cheerleaders and coaches touched by the display of devotion, proud, some teary-eyed.[1]

1. The video footage captured by the local television news station is available online: see "Kristi Yamaoka Falls" 2006.

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Kristi Yamaoka. AP photo 2006, used by permission

More remarkable than the accident itself is the discourse that was generated by and about it in the weeks that followed. Two days after the accident, Yamaoka appeared as a guest on the *Today Show* with Katie Couric. Dressed in her cheerleading uniform and a neck brace, Yamaoka said, "My biggest concern was that I didn't want my squad to be distracted, so that they could continue cheering on the team, and I didn't want my team to be distracted from winning the game." Her injuries and pain could not suppress her "super spirit," as the tagline for the show's segment affirms—the spirit that the cheerleader is trained to perform and instill in others. Yamaoka told Couric (a former cheerleader), "I'm still a cheerleader—on a stretcher or not. So, as soon as I heard that fight song, I knew my job and just started to do my thing" (Yamaoka 2006). Through this testimony, we celebrate Yamaoka's identification with her "job": to cheer and please regardless of her own condition.

This lesson in cheerful self-sacrifice was circulated by major news and sports media outlets, including Fox, ABC, NBC, CNN, ESPN, and *Sports Illustrated*. Even President George W. Bush and Diane Sawyer (also a former cheerleader) personally telephoned Yamaoka to relay their good wishes, reinforcing what Robert Paul Reyes (2006) exalted as

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Yamaoka's "courage and willing[ness] to sacrifice [her]self for a noble cause." Touting her as a "genuine heroine," Reyes put Yamaoka on a par with the lone student facing the column of tanks in Tiananmen Square in the summer of 1989. This writer's historical and cultural conflation is an example of the often indiscriminate mapping of "official" (if exaggerated) knowledge and popular imagery onto diverse Asian American cultures and people.[2] Considering Yamaoka's accident as part of a larger lexicon of cultural representations of Asian American female bodies, we can analyze Yamaoka's cheer as a model of idealized gender performance, with her model minority body serving to discipline the citizen-subject through a national pedagogy of affect.

Yamaoka's cheer is a kind of "symbolic communication" that Tom Kerr (2003) describes: a "rhetoric of the body . . . that relies on signs and representations" (26). The communication of emotion-as-"spectacle," borrowing from S. Michael Halloran (2001), is a "rhetorical transaction" that intercedes between Yamaoka's actions and the desires and compulsions of public discourse (6)—this process of mediation and projection is evinced by the nationwide conversations about Yamaoka's accident and how she overcame (or disavowed) her injuries. Such narratives are cultural and discursive productions that function as "a form of education . . . [that] generates knowledge, shapes values, and constructs identity" (Kincheloe 2005, 58). In other words, the spectacle of cheer is a "dominant pedagogy," described by Lynn Worsham (1998), that deploys emotion to "bin[d] the individual . . . to the social order and its structures of meaning" (216). Indeed, Halloran asserts that the spectacle is a particular kind of "enactment of the social order" reflected, in this case, in Yamaoka's emotional display and gender performance, which bolster hegemonic views of citizenship and subjectivity, and provide a particular body to serve, in David Palumbo-Liu's term, as a "blueprint" that others are supposed to model themselves upon (Palumbo-Liu 1999, 415).

Indeed, *Sports Illustrated* columnist Phil Taylor (2006) gushed, "They're cute, but cheerleaders are also tough, gutsy." Extolling Yamaoka's "feisty" spirit and fearlessness, Taylor suggests that even the toughest sports players who played despite dismemberment and broken bones "owe Yamaoka a we-are-not-worthy salute. All of those supposed tough guys managed to perform in pain, but did any of them gut it out

2. Oliver Wang (2006) plays off the pun in his comment, titled "Inspir-Asians," to respond to Reyes's exaggeration: "This piece is so over-the-top that I can only assume it's satire, but I'm kind of scared that it's not."

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while maintaining a perky smile, a la Kristi? Didn't think so." In this all-American sports story, Yamaoka picks herself up by her pom-poms—a model athlete able to overcome her injuries by sheer will and cheer.

This set of discourses crystallizes a lesson in the public sphere about "the Asian American woman" hailed as an embodiment of "the American feeling" that Lowe (1996) writes about in the epigraph. My contention is that Asian American female subjects are often hailed to perform a crucial form of affective cultural labor, with cheerleading being a standard of this type of work.[3] The cheer Yamaoka performs is an example of the cultural labor exacted of Asian American women to conceal the contradictions embedded in narratives of citizenship and nation—that they exclude even as they claim to include Others and, at the same time, discipline dominant subjects to maintain the polite and cheerful veneer that supports the American Dream ideology. In exchange for a conditional status, Asian American "model minorities" perform cheer, dedication, and team spirit to maintain the affective economy in which dominant notions of citizenship, belonging, and identity circulate.[4]

The lessons of "dominant pedagogies" or "emotionologies" are nowhere more evident than in the classroom and in the ways they set the stage for the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students.[5] Feminist and critical pedagogy theorists have illustrated how anxieties and assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, class, and able-bodiedness

3. Various ways of articulating this type of cultural labor have been explored in terms of "immaterial labor" (Negri 1999), "mental labor" (Ross 2000), "communicative labor" (Greene 2004), "free labor" (Terranova 2000), and "affective labor" (Hardt 1999), all of which share a common presupposition: that acts of discourse, including interpretation (Maxwell and Miller 2005) and even racial politics and signification (Hancock 2005), are forms of work. According to Hardt, affective labor is the work of producing and manipulating various affects or feelings, to generate "social networks, forms of community, biopower" (95-96). Also see Arlie Hochschild's (1983) definition of "emotion work" as the harnessing and performance of particular affects aimed at eliciting specific reactions in others, usually constituting some greater or lesser part of one's labor, and sold as exchange value for wage, for cultural capital, etc.

4. Bourdieu's (1986) concept of embodied cultural capital, elaborated by Reay (2004) and Allatt (1993), is useful here. Allatt defines emotional capital as "emotionally valued assets and skills, love and affection, expenditures of time, attention, care, and concern" (quoted in Reay 2004, 61). Jo (2003-2004) also discusses the displays of "national capital" reflected in "dominant linguistic, physical and cultural dispositions" (39), which act as a" badge of group membership" (38).

5. Carol Z. Stearns and Peter N. Stearns's(1988) term "emotionology" provides a useful way to think about social attitudes or "standards" regarding "basic emotions and their appropriate expression" as well as "the ways institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct" (813).

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infiltrate the classroom—these broader cultural discourses affecting instructional efficacy and laying bare the ideological nature of the classroom and the dynamic and fluid nature of power.[6] Scholarship on multicultural teaching, in particular, has provided insights into the intense affective responses that critical teaching by non-dominant teacher subjects can elicit from students. Indeed, students' suspicion, distrust, and hostility toward female teachers, teachers of color, lesbian and gay teachers have been well documented.[7]

These examples show the effects of student power as it is exercised through emotionologies, and that the power of the supposed "authority" in the classroom (i.e., teacher) can be undermined and resisted by the interaction with students—a perspective that highlights students' power, expectations, and performance and how they shape prevailing emotional standards and construct teacher and student identities in the classroom. I propose that by theorizing "model minority" emotionology, we can better understand and navigate the flows of power that slide in, around, and through expressions and expectations of emotional display, particularly in the space of a critical classroom. These dynamics become imbricated with the emotion work and labor of teaching, and create particular racialized and gendered expectations of Asian American female teachers. I explore these dynamics by analyzing the affective constitution of Asian American female subjectivity and, in the later part of this essay, by reflecting on classroom pedagogy and interaction with students.

## MODELING "THE AMERICAN FEELING"

Inquiry into Asian American pedagogical affects must include an examination of the mutually informing elements that make up the model minority subject,[8] including racialized affect, gender performance,

6. For feminist analyses of power relations in the classroom, see Payne 1994; Friedman 1985; Ferganchick-Neufang 1996; and Chatterjee 2000. For analyses by critical pedagogues, see Giroux 1983 and McLaren 1991. Also see Luke and Gore 1992; Gore 1992; and Worsham 1998 for critiques of critical pedagogy's understanding of power.

7. See Kopelson 2003 for an especially succinct review of this scholarship.

8. The "model minority" cognomen was first bestowed upon Japanese Americans by a white male journalist in the 1960s (Petersen 1966). Its origins make this an ambivalent term, much criticized for its patronizing as well as mystifying effects (Suzuki 1977; Hu 1989; also see Lee 1999). Nevertheless, it has become a central topos in the rhetoric and constitution of Asian American subjects as well as Asian American criticism, imbricated in the discourse produced about and by Asian Americans in ongoing struggles to define their roles as citizens, workers, cultural producers (and objects) and to negotiate their various representations in the cultural imaginary.

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discourses of citizenship, and the concept of modeling that is implicit in the constitution of a "model minority." In their analyses of the model minority figure, Asian Americanists Lisa Lowe (1996), David Palumbo-Liu (1999), and Anne Anlin Cheng (2000), in particular, have set the stage for more explicit discussions of racialized affect.[9] Asian Americans are called upon to internalize the myth of meritocracy and thereby perform "appropriate" or normative emotional dispositions: diligence, self-sacrifice, political passivity, and acquiescence. While these affects may not at first appear to line up with traits belonging to America's pioneering individual, according to Palumbo-Liu, they represent an ideal American disposition—"identificatory lures" that outsiders, in particular, may style themselves after in efforts to accrue symbolic capital. Model minorities are seen to adapt themselves quite readily to such ideals, praised for their easy assimilation to American ideologies of hard work and self-determination, ostensibly confirming their "recovery from racism." Ironically, rather than evince "Asian/American" assimilation, these largely passive traits serve best the interests of hegemony by ensuring their marginalization from full civic and political participation (Palumbo-Liu 1999, 399).[10]

As models, they are made exemplars of the national ideal, used to promote and discipline particular subjectivities. At the same time, their model status functions to keep Asian Americans in line, while pitting them against other, seemingly less compliant, minority groups who do not graciously leave inequality and oppression aside, and whose very grievances are seen as evidence of individual failings in comparison to Asian American "success" (Palumbo-Liu 1999, 400). As the spectacle of Yamaoka's body illustrates, Asian American bodies as texts represent "particular subject positions as (objectified) pedagogical models for future subjectivities" (465n24). In the days leading up to the nationwide immigration rallies in March 2006, with Mexican American and other immigrants asserting their rights, what better than a dose of model minority cheer in the media, extolling the virtues of self-sacrifice and forbearance?

Palumbo-Liu (1999) further theorizes that the modeling function also applies to dominant groups; with reference to the popularity of

9. See Sianne Ngai's (2002) work on racialized affect, in particular the concept of animation and its connotations of "spirit" and "excessive emotion."

10. Palumbo-Liu's use of the virgule in the term "Asian/American" is meant to symbolize an "undecidability" about the two terms and their relationship to each other; it "marks *both* the distinction installed between 'Asian' and 'American' *and* a dynamic, unsettled, and inclusive movement," a "sliding over" between the two terms (1).

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Asian American literature among dominant audiences, Palumbo-Liu argues that it is due, at least in part, to the particular types of subjects it constructs for consumption. Asian American literature "solicits a particularly strong identification from a *general* audience predisposed to seeing . . . a displaced image of its own ideological presuppositions." In the case of Yamaoka, media discourses make her into an example to discipline "supposed tough guy" athletes, "reinforc[ing] dominant culture's notion of model minorities . . . and underwrit[ing] a larger ideology of individuation," as Palumbo-Liu would put it (409). The model thus reifies how "real" Americans are supposed to behave.

For Asian American women, the modeling function takes on a gendered aspect as well, delineating an ostensibly ideal femininity that western discourse interprets as "traditional": meek, docile, passive, manipulable (Prasso 2006, 162). This projection is used to discipline women in general who may be tempted to follow more independent and "feminist"-minded ways of the liberated West.[11] Critical race theorist Sumi K. Cho (2000) points out, "the gender stereotype of Asian Pacific women . . . assumes a 'model minority' function, used to 'discipline' White women, just as Asian Pacific Americans in general are frequently used in negative comparisons with their 'non-model' counterparts, African Americans" (535).

The goal of such disciplining is to produce idealized feminine subjects whose qualities best support and valorize white patriarchy. These

11. This comparison is vividly enacted in a scene from Jerry Lewis's 1958 film, *Geisha Boy* (much could be made of the title alone). A female officer, portrayed as the white American working girl, was spurned by her "Joe" for a Japanese woman. When she discovers that Jerry Lewis's character is also enamored with a Japanese woman, she exclaims bitterly, "What is it about these oriental girls?!" The story would persuade us to believe that those "oriental girls" would never speak so loudly or exclaim so publicly, and that the American woman's failure in keeping her man must be due to her independence and brashness. Orientalized femininity is promulgated in another film almost fifty years after Lewis's foray into the Far East. The recent film *Memoirs of a Geisha*, directed by Rob Marshall (2005) is an adaptation of the novel of the same title by American author Arthur Golden (1997). With pleasing performances by several beautiful and talented Asian female leads, the film is on a par with the much-written-about *Flower Drum Song* (1961), the Rogers and Hammerstein musical made into a film, in both the prevalence and display of Asian female bodies and the fetishization of beauty and femininity as contained, unattainable, yet ultimately exploitable: the western myth of Madonna and whore wrapped up in luxurious silk kimonos. Also see Marchetti's (1993) brief cinematic history of Hollywood's geisha fetish in her chapter "The Return of the Butterfly." Also see Prasso's (2006) chapter "Memoirs of a Real Geisha" for her attempt to debunk popular stereotypes, in particular through her interview with Mineko Iwasaki, the "real" geisha upon whose life Golden based his novel.

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discourses play a key role in developing Asian American women's subjectivity and their internalized ideals, goals, and self-perceptions that intervene with projections of western, masculinist cultural fantasies (see Pyke and Johnson 2003; Ho 2003; and Chan 1987).

Model minority discourse, generally, and the conversations that specifically emerged from Yamaoka's accident can be considered "regimes of truth":[12] sets of practices and discourses that coalesce power and knowledge and which, according to Jennifer Gore (1993), rely on "technologies of the self which are actualized and resisted . . . through the body" (55). The modeling function, therefore, is not just an imposition of power, but rather a technology of self, a process of self-disciplining: the self-styling of behaviors by which "individuals constitut[e] themselves as moral subjects of their own actions."[13] As an essentially pedagogical discourse, the model minority myth is an ethical regime of truth according to which individuals hone their "gestures, postures, and attitudes" (53). For Asian Americans, this reinforces self-styling techniques that include the denial and displacement of their paradoxical position in relation to narratives of citizenship and belonging: both "forever foreign" and at the same time able to achieve an "honorary whiteness" (Tuan 2001).

Cheng (2000) finds Asian Americans' ambivalent relationship to dominant discourses expressed in a psycho-social dynamic of both "delight and repugnance" in the American racial imaginary, which she captures in her analysis of euphoria. The model minority represents "the figure who has not only assimilated but also euphorically sings the praises of the American way" (23). However, this is a conditional and contradictory expression, for the injunction to sing is undergirded by one's assumed outsiderness, which reveals that full assimilation is ultimately untenable, thus illuminating how Asian American subjectivity is constituted in a dialectic of melancholia and euphoria. This ostensibly private psychic coping is, for Cheng, part of a national affective economy that "conditions life for the disenfranchised, and indeed,

12. Gore (1993) modifies Foucault's "regimes of truth" by bringing together his discussions on power/knowledge, discipline, and "technologies of self" (Foucault 1977, 1980, 1983a, 1983b, 1988).

13. For Gore, critical and feminist pedagogies are themselves regimes of truth that prescribe certain ways of feeling and being that are deemed appropriate and necessary to achieving their pedagogical and ideological goals. Gore deconstructs these pedagogical discourses for what is said and how it is said, and illustrates the sometimes normative effects of ostensibly progressive intentions. Using Michel Feher's (1987) delineation of political and ethical regimes of truth, Gore opens up the possibility of analyzing cultural and pedagogical discourses in local instances.

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constitutes their identity and shapes their subjectivity" (23–24). Asian Americans are caught up in a performance, a kind of mimicry of the American feeling that will always fall short. Theirs is the job of tending the "terrain of national culture," an affective terrain that they can never fully inhabit. Yet, this unveils a mythical ideal, a simulacrum, if you will, of individuality that is unattainable even for the dominant subject. This rift necessitates the installation of the minority subject in order for the dominant subjects to disavow their own alienation from authority. The model outlines the possibility of the ideal and establishes an incongruence against which the dominant subject can define itself, enacting the affirmation and the threat of sameness and/as difference that Homi Bhabha (1984) theorizes in the concept of mimicry and its potential to deconstruct dominant authority.

Leslie Bow (2001) argues that "[f]or women, citizenship is inseparable from the performance of femininity and, in turn, femininity mediates women's identification with the nation." In other words, citizenship is a racialized and gendered technology that predicates Asian American women's incorporation into the national body upon their sexual availability—the Asian American woman as a synecdoche of the feminized Orient seen in a passive and receptive relation to penetrating, masculine, western economic and military forces (42). Asian American women must perform a racialized and gendered display of national fidelity to make up for what is considered their predisposition to treachery and betrayal. This threat is branded into nationalist memory, according to Bow, in the figures of Yoko Ono and Tokyo Rose, who were constructed as traitors whose racialized, outlaw femininity "corrupt[ed] men's identification with other men, undermining allegiance to the group or the nation," be it the Allied Forces or the Fab Four (7).

According to Bow (2001), "the public display of the body [is] one of the few avenues through which women can attest to communal fealty" (42). Yamaoka's cheer from the stretcher is emblematic of such public display that signals loyalty, and indeed (over)compensates for her always already deficient service to lord and master (as connoted in the term "fealty").[14] Cheng (2000) also argues that Asian American women

14. The contradictory meaning(s) of such displays can be discerned in racialized and sexualized media representations of Asian American ice-skaters Michelle Kwan and Kristy Yamaguchi. Representations of Kwan and Yamaguchi in the highly nationalistic discourse of the Olympics is emblematic of Asian American women's ambivalent position, according to Mia Tuan (2001). During the 1998 Olympic Games, an MSNBC headline reported, "American beats Kwan," though both the gold winner,

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are situated in an especially conflicted manner to narratives of citizenship, in which feminine beauty works in "service of creating an image of the ideal citizen, making femininity at once the very sign and excess of ideal national subject" (35). Therefore, performance of femininity and notions of beauty and the body further reinforce Asian American women's roles as ideal figures, their otherness both mitigated by and at the same time exceeding their model function, with cheer functioning as both an ideal and excess of American emotional standards.

## "SOOOO CUTE . . . A BIT ODD": AN AMERICAN EMOTIONOLOGY

To more fully appreciate the significance of Yamaoka's cheer, we can draw from Christina Kotchemidova's (2005) succinct social history of cheer from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, which lays out the conditions that undoubtedly inform our present-day understandings of something like Yamaoka's ostensibly unique and excessive expression. Of particular relevance is the role of cheer in shaping the emerging American middle class in the 1800s, with cheer taking on symbolic value "in relation to building a social identity and attaining status in capitalism." The emotionology of cheerfulness was seen as a particularly American "liveliness" or "excessive vivacity" and a concern with displaying happiness (not to mention virtue, courage, and self-reliance) that was in keeping with "the national paradigm of happiness and prosperity."[15] In late capitalism, Kotchemidova observes "a real pressure on the average American to construct himself/herself as cheerful in order to get a job." This has extended to the commercialization of emotion in one's work in the service economy, documented by Arlie Hochschild (1983) and others in the sociology of emotion, where the worker must manage his/her feelings such that cheer is "not only institution-dictated but also autonomously performed." By the late twentieth century, cheer had become ingrained in the dominant culture as a standard of one's social, cultural, and economic fitness, hearkening back to its associations in the

Tara Lipinski, and Kwan, who took the silver, were American. Such slips represent a broader tendency to associate Asian Americans as not American (40).

15. An emblem of individual success, cheer was also deployed as a tool of social cohesion (and exclusion) among the middle class to define itself and discipline various social constituents. Cheer was a way to discipline the rude and uncivil masses, as well as the snobbish upper class. In the nineteenth century, cheer came to seen as an emotion that could "serve both self and others" and informed "an ideology helping to construct women's domestic happiness," with middle-class women "fostering the culture of cheerfulness" in the United States well into the twentieth century, a phenomenon most notably critiqued by Betty Friedan (Kotchemidova 2005).

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Victorian era, as "a sign of managing problems well and being in control of the situation, which creates an aura of success" (Kotchemidova 2005).

Rather than an "outlaw emotion,"[16] Yamaoka's model cheer reflects a deep internalization and a proliferation of the pedagogy of cheer that has been an integral part of the American affect: from her claim that she "knew her job" and happily "did her thing" to her physical assertions of her continuing fitness despite the injuries to the media's association of her with courage and virtue. Yet, Yamaoka's arguably "excessive vivacity" makes apparent Asian Americans' "manic relation to the American Dream," a relation that is expressed as "an involuntary delight that finds itself slightly unseemly" (Cheng 2000, 31). Yamaoka's performance of "insistent jubilance" (52) represents a paradox of Asian American belonging: as both the means for her to (re)claim her fitness and control over the situation and, at the same time, a disavowal of her alienation from full enfranchisement, which the unseemly excess of her cheer only further highlights (23). In such cases, manic or pathological euphoria is "a means of alleviating the pains of exclusion" rather than a celebration of inclusion (42).

Competing discourses of belonging and exclusion can be seen wrangling with each other in the *Today Show* interview as well, which attempts to frame the story as that of an "Injured Cheerleader [Who] Keeps Her Spirit" (Yamaoka 2006). Such titles obscure the racial subtext that is, to my mind, the heart of the story: the visual rhetoric of an Asian American female vested in the accoutrements of mainstream, all-American cheerleading creates a dissonance that has, at its core, a racial element.[17] My

16. See Allison Jaggar (1989) on "outlaw emotions" as those that would threaten the status quo.

17. It is worth noting that cheerleading is itself a contested social practice. An increasingly profitable commercial industry for outfits and paraphernalia, cheerleading elicits contradictory responses from the public. It is championed as the image of innocent (white) girlhood in pigtails and censured for being too sexual and suggestive; promoted as a legitimate athletic endeavor and derided as ditzy fluff (or, as is become increasingly the case, condemned as too dangerous). It is viewed by some as a key strategy for future success in the heterosexual, middle-class romance and, at the same time, as the province of domineering, hysterical mothers willing to kill for their daughters' ensured success and popularity (Humphrey 1998; Well 2006; Richmond 2005; and Suhr 2006). Also see Elaine Scarry's (1985) discussion of the military origins of cheerleading as part of morale-boosting and a justification of violence. See Schwalbe's (2006) discussion of sports in general as a project of nation-making, a point I extend here to include cheerleading, which I see playing a central role in the defining of nation and citizenry, despite its seemingly peripheral, supporting role.

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point is that it is precisely her social position and history as an Asian American woman that set her up for her performance and created the exigency for the laudatory discourse. As one Asian American blogger remarked, "It must be that Asian in her who can't disappoint anyone. Well, Kristi, you continue to represent! I am proud of you even though I think you're a tool" (Daughter of YipYee 2006). Yet, the official narrative about a generic cheerleader disavows what makes the story noteworthy: that is was an "outsider" playing an "insider" role, almost passing in her remarkable, laudable performance.[18] The story constructs and solicits a patronizing and conflicted reaction expressed quite succinctly in Couric's concluding remark on the somewhat surreal and unexpected moment caught on film: "Soooo cute . . . a bit odd."[19]

Lowe (1996) argues that Asian Americans are seen as both objects of assimilation and "contradictory, confusing, unintelligible elements" that must be marginalized (4). Indeed, the official story cannot repress the anxiety that is provoked when outsiders come too close. In the *Today Show* interview, this anxiety is displaced onto Yamaoka's Asian surname, which Couric trips over twice during the show. Near the end of the interview, Couric asks Yamaoka if she pronounced it "correctly," Yamaoka signaling her ostensible satisfaction. Couric's belabored and excessive discomfort with the difference signified in Yamaoka's name highlights the confusing, unintelligible elements that threaten the integrity of this all-American story.[20]

18. In this context, the cheerleader, an already iconic sexualized stereotype, must fairly bedazzle the male gaze with its multilayered connotations when occupied by an Asian American body. My first Google search for "Asian cheerleader" resulted in a list littered with porn sites. The Asian American cheerleader figure generates a tension of exoticization and disavowal of otherness.

19. The public discourse about Katie Couric provides an interesting subtext of emotion, race, gender, and performance. Soon after the interview with Yamaoka, Couric took the much-celebrated position of anchor for *CBS Evening News*. Couric said, "I'm thrilled to become part of the rich tradition of CBS News." She replaced Bob Schieffer, who remarked, "I think we're going to love Katie, and I think Katie's going to love us" ("Katie Couric" 2006). In the context of Darrell Hamamoto's (1994) discussion of the "Connie Chung syndrome," Couric can be seen as a much-needed cheerful antidote to the last female anchor, Connie Chung, who was often criticized as too hard-driving, a veritable network Dragon Lady. (I would like to credit my colleague Rodney Mader for helping me make this connection.)

20. This reflects an overdetermined moment itself, which mimics an almost clichéd classroom interaction between teachers and students with "foreign" names. The discomfort of the teacher and the student's often uncomfortable, sometimes feigned, expression of satisfaction or resignation is a familiar script. (I would like to credit my colleague Rodney Mader with this insight.) The anxiety is expressed in the curious reading and speaking strategies I've observed from first-year stu-

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The excess is not necessarily something that the interlocutor can control to his/her liking. As much as Yamaoka is an (albeit contradictory) emblem of citizenship, belonging, and the morale of "the team," she is also a floating signifier. As a case in point, John Lofton (2006), editor of the *American View*, a right-wing Christian Web site, revises the story of the exceptional, model cheerleader-citizen-worker to send a warning, if not outright threat, against itinerant sycophants lacking a proper (Christian) moral compass—a warning explicit in the title of his opinion piece, "A Cautionary Tale for Kristi Yamaoka and Jay Sekulow: Cheerleading Can Be Hazardous to Your Health." In finding enough commensurability between Yamaoka and Sekulow, the writer reinstantiates Yamaoka's relevance as a model, in this case, an explicitly negative one: her story becomes a parable of succumbing to worldly temptations.[21] Yamaoka becomes the siren that entrances and entices us from the "right" path, an alien force with its seductive power of (beguiling) cheer, threatening the "true" values touted by the Web site: "God, family, and republic." The article proclaims that the "American people" aren't fooled by such enthusiasm. The dominant pedagogy in the *American View* disciplines the citizen in opposition to the model minority cheerleader and her anti-Christian, anti-family, and ultimately unpatriotic adulation.

The various, contradictory messages for which the model minority cheerleader is hailed reveal the interstices along which alternative Asian American cultural formations might emerge, as argued by Lowe (1996) (also see Hesford and Kulbaga 2003). Yamaoka's cheer can be read as an exaggerated emotional display that has the potential to destabilize both dominant and model minority affects. However, with Bow, I question whether "the spectacle of the Asian body performing the public rituals of citizenship creates cultural dissonance in the form of disruptive mimicry or whether it merely works to normalizing effect" (2001, 43). Theorizing specific material situations can reveal the intricacies of resistance and the nuances of the challenges that are posed to our intended counterhegemonic strategies. Looking at something like Asian American pedagogy in the most literal sense brings us into the

dents to high-level university administrators of skipping over or overcomplicating "unpronounceable" names. Though not intended to be othering, such belabored discomfort projected onto someone's name can have the effect of highlighting his or her outsider status.

21. According to Lofton, Sekulow's weakness is evident in his uncritical support of Bush's decision to forward Harriet Meyer as a Supreme Court nominee—a candidate that Lofton did not see as fully advancing the Christian cause.

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context of the classroom, where we can examine the local manifestations of racialized affective performance. As a primary site of cultural pedagogy, the classroom affords us an important opportunity to analyze the implications of an Asian American teacher performing the model minority for both potentially subversive and potentially hegemonic ends. I turn now to the classroom to reflect on how Asian American female teachers may be perceived by dominant students, and also how minority female teachers might negotiate relations of power and emotion in the classroom.

## AFFECTIVE PEDAGOGY

In her compelling narrative about teaching a course on Asian women, Piya Chatterjee (2000) explores how "[p]edagogy becomes a medium through which . . . larger scripts are translated into the microcosm of classroom cultures" (90). As a South Asian woman, she experienced the gaze of her audience in a kind of "pedagogy of the spectacle" (89), which helped her to articulate the "vectors of unease" that students feel in their "perceptions, conflations and connections with gendered difference" (95). Her awareness that her "professorial authority . . . is often delegitimized by inscriptions of gendered otherness" contributed to her sense that "a more palpable and bodied" set of contradictions was involved in "teaching difference" (93). I contend that those palpable, bodied dynamics reflect the affective nature of how teacher authority and student power are negotiated and enacted. Such dynamics further complicate the emancipation narratives that critical pedagogy often constructs about the relationships between teachers and students.

The role of emotion has long been a concern for critical pedagogy, most often articulated as desire or in terms of repression and/or false consciousness, especially in theorizing the social construction of emotions and the attachments that the oppressed or students feel to the pleasures and rewards of subscribing to dominant ideologies. Critical teachers' obligations are to help students reinvest their desires in more liberatory ventures. This duty is often complicated by teachers' own emotional dispositions, which are both constructed and contradicted by professional and moral discourses, with critical pedagogy being key among those discourses, about what it means to teach and to be a teacher. Theorists in composition studies have taken up emotion in recent years to help explain the ties that teachers and professionals have felt to their work and to uncover the problematics of such ties from a

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materialist and social constructivist perspective (see Worsham 1998; Schell 1998a, 1998b; Micciche 2000, 2002; Jacobs and Micciche 2003). For Asian American women, the expectations of teachers' pedagogical labor and emotion work are intensified and complicated by gender and race, and the act of teaching comes with it particular burdens and contradictions: the expectation to function as a model minority and the injunction to perform euphoria and cheer in exchange for the privilege of belonging.

Affective stereotypes texture the ideological landscape that conditions the perceptions and the self-stylings of subjects, with women and people of color laboring against the most repressive (see hooks 1992, 1994; and Collins 1991). If the emotional norm in the classroom is represented by the figure of a middle-class white male, the emblem of reasonableness, emotional neutrality, and appropriate, middle-class politeness, what kind of emotion work is an African American woman, for example, expected to perform to overcome dominant perspectives that are primed to see her as an angry black woman? For Asian American women, the cheerful model is only one among several predominant stereotypes; others include the evil, scheming, and arguably masculinized Dragon Lady; the Martial Arts Mistress popularized by Wayne Wang's (2000) *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and Quentin Tarantino's (2003, 2004) *Kill Bill* series; the prostitute with a "heart of gold" in *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960), or the less flattering "me-so-ho'ny" wartime prostitute from Stanley Kubrick's (1987) *Full Metal Jacket.*[22] The impassive and stoic Asian figure also comes to mind, as does Margaret Cho's rendition of the loud, shrill Asian mother;[23] and the not-so-cheery but nevertheless devoted Butterfly.[24] These iconic roles teach us about how the dominant culture is conditioned to view Asian American women, often reinforcing a fantastical image that mediates perceptions and relationships between Asian American women and dominant subjects.[25]

22. See Liu 2000 for filmic representations of the Dragon Lady. See Prasso 2006 on the relatively new filmic representations of the Martial Arts Mistress. See Feng 2000 for recent analysis of Nancy Kwan's depiction of Suzie Wong.
23. From Margaret Cho's (2000) HBO comedy special, *I'm the One That I Want.* Also see Lee's (2004) analysis of Cho's embodied performance.
24. See Marchetti 1993 on the persistence of the Butterfly figure in Hollywood depictions of interracial romance.
25. Interestingly, Asian American male bodies are more often seen playing the role of teachers in the dominant cultural imagination. While a full elaboration of this is not possible within the constraints of this chapter, it is worth noting the male-gendered Asian American teacher figure, embodied in the wise, old Shaolin monks

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While Asian American women are not frequently seen in the positions of teachers per se,[26] we can analyze how their frequent representations as guides, even initiators, into the mysterious world of the Orient vis-à-vis their coy sexuality, patience, and submission, are projected into pedagogical relationships in the classroom.[27] In these particular roles, cheer is a general, preferred disposition that is expected from Asian American women: if they are not always euphoric or excessive, at the very least they are expected to be willing and pleasant. This expectation reveals the displaced identification and projection of dominant emotional standards and gender and race performances—the affective job that women of color are often expected to perform to maintain the ideological and emotionological order—reminders that, as Yamaoka succinctly asserted, we should know our job and just do our thing.

Maia Ettinger (1994) offers an apt metaphor for the female teacher of color's relationship to students, and by extension to dominant culture, in the "Pocahontas paradigm."[28] This allusion, while describing

in the *Kung Fu* television series of the 1970s (also see Hamamoto 1994), Mr. Miyagi in *The Karate Kid* (1984), or as recently as Ken Watanabe's role as philosopher-samurai in *The Last Samurai* (2003) with Tom Cruise. These images valorize and validate violent masculinity as a philosophically and morally grounded way of life. They also construct the role of teachers and the idea of pedagogy as mysterious, elliptical, promoting a sense of inner righteousness, courage, and resolve, by equivocal lessons in snatching the pebble from the master's hand, the "wax on and wax off" approach to fighting bullies, and the model samurai warrior who composes haikus, admires cherry blossoms, and honorably commits seppuku rather than be overtaken by western modernity. Worth further exploration is the effeminization of Asian masculinity and its role in constituting this teacher figure. See Eng 2001 for discussion of Asian masculinity.

26. There are complex cultural and ideological reasons for the relatively small number of Asian Americans in the teaching professions (see Gordon 2000; Kim 1993). See also Shu 2005 on the constructedness of "Asian values."

27. This role is not uncommon in television and film depictions wherein dominant subjects are introduced to or accompanied in their exploits into the East, the Asian woman functioning as a kind of passport and as a tour guide, translating the foreignness of Asian cultures for the western male gaze, often through sexualized initiations: see Prasso's (2006) analysis of travel narratives by early explorers like Marco Polo recounting harems of available women and the depiction of William Adams in the television miniseries *Shogun* (1980). Even in contemporary, minor Disneyesque movies like *Two Brothers* (2004), an intrepid gamesman is guided by an exotic village girl into the jungles of Thailand. Also see *Good Morning Vietnam* (1987) for a similar role played by Robin Williams's love interest. This guide/initiator role is depicted in its most complicated iteration in the character of Song, played by John Lone in Cronenberg's 1993 film adaptation of David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*.

28. The story of Pocahontas, regardless of the historical reality of the fraught relationship between early explorers and Native Americans, continues to capture the popular imagination, evinced in Disney's animated *Pocahontas* (2000) and the recent

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a specific relationship between early colonial and Native cultures, also provides a befitting metaphor for the raced and sexualized affective functions that many female teachers of color may be called upon to perform.[29] According to Ettinger, Pocahontas is portrayed as the idealized counterpart to the dominant subject, i.e., John Smith. To the intrepid pioneer, she represents "promise of aid and comfort from the Other." As a teacher/guide for dominant subjects, she provides a map through uncharted and unfamiliar territory. Her "spontaneous, unsolicited love" drives her to "protect" them (dominant subjects) (52). It is not her job to challenge, to contradict or problematize the roles, selves, or status of the dominant group in the New World. Instead, she is to rescue them from any guilt that they may feel in association with their place and their ways of being. Pocahontas smoothes over difference and articulates a "common ground" on which they can feel at home—their dominance reaffirmed (53). The Pocahontas narrative illustrates the ways that cultural discourses mediate and in some cases impede the work of teachers who are committed to critical pedagogy and who ask students to explore what is uncomfortable and foreign to them.

When "Pocahontas" fails to comfort or reaffirm their dominance, or does not properly perform her love and devotion to them, the resulting resistance, discomfort, and "radical disorientation" (Knoblauch 1991) can take on a whole other kind of emotional intensity. Students might expect or wish, in the case of Asian American women, for the Lotus Blossom/Geisha to tend to their interests and needs.[30] However, they may more likely perceive and resist the Dragon Lady, who compels them to the difficult work of critical thinking. Students' sense of effrontery and betrayal and their ways of coping with these feelings are further intensified by the cultural stereotype of Asians as inscrutable, villainous,

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release of *The New World* (2005) with Colin Farrell and the much-exoticized new actress, then sixteen years old, Q'Orianka Kilcher.

29. Leslie Bow (2001) suggests in her reading of *Farewell to Manzanar* by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston (1973) that Asian American and native cultures have a complex relationship to each other. According to Bow, in the Houstons' narrative, playing the "native" (in this case the exotic Hawaiian native) is "a means of becoming American," one way for Asian American women to transform their foreignness through identifying with and adopting an exoticizing gaze themselves (51).

30. Sumi K. Cho (2000) points out that these expectations have material, social, and relational repercussions. Unsurprisingly, racist and sexist stereotypes about Asian women being submissive and "easy to have sex with" have come into play in a number of cases of sexual harassment of Asian American women (533).

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and dissembling. The teacher's work and emotional labor are encumbered with the obligation to compensate for the dominant subject's preconceptions, and offer moral support and build team spirit and cohesion by displaying and modeling her own allegiance to the "team," the nation, often at her own cost. The current climate of consumer-driven education, where accountability in higher education is increasingly equated with customer satisfaction, has, to my mind, placed an even more intense emphasis on teacher affects and dispositions, particularly those that solicit positive feelings from students.[31] Such trends threaten to reduce the role of the teacher to that of a cheerleader—or worse, the willowy Asian hostess who quietly guides patrons to their tables at trendy Asian fusion restaurants.

## MODEL TEACHER? MODEL PEDAGOGY?

Ideologies of race, gender, and sexuality, in particular, are embodied, countervailing forces to the ideas that are to be promoted in a critical classroom. A model minority female teacher, regardless of how self-empowered she may feel, may also face the nullifying effects of cultural discourses that sexualize and patronize women of color. In this context, how does a model minority female subject perform the emotion work of teaching? How is she perceived by dominant and minority students in her conflicting roles? How does she conform to and/or resist those expectations? And what are the costs of doing so? The following narrative describes one particular pedagogical encounter and tries to shed light on how culture invades the classroom and how subject formation and affective labor is an ongoing, interactive process that shapes teachers and students alike.

I taught a course called "Growing Up in America" when I was a graduate student in a public university in upstate New York. A white female student helped me glimpse how nationalistic and pedagogic discourses merge and act upon dominant as well as Asian American subjects. During a discussion of Jonathan Kozol's (1992) *Savage Inequalities*, Linda, a young woman of Jewish background who had grown up in Manhattan, announced that she finally understood what I was trying to get at with the notion of "privilege," which we had been discussing in

31. Studies of student evaluations of teachers have shown that many factors contribute to students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness, including students' dispositions and interests, teachers' perceived attractiveness and personableness, and expected grades (Felton, Mitchell, and Stinson 2004; Wright and Palmer 2006).

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relation to Peggy McIntosh's (1989) article "Unpacking the Backpack" on white privilege. Linda said, with due humility, that she was privileged to have been able to attend schools in New York City that didn't have the "problems" that Kozol describes, coming to the reassuring conclusion that inequalities are local and isolated instances, for in her school, the school calendar was peppered with months and days that celebrated some minority group or another. At the end of her impassioned and sincerely intended monologue, she pronounced very graciously that her great fortune was only further verified by virtue of having someone like me as a teacher, the first Asian teacher she had ever had.[32]

Linda said it in a very flattering way: she felt truly lucky to be in a country where she had the "privilege" of learning from an Asian woman. She felt this spoke well of the opportunities this country affords to all people. In fact, I was proof to her that anyone *could* pull themselves up by their bootstraps and not be shackled by their race and gender. At the time, I was stunned by the flattery embedded in Linda's statements, and as a young teacher, I was grateful to know that I was appreciated. Yet, I also felt quite undermined by Linda's pedagogy of "the way things are." As critical pedagogy reminds us, students are not blank slates, and this was made clear to me by what I later came to understand were discourses that were being projected and read onto me. Extending Rey Chow's observation that students bring stereotyped "terms of references" to their reading of Asian American literature, Cheryl Johnson (1994, 1995) argues that this same process works in how students read the teacher's raced and gendered body as text (1995, 130–133). This was confirmed for me as I found that my body, my presence in the classroom, the histories and investments that brought me there, my identities and various performances (intentional and perceived) of femininity and model minority-ness represented knowledges, perspectives, and narratives that superseded the frightening picture of the world laid out in the texts of Kozol and McIntosh.

32. A Google search for "Asian teacher" resulted in a gendered and sexualized search list with many hits for porn sites, relatively few of them either from Asia or by and for Asian/Americans, even fewer related to education. Perhaps only slightly behind nurses and cheerleaders in the sexual imaginary, the female teacher is a highly sexualized and fetishized figure that riffs on power plays because of her institutional power and associations with authoritarianism that link her to images of ruthless schoolmarms, as much as she is linked to the soft, nurturing, usually white teacher—both images functioning to defuse and delegitimize her authority (Tischio 2004).

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If we believe in the real power of students as agents rather than as victims of pedagogical situations, we must also contend with the active roles they play in constructing the discourse of the classroom and interpellating (one might say disciplining) each other and the teacher. Linda held up a mirror and reflected back an image of me that I had not wanted to see, the view from the eyes of the dominant. In that mirror I saw a figure barely legible underneath a palimpsest of terms of reference—a chimera of caricatures: a broad, sallow face; slanted eyes; bound feet; kimono; white-face; a triangle straw hat; an abacus in one hand, chopsticks in the other; bowing; scuttling; bowing; and a thought-bubble that read "Me so ho'ny." Even as I write this, the hyperbole seems a little distasteful, excessive; yet, dominant perceptions and Asian American subjectivity are often shaped by such fetishized bits and pieces of stereotypes and grand narratives, most of which are just beyond conscious grasp. Linda unknowingly interpellated me into the model minority subject position, which constrained what I was able or, in some light, "allowed" to do.

Linda's monologue produced a palpable logic that swept across the classroom: since I obviously benefited from the system, how could I criticize it? I should, instead, show my gratitude for that access, and be thrilled for being included. The discourse of the model minority, by virtue of "allowing" me to become a professor, afforded me a position from which to speak with authority about the world. However, that very authority, benevolently bestowed, compromised my right to criticize American culture and society. As an obvious "foreigner," my critiques came across as particularly anti-American, diminishing the authority of the structures and institutions that granted me my position in the first place, and made me look like an ungrateful guest, thumbing my nose at American hospitality. Amid all these contradictions, I felt as if the only "right" thing to do would've been to put my palms together and bow. After that class, I half expected to see bags of laundry slumped outside my office door, but found only a pile of papers. Soiled texts to clean. An attached note read: "I'm concerned with the ending of this paper. I don't think it flows." *Light on the starch, please.*

Linda's speech act was suffused with conditions. When people say things like, "Those Asians are so hardworking!" it is a compliment underscored with a warning—i.e., "Stay hardworking." What happens when the model minority falls, fails, not only refuses "to sing the praises of the American way," but in fact denounces it altogether? As we have seen, they can be made examples of, vilified in the public and political

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arenas, like Tokyo Rose and Yoko Ono, or hailed and reified as an emblem of American spirit itself like Yamaoka. In other instances, as my narrative suggests, model minority teachers are hailed in other ways, urged, sometimes benevolently, back to their "true" selves. In reflecting on my interaction with Linda, the classroom appears to me as a kind of dramatic production with the teacher in the spotlight, except I kept missing my cues. I was supposed to speak in favor of the system that had "allowed" me to "make it." In quiet embarrassment for me, Linda gently read my lines to me from offstage. Her iterations of immigrant discourse, "lucky to be in such a country" with "opportunities for all people," was for my benefit, a kind of ventriloquism, modeling for me what *should* be coming out of *my* mouth. Linda was pointing me not only toward the grateful, high-achieving model, but also the model feminine teacher who dresses "like a girl," dresses "like us," as was often noted in my teaching evaluations. She was guiding me away from the strident, critical, "thinks she knows everything" "witch," as I've been (in recent years) called on RateMyProfessor.com, and toward the kind of teacher who earns the RateMyProfessor's chili peppers, and feels duly flattered.[33] Linda was reminding me to fulfill my role, to give her what her fortunate education had bought her: someone to verify the luck and fortune of this great country and grant her the rights to the "privilege" she had just discovered. Helping me to, as Johnson (1995, 129) puts it, "disinfect" the dialogue of the classroom, to remove the "funkiness," or the dissonances of race and gender, and to recenter the happy monologue of the grateful immigrant.

As I'll illustrate in my final anecdote, the performative citation of the happy immigrant is reiterated everywhere: from immigrant shopkeepers to the images (and self-representations) of cheery and successful Asian American professionals. I was witness to one particularly ritualized public performance of Asian American gratitude at the national conference of the American Immigration Lawyers Association in 2005 in Salt Lake City, Utah. During this conference, the American Immigration Law Foundation held its seventeenth annual benefit, this year to honor Vietnamese American immigrants. From the favors of "hand-crafted"

33. Immortalized by the 1980s rock band Van Halen in their music video "Hot for Teacher" (1984), a sexy teacher performs a striptease for her students. Sites like RateMyProfessor.com reinforce the larger cultural notion that there are "hot" teachers who deserve to be noticed and marked with the racist and sexist symbol of the chili pepper—the online analogy of waving bills in a strip club or the stereotypical gauntlet of cat-calling construction workers showing their "appreciation."

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bamboo chopsticks to the pressed chicken entrée, which the event organizer and many of my fellow diners insisted was quite "authentic," to the Vietnamese décor and music, the slightly dingy conference space of the Salt Palace Ballroom had all the ambience of a high school prom.

The spotlight, however, was on the honorees on the podium, all Vietnamese American immigrants, refugees, in fact, who had made something of themselves in America, among them a business owner, a computer executive, the actress Kieu Chinh from the film *The Joy Luck Club*, and writer Le Ly Hayslip. The foundation presented each honoree with an American Heritage Award plaque. In exchange, each offered an acceptance speech to the predominantly white, and largely female, audience of immigration lawyers from around the country. Each speech followed the same pleasing narrative pattern: suffering, journeying, and eventual success. Each speaker concluded his/her speech with affirmations of the American Dream and expressions of immense gratitude to the foundation and to the lawyers who filled the banquet hall for helping them and others like them to make it. The ceremony was topped off by announcing the winner of a best essay contest, an enthusiastic, white fifth-grader from Buffalo, New York, who won for his essay, "Why I am *Glad* America is a Nation of Immigrants" (emphasis added).

My telling of this story is not to diminish the narratives and the real struggles that the honorees experienced. Indeed, their lives are moving testimonies about survival, all of them having experienced extreme hardships and trauma that undeniably come from living through war: poverty, hunger, displacement, death, and separation from loved ones. It is remarkable what they have overcome. However, I could not get over the feeling that this event was not to celebrate them as much as it served a larger ideological function to reinforce the model minority stereotype. In typical model minority style, the speeches were all marked by the "bravery, perseverance, and strength which helped them succeed in the United States," as observed in the foundation's newsletter (American Immigration Law Foundation 2005).

Not unlike the classroom drama I described, the podium became the stage for a pedagogical act; the Vietnamese American immigrants, models that teach an object lesson about perseverance and whose narratives preserve the illusion of the American Dream. The interactive flows of emotion and expectation infuse the whole scene—a rhetorical setup that directs what the speakers could say to an audience eager to be touched by stories of suffering and who expect ultimately to be cheered

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on. Indeed, there would've been no "appropriate" occasion had someone been so ungracious as to mention America's complicity in the political and military circumstances that contributed to their suffering and their eventual flight to the United States. The solicitation of feelings and confessions of trauma (typical of Foucauldian discourse) and the pat cheerful conclusions of immigrant experience were meant to disavow the proverbial elephant in the room and to reassure and reward the white lawyers for the work they've done, as each speaker turned to acknowledge them. The largesse, the poignance, the hypersincerity of the honorees' speeches reflect an overcompensation—an excess that won't quite resolve the contradictions that rive this scene. The Vietnamese American immigrants euphorically sing the praises of the American way and make everything all right for the dominant subjects, the lawyers, who—moved, pleased, self-congratulatory—shuffle out of the ballroom, many leaving behind their chopsticks untouched.

## CONCLUSION

In the context of a critical classroom, where issues of race, class, gender, sexuality are expected to be raised, educators have reported ambivalent, often discomforting results.[34] The anecdotes above are intended to flesh out the broader discourses that contribute to the potential problematics that may arise in the critical classroom. Critical pedagogy tries to address this potential problem of student resistance by hailing an affect-conscious critical teacher who, as a model and leader, would help dominant and subordinate subjects redirect their ideological and affective investments along more emancipatory lines. Often, the teachers of critical pedagogy are assumed, as part of the professional class, to be already in a position of power, who have managed successfully to disinvest their repressive affects in order to become well-meaning, conscious, liberated, and liberatory critical teachers.[35] The teacher as a dominant, enfranchised insider, marked as citizen-intellectual, is a key figure and, arguably, the central agent of the social transformation that is espoused in much of the critical pedagogy literature.[36] However, the construction

34. See Ellsworth 1989; Tassoni and Thelin 2000; Hurlbert and Blitz 1991. Also see Thelin 2005 for a rationalization for maintaining critical pedagogy's mission despite its problematics in the classroom.

35. See Yoon 2005 for elaboration of this particular thread in critical pedagogy literature.

36. For further critiques of these tendencies in critical pedagogy, see Lee 2000; Gore 1992; Orner 1992; and Ellsworth 1989.

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of this would-be teacher is too often glossed over, leaving unaddressed the complications of this subject position, particularly when it is occupied by multiply constructed and contradictory subjects who do not fit the image of the dominant citizen assumed by critical pedagogy.

The model minority tells a story of conflicted liberation, citizenship, and democracy that at once contradicts and also conforms to the emancipation narrative of critical pedagogy. Like the model minority, the critical teacher is interpellated in the name of assimilating to a particular vision of the citizen, to shed "alien" status and become "naturalized," to metamorphose from the uncritical to the transformative intellectual, to gain entry into a community of mythical common good, be it of American citizenship or the rolls of critical pedagogues.[37] However, when the teacher who shows up in class is not the transformed and emancipated dominant subject, but the perpetually alien, fictionalized body of Pocahontas and Suzie Wong, the dynamics of the class and the ultimate goals that can be claimed of such a class are problematized.

In such potentially "hostile" environments, there is great pressure and desire for teachers to relieve the tension and fear which, according to bell hooks (1994), can lead to "professorial investment in bourgeois decorum as a means of maintaining . . . order" (188). hooks shines a light on what I see as the mutually constructive force of the emotions of teachers and students, which shapes the power dynamics in the class. It is not simply up to the teacher to decide rationally to dispose of or perform particular affects for herself or for her students. As hooks points out, the range of acceptable or necessary affective strategies are already to some extent overdetermined; for example, Linda's interpellation hailed me, against my own desires, to behave in a proper, model minority feminine way: not disillusioned, but cheerful; not critical, but loving. This model disposition would be the screen through which my performance would be interpreted, contributing to "misreadings" of any particular affect I may have intended to perform, either in resistance to or in compliance with dominant expectations. Furthermore, the expectation of a cheerful, nurturing, and compliant teacher serves as a benchmark against which any affective performance would be disciplined.

Therefore, it is important for teachers to critically examine their own affective constitution, not simply as individual weaknesses or insecurities, but as techniques that are informed by discourses of race, gender,

37. See feminist and Asian Americanist critiques of citizenship and democracy: Fraser 1994; Luke 1992; Lowe 1996; and Palumbo-Liu 1999.

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and sexuality, in particular. In addition, such an inquiry into broader social and cultural discourses may prove useful in illuminating the roles we are called upon to play and the particular emotion work we are called upon to perform in order to maintain the affective interlaces of the ideological order. As I've suggested here, an alternative discourse of affect articulated from the conflicted position of "insider/outsider," like that of the ambivalent model minority female teacher, may promise to shed new light on the problematics of power and how and in what forms it is exercised in the classroom.

Nevertheless, it is always a difficult proposition to suggest ways out of such pedagogical quandaries. We must continue to ask questions: What does this mean for Asian American subjects and their potential (passive and active) resistance and collusion in relations of domination? How can a race-conscious emotionology potentially serve both liberatory and oppressive ends? What do we do with our increased emotional literacy? As critical teachers, how should we direct our and our students' emotional energies? How can we avoid the trap of trying to "manage" emotion even as we broaden our understanding of it? (see Boler 1999)

Most of all, asking and trying to answer these questions must be predicated on a critical and sustained skepticism of any perspective that claims to be beyond implication. Asian Americans may be called into the model minority subject position and may be rewarded with the feelings of uplift and belonging. In some instances, such lures may keep individuals complacent, despite the advances of the Asian American movement and Asian American studies. However, there are costs, and there is affective labor involved that is compensated only by the promise of inclusion, the illusion of being set apart from the least enfranchised of society, when, in fact, the model minority is kept out along with those he/she helps bar from entering. A more thorough history of political, economic, and social contexts may reveal Asian Americans' rejection and suspicion of prevailing sociopolitical structures, which have been understood conveniently as passivity by those in power. Yet, while such affective dispositions are stereotypes of the dominant culture, they have the power to shape future Asian American affects and continue to style passive or cheerful or forbearing Asian American subjects. Asian Americans may not build the master's house, yet if we also don't want to be his tools, as the blogger suggests of Yamaoka, we must be willing to examine our internalizations and the affective rewards we receive for playing our parts and reading the scripts. As much as we'd like to find

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potential resistance and parody, which has been a legitimate endeavor of much scholarship in Asian American studies, we must also be willing to investigate our complicities.

And lastly, we must be willing to acknowledge the contributions our students make to classroom affects and power relations; rather than patronize their disempowerment or bemoan their wrongheadedness, there may be insight and transformation to be found when we are willing to credit, and not just demonize, their affective investments as potentially useful texts that they have a hand in generating in the class.

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