

Asian / American

Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier

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Stanford University Press / Stanford, California 1999

3 / Written on the Face: Race, Nation, Migrancy, and Sex

IN THE 1930S, UNDER CONDITIONS of increased migration and urbanization, a new sociocultural “hybrid” subjectivity is discursively produced. This new subjectivity is interpolated into a new set of possible frameworks and alignments that complicate our sense of identity as produced dialectically in an encounter between the “self” and the “other.” In this complication, Asian/American identity is set within a particular notion of the modern which wrestles with the precise nature of “becoming” American, as America itself is inflected by modernity. In this section I examine two particular sites of Asian/American predication. In this chapter, I extend my preceding discussion of the embodiment of hybridity and examine the racialized and deracialized body, framed within a somatic aesthetic. This aesthetic is read within various historical occasions of migrancy, from the midcentury to the present day. Here the body is seen as a reproductive entity whose decisions and actions sexually reflect the specific character of migration and assimilation, and dramatize the cultural tension of modern migrancy in racial terms, specifically as these new negotiations impact upon the “face” of the nation. In Chapter 4, I analyze representation of the Asian/American body and its social inscriptions in literary narrative. Despite their shared assimilationist themes, these narratives refuse to jettison the corporeal in order to set forth a story of a purely disembodied psychic adjustment to modern America. While each seeks to join up with a “universal” aesthetic (which becomes synonymous with a certain type of cultural assimilation), each remains attached to the materiality of the body and its inscription in the worldly.

In both chapters, my study of the body accords with Bryan Turner’s general observation that “the body is a site of enormous symbolic work and symbolic production. Its deformities are stigmatic and stigmatizing, while at the same

time its perfections, culturally defined, are objects of praise and admiration. . . . The body is both an environment we practice on and also practice with. We labour on, in and with bodies.¹ In particular, the issue of the racialized body provides a specific site of cultural mapping that inquires as to the body's manifestation of a psychic and spiritual content. This manifestation is read as a litmus test of sociability, its gradations evidence as to the precise calibration of the Asian/American ratio.² But along with an attention to the symbolic, I maintain a focus on the material densities of bodies placed in the circuits of labor and consumption. Without such a focus, the body threatens to become disembodied, a free-floating signifier released from historical materialism, disjoined from the very productive forces that have given us Asian America.

In an essay written in 1928, Robert E. Park argues that modern civilization must be understood as a quantitative change in a process that began with the Greeks: "What took place in Greece first has since taken place in the rest of Europe and is now going on in America. The movement and migration of peoples, the expansion of trade and commerce, and particularly the growth, in modern times, of these vast melting-pots of races and cultures, the metropolitan cities."³ He employs this process entirely along the lines of contact between formerly heterogeneous peoples: "If it is true that races are the products of isolation and interbreeding, it is just as certain that civilization, on the other hand, is a consequence of contact and communication."⁴ Park carefully differentiates race from civilization, yet it is clear that his axiomatic argument favors the process of civilizing the world in terms of the prerogatives of modernity. For Park, race is a problem carried over from the premodern age, still anchored in the local and tribal. The modern resides precisely in the metropolis, the site of modern technologies and political economies. The tension between the loss of the premodern and the shock of the modern produces what he calls the "marginal man," a hybrid of different cultures, who is "an effect of imperialism, economic, political and cultural; an incident of the process by which civilization, as Spengler has said, grows at the expense of earlier and simpler cultures."⁵ But it produces as well a particular crisis for the modern nation, which must now negotiate not only cultural complications brought on by migrancy but racial ones as well. It is no accident that the focus tends to stay upon the cultural, as it is a more easily negotiated terrain. The racial will nonetheless stubbornly abide to remind the sociologist of the residual and persistent elements of the "premodern."

In this world, the cultural hybrid becomes valorized as the subject most able to live in the modern age:

The fate which condemns him to live, at the same time, in two worlds is the same which compels him to assume, in relation to the worlds in which he lives, the rôle of a cosmopolitan and a stranger. Inevitably he becomes, relatively to his cultural milieu, the individual with the wider horizon, the keener intelligence, the more detached and rational viewpoint. *The marginal man is always relatively the more civilized human being.* He occupies the position which has been, historically, that of the Jew in the Diaspora. The Jew, particularly the Jew who has emerged from the provincialism of the ghetto, has everywhere and always been the most civilized of human creatures.⁶

Here Park writes a decade after his pioneering essay on the marginal man to introduce a book by his student, E. V. Stonequist. Stonequist's understanding of the marginal man shows the effect of a historically produced skepticism; his study centers upon the psychologic effects of marginality and argues a much less sanguine attitude toward the production of modern subjects in migration: "The modern world of economic competition and shifting social relations places the individual in a situation where change and uncertainty are the keynotes. Fixed or permanent adjustments become impossible. The world moves and the individual must continually readjust himself. The possibility that he will not do this with complete success is greater than ever before. Social maladjustment, whether slight or great, then becomes characteristic of modern man."⁷ Nevertheless, by the end of his study, Stonequist decides, "The marginal man is the key-personality in the contacts of cultures. It is in his mind that the cultures come together, conflict, and eventually work out some kind of mutual adjustment and interpenetration. He is the crucible of cultural fusion."⁸ Thus, rather than "confusion," we find an adjustment that becomes synonymous with the altogether necessary act of adopting to the terms of modernity. Indeed, the mentality of modern life is characterized by such negotiations; the marginal individual reads his or her own life according to such prescribed problematics and is read as well accordingly.

Crucially, we find in these writings an uneasy slippage between cultural and racial hybridity. At times they are synonymous, but at others race persists in being much more visible and problematic—sometimes racial others are read as synonymous with the general exotica of modern forms; at other times, they are markers of a "racial frontier" that cannot be crossed without cost. As modern man is "confused" by both the disorientation that comes with moving between two cultures and the disappearance of premodern sureties, the "unfamiliar" is found everywhere. But like movement itself, which we saw regarded as a suspect condition in the 1920s but valorized as the very sign of the progress of civilization in

Park's conceptualization, the unfamiliar is endowed with particular erotic and sensual value. Park cites W. I. Thomas's *Sex and Society*:

It is psychologically true that only the unfamiliar and not completely controlled is interesting. This is the secret of modern scientific pursuit and of games. States of high emotional tension are due to the presentation of the unfamiliar—i.e., the unanalyzed, the uncontrolled—to the attention. And although the intimate association and daily familiarity of family life produce affection, they are not favorable to the genesis of romantic love. Cognition is so complete that no place is left for emotional appreciation. Our common expressions, "falling in love" and "love at first sight" imply, in fact, unfamiliarity; and there can be no question that men and women would prefer at present to get mates away from home.⁹

Park makes explicit the connection between "romantic" attraction, sexual reproduction, and social effect. He cites this passage to confirm his assertions regarding intermarriage: "sexual interest, which is still one of the most powerful motives in human contact, operates independently and often counter to the interests represented by the organization of society. Romantic love, which is proverbially interested in the exotic and unfamiliar, not infrequently crosses racial barriers, and is never completely inhibited by class and caste taboos."¹⁰

This notion of the attraction of the exotic and the consequences of such for society have to be historicized within the context of modernity. It is no longer a matter of seeking the foreign *out there*—during this period, like no time before, the foreign has moved into the familiar, and has been endowed with a particular erotic charge that is linked obviously to the notion of sexual reproduction. It is precisely the fantasy of the interpenetration of Asia and America that we saw operating doubly in Capra's film: Megan's liaison with Yen is complemented by the figure of the westernized Asian, who occupies now an idealized space of both the familiar and the exotic. It is that doubleness that is contained within the figure of General Yen as he appears in Davis's fantasy and in the subtextual interstices of *The Bitter Tea of General Yen*. Simultaneously, then, we have both the rehabilitation of the cultural hybrid as the modern cosmopolitan subject and the argument that environment and culture can indeed affect racial difference. In both we find a conceptualization that allows for the rapprochement (at least culturally) of heretofore mutually exclusive terms: *Asian American*. Yet it is crucial to note that this cannot be regarded as a unidirectional, evolutionary moment; rather, there persists a racism that will be rearticulated variously in modified discursive forms and will repudiate or at least rebuff the "cultural" connection of Asia and America.

For instance, the notion that the sign of race itself is being gradually effaced to good effect betrays a skepticism regarding both the actual possibilities of socially sanctioned intermarriage, which would biologically produce a hybridized *race*, and thereby a sign of harmony between races and of a more enlightened, less racist America. Instead we have increased meditations on the workings of America upon the foreign body, which will wear away the marks of difference and mold Asia. The point may not be so much the malleability of Asia as the shaping power of America. Previously, we noted how the Immigration Commission was set the task of determining the precise nature and effects of modern migration to the United States. One of its key points of interest was the work of Franz Boas entitled "Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants."¹¹ The Commission was excited about his findings (laid out over dozens of graphs and charts) that immigrants' bodies were actually being transformed the longer they stayed in America.

Assimilation, then, was both a psychic and a somatic phenomenon, the latter now presenting in concrete form the actuality of Americanization (and, conversely, if certain bodies *won't* change, or do so only recalcitrantly, then it is taken as an index to their resistance or inability to assimilate). The summary introduction to the report begins: "The Immigration's anthropological investigation had for its object an inquiry into the assimilation of the immigrants with the American people as far as the form of the body is concerned."¹² One typical finding is found in the following statement, which reveals the issues of greatest concern to the Commission—the capability of immigrants to change and the "natural" conditions that would inevitably transform them in America: "In most of the European types that have been investigated the head form, which has always been considered one of the most stable and permanent characteristics of human races, undergoes far-reaching changes due to the transfer of the people from European to American soil. For instance, the east European Hebrew, who has a very round head, becomes more long-headed; the south Italian, who in Italy has an exceedingly long head, becomes more short headed; so that in this country both approach a uniform type, as far as the roundness of the head is concerned."¹³ Such evidence seemed irrefutable proof of the effect of America upon the bodies of immigrants, which now metamorphized into American bodies. And correlated to this was a psychic change: "This fact [of bodily transformation] . . . shows that not even those characteristics of a race which have proved to be the most permanent in their old home remain the same under the new surroundings; and we are compelled to conclude that when these features of the body change, the whole bodily and mental make-up of the immigrants may

change. . . . The influence of American environment makes itself felt with increasing intensity, according to the time elapsed between the arrival of the mother and the birth of the child [emphasis added].”¹⁴

Nevertheless, despite this new hope of transforming immigrants naturally by prolonged exposure to America, the notion of America as a catalytic space runs up against the Racial Frontier—such bodily transformations are considered only in terms of eastern European and Mediterranean immigrants; it seemed to go without saying that “orientals,” whom the Commission agreed should be excluded from the nation, were not susceptible to such transformation, no matter how intense or lengthy their exposure—both the physiognomic and the psychic gaps to be crossed were too great.

The abstraction of “race” is the logical outcome of such absolute difference: “The Japanese, like the Negro, is condemned to remain among us as an abstraction, a symbol—and a symbol not merely of his own race but of the Orient and of that vague, ill-defined menace we sometimes refer to as the ‘yellow peril.’”¹⁵ Park insists that racial difference is determined not by mental nature, but by a physical sign. It is because of the persistence of this physical sign that racial others are so “condemned” to “abstraction.” Their physical difference renders them inaccessible except as a mental construct; racial phenotypology casts Asians into the realm of ideology. Until the face of race changes, there is no hope for any manifest understanding. Yet there is a tremendous gap between Park’s recognition that race is merely physical difference and the recourse he ultimately makes to the abstract mental prejudices of modern “Americans.” He completely bypasses the socioeconomic apparatuses that perpetuate and manage racism.

The abandonment of material history for the abstract, to which Park seems to acquiesce, allows the notion of the marginal man to take two directions. First, it consolidates modern dilemmas into a universal psychological space that it is the duty of each individual to negotiate as he or she will, given the absence in the modern world of anything like traditional, nation-bound belief systems: we are all, in a sense, “marginal” in our existence at the cusp of modern cosmopolitan industrial life in a “world economy.” Second, it particularizes the racial other as the most problematic manifestation of marginality and relegates it to the margins until such time as it completes its phenotypical transformation (into a likely image of assimilation), or, until (much more fatalistically) “society” is willing and able to recognize it as one of its own. In Chapter 9 I discuss the “mental” facet of this displacement of marginality exclusively into the psyches of racialized peoples; here I will concentrate on its mapping of the somatic. Park and Stonequist literalize the “margin” within and upon the body of the racial

other, and in so doing create an abject sign of negativity, a sign that is consigned to the exterior as a perpetual reminder not of our shared “marginality,” but of the outcast “we” all fear ourselves to be, yet do not have to be to such an extent. It is for time, not social action, to redeem this outcast figure; it is only time that will gradually efface the sign of racial difference and welcome the racial other into the fold.

It is of particular interest that Park’s analysis stays within the abstract, as if a critique of the actual material histories of American racism would disrupt his mental mapping of race relations. This general tendency toward the abstract (here, toward a vaguely defined notion of modern “psychology”) allows for the consolidation of the modern as marginal, and its valorization as the cosmopolitan, while leaving the issue of race abstracted and bracketed. It is important to stress the number of ways that the presence, real and anticipated, of Asians in America is regarded through the ambivalent optics of marginality and tracked along an uncertain telos of social assimilation, uncertain precisely because of the abiding mystery of the “abstraction” of Asians as racial others. And I would suggest that (contra Park) this ability to abstract Asians should be read against the inability to do so with African Americans. The “exotic” east lends itself to certain mystifications, whereas the history of slavery in America, while certainly secured in part by ideological imaginings, has nonetheless embedded blacks more concretely and determinedly in the material.

The issue of the “Asian race” should be read as a fantasy in itself—modern discourse on race and hybridity is doubly haunted by an ideologically driven desire to see America as the exemplary modern state wherein difference is accommodated by the discourses of democracy and cosmopolitanism, and by a recognition that the utopian social age was still, always, on the horizon, when it came to those on the other side of the racial frontier. The element of race presents the particular impediment to modernizing the racial Other. The psychologic and the somatic therefore become intimately attached in the discourse on race and migrancy, nationhood and cosmopolitanism. And that sign of race can best be seen on the face.

In fact, Park’s fascination with the Pacific racial frontier (see Section I of this book) is elaborated in an essay that focuses precisely on the face, “Behind Our Masks.” Here the face is elaborated as the site of racial negotiations and the transformation of racial identity.¹⁶ Park’s general thesis is found in this passage: “Racial traits and racial differences that constitute the racial type and conceal the individual man are not always or altogether physical. Physical differences are emphasized and reenforced by differences of dress, of manner, of deportment,

and by characteristic expressions of the face."¹⁷ Park's usage of the term "face" designates a universal connection between the physical, the psychosocial, and the national:

It is probably no mere historical accident that the word *person*, in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role. . . . Our very faces are living masks, which reflect, to be sure, the changing emotions of our inner lives, but tend more and more to conform to the type we are seeking to impersonate. Not only every race, but every nationality, has its characteristic "face," its conventional mask. . . . In the end, our conception of our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality.¹⁸

Thus, each individual's face expresses that person's internalization of certain social codes and conventions. The face carries the traces of specific historical conditions that exert particular pressure upon the body and its comportment, the face and its expressions. He quotes Fishberg with regard to Jews: "centuries of confinement in the ghetto, ceaseless sufferings under the ban of abuse and persecution have been instrumental in producing a characteristic, psychic type, which manifests itself in his cast of countenance, which is considered particularly Jewish."¹⁹

It is this "face," then, not (only) in its phenotypology but (also) in animation, that demarcates essential differences between groups. The racial frontier of the Pacific finds expression in the behavior of the oriental, which is manifested on their visages, real and symbolic: "Present differences between the Orient and the Occident are largely concerned with what the Chinese call 'face'."²⁰ He continues: "one striking difference between Oriental and Occidental people is that the former are more conscious, more conventional, in their behavior than we. . . . That is the reason why the Chinese go to such elaborate lengths to save their face. 'To save your face' is to preserve an attitude, and to maintain self-control."²¹ This leads to certain cultural misunderstandings: "Orientals live more completely behind the mask than the rest of us. Naturally enough we misinterpret them, and attribute to disingenuousness and craft what is actually conformity to an ingrained convention."²² It becomes clear that the opposition Park is drawing lines up squarely behind the binarism of "oriental" conformity and "western" individual freedom, between the premodern and the modern world. It is up to the second generation, then, to bear witness to the unshackling of Asians in America: "All this changes, however, in the second generation. . . .

With this change in residence and ideals, there has been an abrupt mutation in racial characteristics."²³ Thus race itself is "mutated," faces change, as the psychic content of the second generation has been transformed. Harking back to our earlier discussion, Asians are rescued *then* from the realm of abstraction, and concretized, finally. They may then be admitted to America's imagined sociality, recognized particularly, as their faces have changed, and thus given evidence of their psychic change.

This transformation seems so complete that it produces an eerie, *unheimlich* effect on those who observe the "new" oriental face. Although Park wants to delink the inert physicality of the face from its expression of the psychosocial (the liberal notion that racial markings are less significant than the individual inferiority—the former being permanent but insignificant, the latter being essential but changeable), this neat compartmentalization breaks down in the following account, in which Park tells of meeting a young Japanese American woman: "I found myself watching her expectantly for some slight accent, some gesture, or intonation that would *betray* her racial origin. When I was not able, by the slightest expression, to *detect* the oriental mentality behind the oriental mask, I was still not able to escape the impression that I was listening to an American woman in a Japanese *disguise* [my emphasis]."²⁴ The language here is emphatically that of inspection and detection, attempting to locate the seeming contradiction held within the term "Japanese American." Nevertheless, this all but complete Americanization ultimately fails, since, as Park himself attests, the uneradicable sign of race cannot be ignored, even by people of goodwill:

Physical traits, however, do not change. The Oriental in America experiences a profound transfiguration in sentiment and attitude, but he cannot change his physical characteristics. He is still constrained to wear his racial uniform; he cannot, much as he may sometimes like to do so, cast aside the racial mask.

The physical marks of race, in so far as they increase the racial visibility, inevitably segregate the races, set them apart, and so prolong and intensify the racial conflict. (252)

It is here that Park's double use of "face"—as comportment and as phenotype—becomes disaggregated and specified. The form may change, but never the latter. And in this passage, Park implies that it is that *fact* that accounts for racism.

His student, E. V. Stonequist, who popularized Park's notion of "marginality," reaches the conclusion that the pathological psychic state of marginality can only be resolved by erasing the outward sign of racial difference through inter-

marriage: "In the final analysis the adjustment of immigrants and their descendants is conditioned by the possibility of interracial marriage. Where this is permitted by law and public sentiment, assimilation proceeds swiftly and with minor difficulties. Where sentiment is adverse, race problems are prolonged, or even accentuated."²⁵ Racism will always exist as long as there is discernible racial difference. The only way to lessen the distinctiveness of racial difference is to gradually erase it by biological means—the very means that were so particularly feared by anti-miscegenationists.

We find in this passage from Albert Palmer's 1934 text, *The Oriental in American Life*, however, the notion that the physical might be affected by means other than interbreeding. Palmer, a clergyman, found for Asians what the Dillingham Commission found true for European immigrants: that American life had a particular effect on the body. Palmer argued that the physical environment of the United States was relentlessly changing (even) the appearance and bodily habits of "Orientals," gradually giving them bodies and deportment that approximated those of the dominant. The following remarks share with Park's notion of "face" an attention to the ethnically and socially expressive aspects of the countenance, but suggest a more amorphous mode of physical transformation:

It is very interesting to note how the physical bearing and even the facial expression of Orientals born in this country are shifting in the American direction. . . . For example, twelve-year-old American-Japanese boys average over an inch and a half taller and five and four-tenths pounds heavier than the Japan-born. Japanese are notably short-legged, but their children tend to have longer legs in this country. Changes in eyelids and eyelashes are also evident, but the most noteworthy adjustment is in the shape of the mouth and the general openness and responsiveness of the countenance. Whether these changes are due to using American furniture, food habits, better dentistry, general freedom of life, or subconscious imitation of the dominant type, no one knows. The important thing is that they are taking place. . . .

Is it too much to believe and hope that, sooner or later, an enlightened and intelligent American public opinion will discover that these Oriental young people, born and reared among us, are not just replicas of the old type foreign-born Chinese or Japanese, but a new type? When that day dawns and we come to see that the Oriental masks are looking more and more like American faces and that behind them are personalities that think and feel as we do and cherish similar dreams and ideals, then the barriers will crumble away.²⁶

Following the trajectory of this passage, we witness an attention specifically to American-born Asians, who, reared in the American environment, seem to ex-

hibit the inevitable outcomes of inhabiting America. In heliotropic fashion, the bodies and minds of these Asians bear mute witness to the dominant traits of American life. Palmer's particular attention to the "shape of the mouth and the general openness and responsiveness of the countenance" reflects a focus on merely the most outward representations of an inner change: the production of an "American" social subject, whether it be produced by furniture that molds the body to its contours, food that nourishes a particular growth spurt, dentistry that intervenes in unhealthy orthodontics, a "freedom of life" that signals a distinct departure and liberation from Asian authoritarian "tradition," or, possibly, the subconscious but nonetheless willed "imitation" of the dominant type. Nevertheless, Palmer is not interested in what, exactly, produces these changes; "the important thing is that they are taking place." This marks the essential difference between "these Oriental young people" and "old type foreign-born" Asians. These young people do not reproduce their parents' sociality, but represent an as yet unclassifiable "new type."

Most significant is Palmer's evocation of Park's distinction between Oriental "masks" and actual faces. The former are seen as the unwelcome residue of foreign social habits that are deemed here to be eminently unreal—insincere, merely the blind repetition of traditional conventions—while American faces are taken as eminently "real" in their unabashed individualistic freedom of expression. It is that necessary transformation that must be worked for "us" to ever imagine that "they" are like us, and that would be the first step toward a non-racist society. But, unlike Park, Palmer suggests that something much more subtle and mysterious is at work. While he, too, comes to suggest intermarriage as a possible way to accelerate the disappearance of race, as a clergyman he is only too familiar with the psychic damage that might bring about, given the still unenlightened nature of the general public.

What I want to draw out from this discussion is the formation of a particular discourse on the migrant and second-generation Asian body, its "face," and how its difference from the dominant notion of "face" is addressed by hybridization, whether it be biologically or environmentally induced. This discourse finds particular rearticulation in the second half of the twentieth century, as the new field of plastic reconstructive surgery provides the technical means to accelerate and make more precise the slow environmental phenomena remarked upon by Palmer. But before I turn to a consideration of that newly discovered "plasticity" we should note that the correlation between Asian/American material and psychic interpenetrations is noted as well in the reconstructed landscape of

Asia. Consider these passages from a young Chinese college student returning to China:

With regard to material traits I saw and enjoyed many things in Tsing Hua, which are similar to those I have seen and am enjoying at Stanford. For instance, tub baths, ice cream, milk, "drinking fountains," aerated water, electric light, steam-pipe, phonograph, radio, and some other kinds of modern conveniences. Whenever I wished to go to the city, for Tsing Hua College is situated a few miles away from Peking, I could go there by bus. Whenever I was sick, I went to see a Western doctor and took Western medicine. Moreover, the fountain pen I possessed was manufactured in America; the suit of foreign dress I used to put on was made in Western style; and the shoes I used to wear were just like what I am wearing in America. For amusement, I used to see moving pictures. The movie, I think, is one of the most powerful cultural influences, for good or for evil, that America has brought to China. . . . From the moving pictures they are learning the Western way of making love, of committing suicide, of saying this or that. . . . However, my contact with the Western material traits is nothing compared to my contact with the Western ideal and spiritual traits. In fact, it is not the wearing of a collar and necktie but the study of Western subjects that has changed me into a "cultural hybrid."²⁷

Chieng Fu Lung here carefully inventories the new material environment of China—the college seems to replicate Stanford, the transport of the body to and from the city, the clothes it wears, the very fountain pen that scripts the essay, are all echoes of America in China. The comportments for sexuality and death are carried over from American celluloid. And even when he asserts that "studying" does more to hybridize him than those materialities, it is difficult not to see the two realms of the spirit and the body working in tandem, each one confirming the other. If Palmer sees Asians in America changing their bodies and minds, here we find the exportability of such transformation in modern Asia.

The postwar years presented a historically distinct context for meditations on the Asian/American body. If the 1930s anticipated the intensification of Asian/American formation in the context of absorbing and domesticating already present Asians in America, and inventing neocolonial strategies of American/Asian geopolitics, the Second World War and the Immigration Act of 1965 drove home the point that Asia's and America's destinies were indeed intimately connected in the journey into the second half of the twentieth century and beyond. We witness the foregrounding of the body in particular as a sign, whose signify-

ing power is complicated by both a new technologically driven malleability and by a historically driven re-imaging of the "face of America."

After the Second World War there developed a concrete manner of representing the Asian body for American socialization, one that has increased in practice as its technology has improved parallel to the intensification of the circulation of western images of beauty and the power seen to be attached to it. Reporting from Bangkok, Sheila McNulty chronicles the rising popularity of plastic surgery upon the Asian eyelid: "As Thailand embraces fast-food restaurants, blue jeans and Hollywood movies in its zeal to Westernize, its women are having their faces nipped and tucked to fit in. . . . From South Korea to the Philippines to Malaysia, women who can afford it are going under the knife in hopes of achieving the now-popular European concept of beauty."²⁸ The title of her article, "Asians Bear the Knife for Western Look," along with this quotation, draws together the key elements of this reportage: "western" notions of beauty have solidified a hegemonic hold as commodities have delocalized Asian customs and tastes. So great is that hegemony that it has produced a masochistic, self-sacrificial mentality among the natives who are willing to endure physical and economic discomfort. The benefits are, ostensibly, psychic, but that psychic gain is always transacted intersubjectively. Ronald Matsunaga, a Beverly Hills plastic surgeon, promotes his technique of eyelid surgery as resulting in "a marked improvement of the narrow, puffy Asian eye and greater patient satisfaction. . . . The goal of each author performing this operation is to surgically create a supratarsal fold, commonly referred to as a 'double eyelid' changing the eyelid of the typical Asian to a more esthetic and cosmetically larger eyelid characteristic of the occidental. The newly created eyelids can be further enhanced by proper cosmetic application, resulting in greater self image and confidence" (149).²⁹

Here, I draw attention to two issues. First, that the shaping of the exterior is taken to effect a modification of the interior: as appearances change, the projection of the psychic interiority is assumed to be altered by dint of the fact that a different "spirit" is seen to lie beneath that surface. This projection is *imagined* by the patient to take place upon the Asian face in the mind of a white observer. So secure is the patient in this assumption that it is supposed to have the effect of endowing the patient with a new spirit, that is, *reconstituting* that subjectivity.³⁰ In this regard, it is not enough to remark only on the internalization of aesthetic judgments and values; it is crucial to place that observation in the wider context of social being that extends "beauty" into morality, social engagement, and mental structures. The display of the Asian face suggests a particu-

lar zone of contact, which in turn implies the contact of certain contents and elements. Appearances are not everything, but they are assumed to correlate with that which they are not. If the “narrow” eyelid betrays “dullness,” “stupidity,” “passivity,” it is futile to try to posit a causality (are they read such because they belong to an Asian face?). Rather, the key point is the correlation of the exterior with the interior, which signals a set of behaviors readable on the face and permanently ensconced in the psyche.³¹ The modification of the sign of race will thus affect what liberal rational thinking cannot (that is, skin color doesn’t matter). If Park was impatient about the pace of racial “enlightenment” in the United States during the thirties, if Stonequist could only see intermarriage as performing that necessary modification of racial markings, and if Palmer could rely only on the slow change brought about by furniture and diet, after the Second World War technology stepped in with something more immediate. It will allow race to change because the individual has been allowed to change cosmetically.

But it is crucial to note that the alteration of the Asian eyelid is not absolute, but rather, measured. McCurdy advises his colleagues, “Many patients . . . simply desire a small ‘double eyelid’ while maintaining the Oriental look” (4). Similarly, a press release from the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery notes, “The procedures they [minorities, including Asian Americans] seek are not so much to look ‘western’ but to refine their features to attain facial harmony.”³² While such qualifications might be motivated by a desire to mute the racist undertones of this surgery (though they certainly seep through in phrases such as “facial harmony”), this also suggests that the desire to alter the eyelid is not undertaken necessarily to “be white,” but to partake of whiteness in a selective fashion. And that whiteness exists precisely in the discourse of social power. Ann duCille makes this point with regard to a black child’s imaging of self in relation to whiteness: “A child’s dreaming in the color scheme privileged by the world around her is not necessarily the same as wanting *to be* that color. . . . What guided my fantasy life, I believe, was less a wish to flee my own black flesh than a desire to escape the limitations that went with such bodies.”³³ Similarly, Asian Americans interviewed as to why they wanted to change their appearance pointed to economic benefits as much as “self-image” benefits.³⁴

This leads us back to Matsunaga’s notion that the “revised surface” is now suitable to further cosmetic (nonpermanent) application: “The newly created eyelids can be further enhanced by proper cosmetic application, resulting in greater self image and confidence.” That is, the scalpel of the surgeon discretely steps back after a limited but critical intervention—the subject is now endowed not

just with a newly “created” eyelid, but with a surface that is able to be individually modified at will. True American individualism is allowed to flourish and adjust itself according to the specific contours and reshapings of body and social life. Why is this important? Again, such a liberal add-on is advertised not only as another incentive, but to map out a much more potent site of malleability, one that we can call the ideation of the adjustable, temporalized modernization of Asian America. Things are not simply yellow or white, but are now eminently flexible given the proper surface, the proper contact zone. Nonetheless, the functionality of this is predicated on a blind faith in the interpretive correctness of the patient, who must wonder, “If I do this will I be seen as ‘other’ than what I am now *in the way* I anticipate and expect to be seen?” This links the body to the psyche. The morphing of physical form anticipates the revision of the psyche within, and the way that transformed body will be viewed by others. Such projection into an other’s point of view (“I can see how others see me”) is linked to notions of racial “schizophrenia.”

The contemporary practice of plastic surgery on the Asian eyelid should not be understood as a recent phenomenon, solely concerned with self-image. It is more fully appreciated as participating in the general discourse of migrancy and national identity established in this study. Surgery on the Asian eyelid flourished after the Second World War, specifically in Japan, as many Japanese women, especially “war brides,” anticipated having to “fit into” their adoptive countries. But no attention has been paid to the fact that the high point of such surgery began as a public relations program of United States occupational forces in Korea. To get such an account, we need to examine D. R. Millard’s 1955 essay, “Oriental Peregrinations,” his narrative of his service in Korea as an army surgeon. Here I connect this specifically Asian American topic to the general topic of modern hybridity.

Millard is initially sent to Korea to help reconstruct war-damaged bodies. He begins his essay by outlining the connection between “rehabilitating” the state of Korea and rehabilitating Korean bodies:

One of the purposes of the U.S. Marines remaining in Korea after the ceasefire was to assist the war-ravaged people in their rehabilitation. It seemed that plastic surgery should be a part of this project and through it would be constructed visible evidence of American goodwill in Asia. This is a land where anomalies and deformities must be borne through life without relief. What, to us, is no more than a pedicle flap or a skin graft, to them is little less than a miracle. Thus it proved to be a direct type of aid that people could see and appreciate.



Figure 2. Illustration from D. Ralph Millard, "Oriental Peregrinations," *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* 16 (1955). Used with permission.

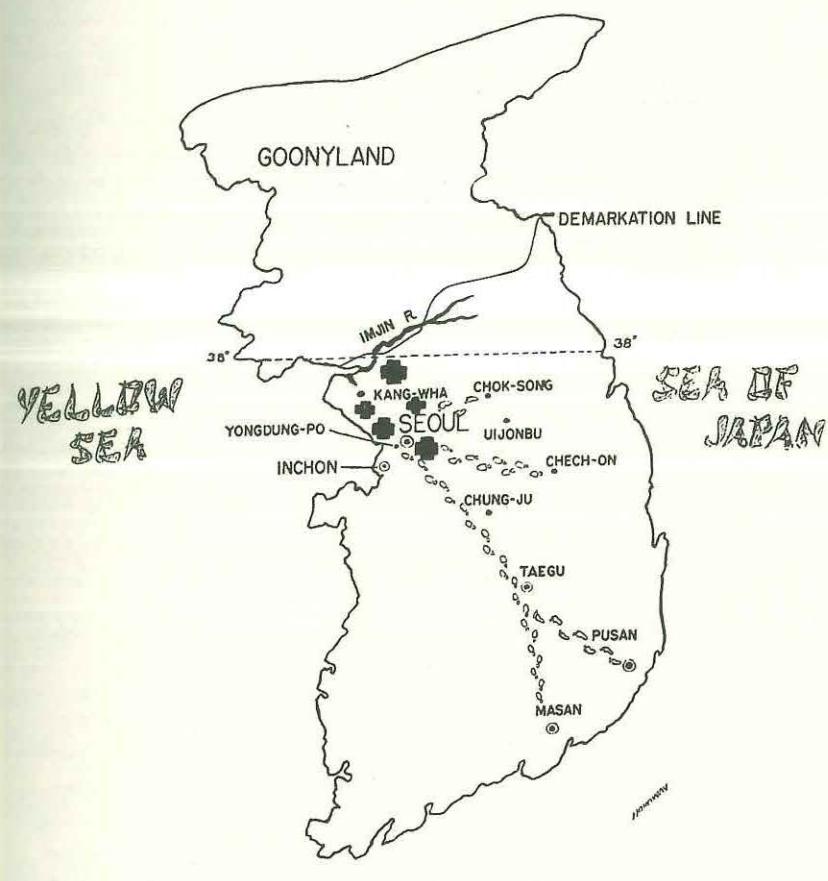
Pouring unearned money into a country often causes more chaos and waste than goodwill. . . .

We Americans are naive babes in the Asian wood never knowing whether we are feeding the mouths of friends or loading the guns of communists. Yet we can be relatively certain that after each deformity was corrected or improved and the Korean returned home, America had won the heart of the patient, his family and possibly even part of his village. (319)

In other words, where ideology is uncertain, the rehabilitated body bears irrefutable witness to goodwill. The American diplomat/soldier, lost in the unknown territory of Asia, cannot be sure how any of his acts will be interpreted. The reconstituting of bodies, however, is a certain sign of intent and goodwill; it is not open to misinterpretation. And it is hard to miss the corollary to such acts of reconstituting the Korean body—a map of Korea drawn by Millard, showing the areas where plastic surgery was performed, marks as well the segmentation of north and south, and we can extrapolate the hidden desire to make "Korea" whole again, under U.S. sponsorship.³⁵

And one could, indeed, link this to the general crisis in postwar East Asian policy, and the crisis of the Cold War. It relates not only to the division of Korea

ORIENTAL PEREGRINATIONS



LEGEND: Hospitals Where Korean Plastic Surgery Was Performed

Figure 3. From Millard, "Oriental Peregrinations." Used with permission.

but also to the division of Germany. In both cases, we have a crisis of accommodation by division, a compromise acceptable to none of the players. "To make whole again" forms the common discursive link, but the question still remains, what would this new whole look like, given the impossibility of effacing the scars of the sutures, which attest to the body's prior fragmentation?

What needs to be secured before any such surgery is a sense of how, exactly, to reconstitute the Korean body—specifically the face—in a form not only as good as but superior to its prior, unviolated form. To do this requires a particularly contrived investigation. Millard gives this account of the procedure:

Before venturing into Plastic on Orientals, however, it seemed wise to become adjusted to their standard of beauty. On every Saturday night at a certain Officer's Club there is "moose call" in the form of a dinner dance. A buffet supper baited with ham, chicken, sausage, and pickles is served and bak-san [many] . . . attractive young ladies of Seoul line up outside the gate. The more exotic *baby-sans* are soon escorted into the party and by candlelight with a background of soft music it is possible to study the facial contour of the Oriental. Occasionally an American or English girl is allowed into the party, and with a round-eyed control at a table of slant-eyes the social gathering becomes a veritable laboratory for scientific comparison. (322)

It is hard to leave such a loaded passage behind without commenting on the particular issues of "baiting" a war-ravaged female population, of the necessity to have a "control" against which to measure the difference (and hence identity) of the "oriental," nor the transformation of a bar into a candle-lit laboratory. Specifically noteworthy is Millard's fondness for metonymy, signaling his attachment to reducing the human being to the medical case, and also to the parceling up of bodies, so as to allow for his recombinatory poetics. This "seduction" works in two directions, for the Korean landscape is transformed into an irresistible operating theater for Millard:

In a country so ravaged by war and so lacking in medical care there is little wonder that in the hidden corners of each village lurked the devastating results of untreated raw contracture. Evidence of this was seen in toes drawn back on the dorsum of the foot, eyelids pulled off the eye and chins soldered down with keloid to the chest. Orphanages were combed for children with deformities. In any of the numerous leper colonies alone, there is a lifetime of reconstruction. This is indeed a plastic surgeon's paradise. (323)

Yet this "paradise" takes on a particular allure when Millard shifts his mission from rehabilitating Korea to advancing the range and nature of the technical. The rehabilitative is given over to a delight in the purely aesthetic, an aesthetic, as we saw above, informed by *transformation*, not reconstruction. Witness how the language of desire, imagination, and bounty gives way to that of fascination with this particular case of transformation that captures Millard's attention:

Every night during my first week in the Orient I dreamed of "Z" plasties on thousands of mongoloid faces but by the time a month had passed I seldom gave them another thought. When the inevitable did occur, it took me by surprise. A slant-eyed Korean interpreter, speaking excellent English, came in requesting to be made into a "round-eye." His future lies in his relation with the west and he felt

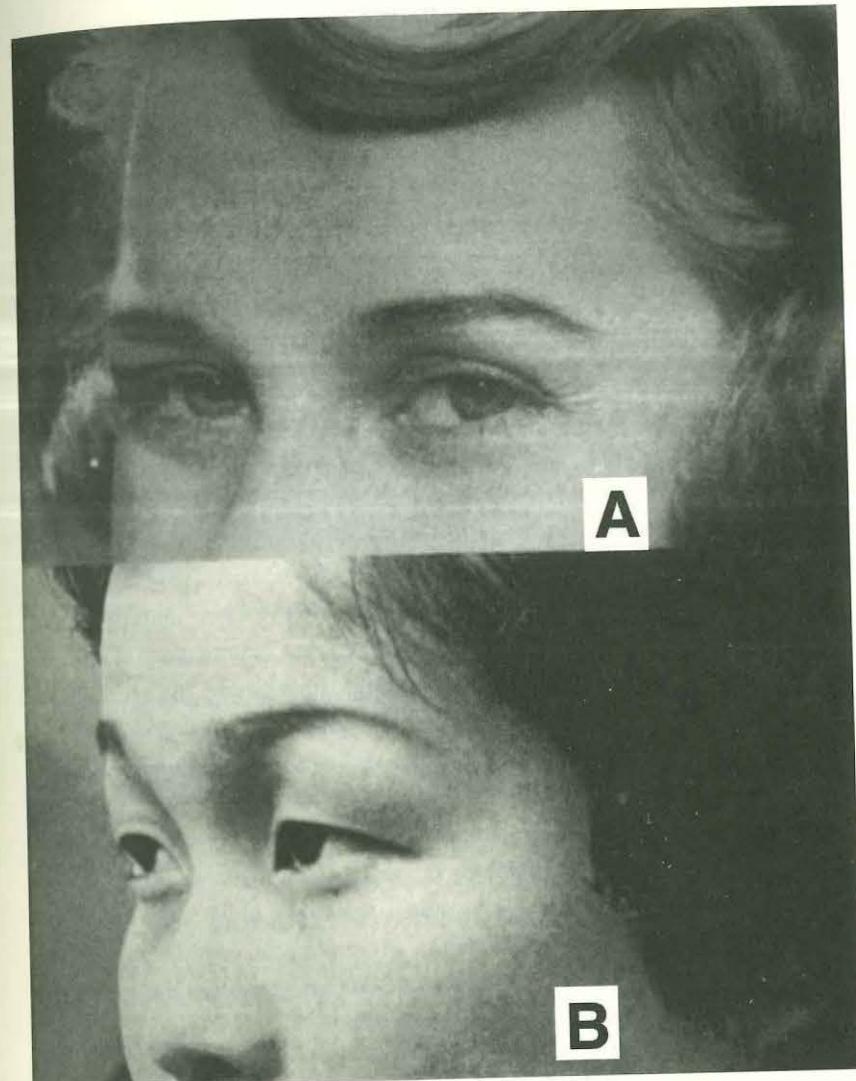


FIG. 12A. The Occidental look.
FIG. 12B. The Oriental look.

Figure 4. From Millard, "Oriental Peregrinations." Used with permission.

that because of the squint in his slant eyes, Americans could not tell what he was thinking and consequently did not trust him. As this was partly true, I consented to do what I could. (331)

This quotation takes us firmly from the realm of the reconstruction of a past form (a project Millard soon tires of, its novelty exhausted) to that of transformation for *future* applications: the invention of a hybrid that is produced by “correcting” a “defect” inherent in the Asian face. This defect must “inevitably” be modified if the east is to have any authentic contact with the west: “Due to the droop of the upper lid only the lower half of the iris is exposed. This gives the effect of an expressionless eye sneaking a peep through a slit, a characteristic which through fact and fiction has become associated with mystery and intrigue” (333).

What is most important is the particular relation that this interpreter has with the west—that of acting at the seam of Asia and America, as cementing their communication in translation. And that individual, being Asian, cannot be trusted without being physically transformed to approximate a particular social subjectivity. This new, hybrid figure must be able to vacillate unimpeded between self and other. Contrary to Park’s belief that the countenance of each individual was an expression of his or her cultural conventions, Millard believes the opposite: the social does not determine the physical—the physical determines the social.³⁶ Millard is at once more absolutely and biologically racist, but, given the advance in techniques that allowed the transformation of facial characteristics, also more progressive in a weird way. For surgical technique can intervene in the process of hybridization and accelerate the more slowly produced effects of interbreeding.³⁷ According to this logic, which is the obverse of Park’s notion of “face,” the transformation of the physical should bring about a change in the psychic. This is indeed what we find in the caption that accompanies the “before and after” photos of the interpreter.

We see in Millard’s description of this patient’s outcome an attention to a *deep* transformation worked by the adjustment of the surface: “Note the flat nose and hooded eyes of the Korean interpreter. After cartilage to nose and plastic to eyelids the interpreter was mistaken for Mexican or Italian. He became a Christian and hopes to travel to the United States to study for the ministry” (334). This surgically produced image of the hybrid reaches into the interior to work a psychic change. And with any appearance of untrustworthiness erased, the soul itself is adequately westernized and rectified, and a new “person” emerges. One notes how the interpreter is not transformed into an “American”—that would be too immodest and impossible a task. Rather, he is situated in the terrain of a



Figure 5. From Millard, “Oriental Peregrinations.” Used with permission.

positive indecideability, a flexible, albeit still ethnic, identity, that benefits from its potential confusion with other, presumably more “assimilable” ethnic types still in that liminal space of pre-Americanization, yet closer than the racially marked Oriental.

Millard, encouraged by these results, embarks upon a program of “deorientalizing.” Although there is a marked difference between the rationale for “deorientalizing” Asian males and females (“professional” reasons for men, to make them appear more trustworthy; “aesthetic” for women, to make them closer to the American “norm” of beauty), in both cases this procedure removes an essential semiotic element and thereby enables a particular set of social relations between east and west:

Many ask why the Oriental wants to change his face. Of course the majority do not, but those who do give reasons which range from religious or economic to the universal desire to appear more beautiful. It is felt that this deorientalizing problem may well come home to the American plastic surgeon, for there have been well over 10,000 Japanese war brides as well as many post-war marriages with Korean girls. These numbers are continually mounting, for when a lone-some G.I. comes face to face with the gentle humility, artistic grace and mysterious charm of feminine *baby-san*, he brings her back alive. Alas, folds that were exotic in Pusan or Kyoto will become strangely foreign to Main Street of a mid-

west town or under the columns of a southern mansion. Especially in the products of the second generation, the plastic surgeon may be called upon to help them blend with their surroundings.

The oriental must not disturb the placid landscape of the United States. This is not just an aesthetic consideration, for the “overtly Asian” face is brought “back alive” as American plunder from Asia. On a less dramatic but more compelling level, the Asian face, unmodified, recalls the ungovernability of the Asian/American encounter. The folded eyelid is to be a sign of its containment. But especially telling is Millard’s focus on the “products of the second generation,” who need particular attention. How do we reconcile the fact that they, as half-white, should carry within and upon themselves already the beginnings of “deorientalization,” and yet need particular help in “blending in”? Are we not confronted with the contradictions of this aesthetic, that at once celebrates the hybrid and recoils before its concretization when it is produced not by controlled surgical technique but by sexual reproduction?

If Millard worries about how “slant eyes” will be viewed by the “American” spectator, not as a distant, abstract image, but as a concrete presence on Main Street U.S.A., then the issue of beauty, the aesthetic of the body, becomes part of an anxious and fragmented social discourse of race. Asian bodies are present precisely as representing the impeachability of domestic space in a sexualized, potentially reproductive, fashion. The anxiety over the hybrid returns and must be tamed, as “contact” with Asia under the imperatives of Cold War policies has intensified and made itself a permanent part of the American landscape, not only as labor, but as sexualized and reproductive force. The discovery and promotion of cosmetic surgery provided an opportunity for the Asian body to demonstrate its acquiescence to American aesthetics, social codings, and racist assumptions of behavioralism. At the same time, though, this artificially produced image of a hybrid form seemed to offer both the conditions for intermarriage and socialization in the United States and a preview of an actual state of hybridity that could and would be produced by intermarriage. This operation thus contains a contradiction: the epicanthal fold is at once a sign of acquiescence and an occasion for subversion. The racial economies of faciality are thus to be located not in absolutely territorialized otherness, but in a calibration of similitude. What we witness above is the surgical erosion of the Asian face, so as to allow a certain situatedness with regard to America. Deleuze and Guattari note:

If the face is in fact Christ, in other words, your average ordinary White Man, then the first deviances, the first divergence-types, are racial: yellow man, black man, men in the second or third category. . . . They must be Christianized, in other words, facialized. European racism as the white man’s claim has never operated by exclusion, or by the designation of someone as Other. . . . Racism operates by the determination of degrees of deviance in relation to the White Man face, which endeavors to integrate nonconforming traits into increasingly eccentric and backward waves, sometimes tolerating them at given places under given conditions. . . . From the viewpoint of racism, there is no exterior, there are no people on the outside. There are only people who should be like us and whose crime it is not to be.³⁸

But a discussion of Millard’s essay would be incomplete without noting that the transformation of the face is not performed solely upon Asians. Millard notes: “We all know the U.S. Marines are the world’s greatest fighting force but it never occurred to me that they would turn out to be the ugliest. Headquarters approved a ‘new look’ program—ears were pinned, noses straightened, chins bolstered and faces lifted” (320). In particular he reports requests by soldiers to have stronger chins and less hooked noses. The Anglo-Saxon norm thus affects other “Americans” as well. What we have then is a much more complicated set of negotiations, enabled and prompted by developments in surgical technique, and which, I will argue here and in the study generally, evinces a complex set of flexible racial identifications in the modern and postmodern ages.

Having traced the development of the aesthetic of the hybrid in the period following the Second World War, I want to turn to its development in a direction that will ultimately seek to erase all signs of raciality: in the late twentieth century we find the displacement of the hybridity onto the terrain of the “symmetrical.” We note a persistent attention to migrancy as we move from the Cold War spirit of containment (that nonetheless had to accommodate migration to the United States produced within the logic of its postwar involvements in East Asia) to the contemporary age of transnational capital.

D. R. Millard’s work did not end in Korea. His major work was published thirty years after “Oriental Peregrinations.” In it, we witness the development of the notion of hybridity, but also the ascension of another concept with which to address the effects of migrancy—the symmetrical. Millard’s *Principalization of Plastic Surgery* (1986) is a long treatise on the essentials guiding the practice of plastic surgery. In particular, Millard addresses what he calls “aesthetic plastic surgery.” The title of his eighth principle is particularly instructive: “Know the

Ideal Beautiful Normal." Millard explains: "Since the normal is our goal, any reconstructive surgeon must know the normal, be sensitive to it and use it as a guide and challenge. Still the true plastic surgeon will go further to know the ideal beautiful normal" (78). First, the norm for the body's appearance must be ascertained, but the surgeon as true artist cannot rest there—he must discover a norm that is endowed with the aura of an ideal beauty. Millard calls to his aid Plato, Aquinas, and Umberto Eco. But he rests his case on the words of Dr. M. Gonzalez-Ulloa:

It is not possible to establish a universal canon of beauty because of the different ethnic types, but in every face, notwithstanding the ethnic origin, is found proportion and harmony between the segments and a good architectural frame. . . .

Then too, the morphology of the human body has begun to change so that it becomes similar to that of the community's dominant group. It could be said that the use of aesthetic plastic surgery corresponds to the great Jewish migration towards the western world. . . .

Now we come to an era that has no classic type of beauty, no dominating type to influence the concept of "prototype of beauty." Cross-breeding, due to mass migration between continents, to wars, to constant traveling or to mass commerce has resulted in races with mixed traits. (93f)

We see a rationalization that becomes entirely familiar in modern discourses on physical beauty and race: races differ, and yet there is a geometrical, *somatic* aesthetic that transcends such differences. In the steady flow of historical time, specifically within the conditions of modernity, races are increasingly blending into each other, and all will eventually fall under the same imperative of geometric balance.³⁹ I want to draw particular attention to this transition: the willingness of minority individuals to surgically change their appearances to better blend into the image of the dominant becomes superseded as the hybridization brought about by modern migration makes the image of the dominant less and less distinct. Herein the notion of symmetry comes to be a placeholder of value against which the hybrid is to be evaluated.

Millard, too, ends up arguing the superiority of a hybridized image:

While Oriental ladies are having their upper lids made more Occidental, ladies of other races, covetous of the charm, mystery and intrigue associated with the slit and slant of the Oriental eye, devote much time and expense to makeup to create the sloe-eye to imitate the Oriental effect. Often blending of racial characteristics produces an exotic beauty *beyond the pure forms* much as the mixing of

species can occasionally produce an exceptionally beautiful hybrid [emphasis added]. (102)

The valorization of the hybrid is only partially explicable by the fact that total transformation is impossible ("It is not just nonsense but impossible to make an Oriental totally into a Caucasian or vice versa. The same goes for transformation of a black into a Caucasian or vice versa or an Oriental into a black" [105]). Rather, we find in these writings on aesthetic plastic surgery a recognition not only of the limits of surgical technique, but also of the historical occasion of hybrid value, which rescues plastic surgery from having to confess its inability to enact absolute transformation. Instead, we witness the instantiation of an "ideal norm" of beauty which goes beyond racially distinct norms. This transition between the specificity of race to a focus on the normativity of the geometrical and the ascension of the hybrid has to be read within the history of U.S. modernity, and specifically that of Asian/American formation, as the concern becomes not the impossible task of sequestering race within nations, but of inventing the terms upon which to negotiate the hybridization of the modern nation feeling its very interior penetrated by the formerly foreign.

Recently, sociological attempts to explain the trajectories of interracial desire as determined by class mobility, fueled by feelings of inferiority instilled by racist imaging, have been countered by biological studies that explained that "beauty" is altogether nonraced. The cover story of the June 3, 1996, *Newsweek* offers us "The Biology of Beauty." The cover features two "beautiful" naked young people, white and blond, strong and slender: one male, one female. The article presents research that claims that "people everywhere—regardless of race, class, or age—share a sense of what's attractive" (62). Such arguments pick up the thread of Gonzalez-Ulloa's notion that, while a "universal canon of beauty" cannot be obtained, there is a shared sense of beauty emanating from an appreciation for symmetry, but these studies have the benefit of reaching this conclusion by way of extensive scientific analysis.

After first presenting the argument that we are attracted to strong, healthy individuals rather than weak, sickly ones (obviously because we instinctively want to reproduce), the article explains that the "latest" scientific studies have found that healthy bodies are signaled by symmetry; individuals are predisposed to have sex with people they sense to be reproductively viable. The empirical data support this: "For both men and women, greater symmetry predicted a larger number of past sex partners" (63). Symmetry may now be measured

against a general set of possible combinations: "Scientists can now average faces digitally, and it's still one of the surest ways to make them more attractive" (64). The effect of such studies is to quell anxiety about race (or anything else) as presenting significant difference.⁴⁰ Besides reaffirming some very problematic masculinist, heterosexual assumptions about "beauty" and behavior, however, the study has the effect of suggesting that race matters so little that issues of material history are irrelevant. But if we "all" desire the same bodies, then why is it that there is not much *more* interracial marriage, or that certain patterns of intermarriage persist and others don't?

Resistance to structural critique shows up in most discussions of interracial marriage, even those most sensitive to certain imbalances and distasteful practices. The decision to intermarry is rationalized as distinctly individualistic: "As long as they're individuals, that's all that counts."⁴¹ While I am not suggesting that such impressions of individual taste are mistaken, it is crucial to see what else, *along with race*, might constitute that "individual" as an object of desire. To denounce race as a determining factor is one thing, but to disengage completely from the way that race is imbricated and made visible in a number of social discourses is another. The move toward privatization is an effective way to bypass such considerations.

It is crucial to note that this newly defined imperative to reproduce the "species" is now seen as eminently "human" in a (potentially) *hybridized* fashion. That is, the imperative of racial reproduction has been dismissed, overridden by attention to the individual's urge to reproduce him- or herself regardless of any desire to reproduce any particular racial identity.⁴² Hence the common anxiety voiced to counter desire for intermarriage—"What about the children?"—has been superseded by an always open and flexible hybrid image. But this notion of nonracial desire comes into collusion with a rather defeatist conservative stance toward the multiracializing of America. Have we accepted hybridization simply because it is inevitable? Is symmetry a rationalization, a substitute that will hide the lack of a clear image of "the face of America," in this age of increased and intensified migrancy and transmigrancy, which circulate in a global economy adumbrated and euphemized in Park's notion of a vast "unconscious cooperation of races and peoples"? What does the "new America" look like? We still need a face, but which face are we comfortable with? How does symmetry *look*, and *look back at us*?

That the connection among sexual attraction, reproduction, and race in the political economy of the state is linked to new global economics and migrancy is unmistakable. *Newsweek's* 1996 cover story follows a special issue of *Time* mag-

azine published in the fall of 1993: "The New Face of America: How Immigrants Are Shaping the World's First Multicultural Society." Their common attention to the face, specifically the female face, within the thematic of race, is telling. The *Time* issue dramatizes the "multiculturalizing" of America with the image of a computer-generated hybrid, a fantasy that seeks to put a face on the end product of interracial marriage. While intermarriage is initially used as a trope for the process of multiculturalization,⁴³ it provides a particular site for imagining the telos of immigration and assimilation in the late twentieth century: "The process of assimilation, while perhaps a bit more hesitant and stressful than at times in the past, still marches on. . . . There is no turning back: diversity breeds diversity. It is the fuel that runs today's America and, in a world being transformed daily by technologies that render distances meaningless, it puts America in the forefront of a new international order" (9). And it is precisely this technology that also assists in imaging the product of such time/space compression, such self-perpetuating "diversity."

Lauren Berlant remarks upon the way this image tracks the messiness of material history into a *cybernetic private world*: "The new face of America involves a melding of different faces with the sutures erased and the proportions made perfect; she is a national fantasy from the present representing a post-historical—that is, post-white—future" (418). This absenting of history may be approached from another angle as well. The movement from similitude to symmetry, the displacement of value from a mimicking and approximation of whiteness onto a "color-neutral" objectivity may be ironically correlated with a shift from modernity to postmodernity. Instead of an attempt to create and recreate a face of the nation which marks the persistence of a clear historical value (whiteness), the notion of symmetry instantiates a postmodern "flatness" wherein different points of historical origin are made irrelevant and erased. What matters most is the present, in which everything has equal value. Herein we find one of the many contradictions of postmodernity. At the same time that it allows an occasion for dismantling inherited hierarchies, it leaves uncertain the availability of any history to ground progressive work. Liberation is attended to by conflation and an emptying out of historical content. Yet this very contradiction drives the dialectic in which one may indeed be able to map another sort of totality.⁴⁴ Here I wish to center precisely on the unsettledness of this "shift": in the late twentieth century, we find a vacillation between a modernity in which race retains its negatively differential function, in which the nation continues to be (supposedly) consolidated in one historical racial image (although the discursive production of this image might change and vary), and a post-

modernity in which a value-neutral “hybridity” instantiates an ahistoricized symmetry in the place of similitude. The former bespeaks the persistence of racial thinking, the latter aspires to move beyond it but can do so only by eliding material history. Finally, this shift may be correlated with the historical movement to late capitalism: the increased and uneven transmigrancy of peoples across national spaces is driven by the new mode of late capitalist production. The sovereignty of the nation-state is now compromised by increased transnational interests; the very constitution of its interiority attests to the demographic changes that accompany globalization.

Time's description of the process that resulted in this image merits quoting at length:

The woman on the cover of this special issue of *Time* does not exist—except metaphysically. Her beguiling and mysterious visage is the product of a computer process called morphing. . . . When the editors were looking for a way to dramatize the impact of interethnic marriage, which has increased dramatically in the U.S. during the latest wave of immigration, they turned to morphing to create the kind of offspring that might result from seven men and seven women of various ethnic and racial backgrounds. . . .

The highlight of this exercise in cybergensis was the creation of the woman on our cover, selected as a symbol of the future multiethnic face of America. . . . Little did we know what we had wrought. As onlookers watched the image of our new Eve begin to appear on the computer screen, several staff members promptly fell in love. Said one: “It really breaks my heart that she doesn't exist.” We sympathize with our lovelorn colleagues, but even technology has its limits. This is a love that must forever remain unrequited. (2)

The editors reassure us that this “woman” does not exist except “metaphysically”: that status endows the image with a fantastic existence that is imaginable and representable in a technologically “valid” manner. The convergence of technology and imagination underwrites this particular face of America; it also declares the limits of technology, noting that technology cannot produce a sexually viable cyborg commensurate with the image. The *quasi*-whiteness of the image is a correlate to the vacillation between image and reality, the present and the future, between the absence and the presence of race as a sign. In other words, the image is particularly desirable because it is like and yet not-like, a perfect rebus of what used to be called miscegenation, now rewritten in a modern age that must become reconciled to the hybrid. The image is familiar enough to be not too unsettling, but not so familiar as to breed contempt. Rather, it fosters desire.



Figure 6. Cover of special issue of *Time*, 1993. Copyright 1993, Time, Inc. Reprinted by permission.

Time's image thus participates in the narrative of beauty and corporeal transformation we've traced from the 1930s, a narrative that at each step attempts to stabilize the effects of migrancy, desire, and identification, and to exploit this harmony as a sign of America's ability to deal positively with the new world of increased globalization. And it does so by means of art and artifice, surgery and cybernetics.

The celebratory subtitle, awarding America the number-one status once again ("During the past two decades, America has produced the greatest variety of hybrid households in the history of the world" [64]) is predicated on the notion that hybridity is not only inevitable, but valuable and especially economically so. This recalls the eugenicist notion of "hybrid vigor," which argues that the more distant the strains that are interbred, the stronger the resulting product. Yet here there is both the aroma of triumph and the scent of fear and defeat. The playfulness insisted upon in this imaging is replicated in a chart published on pages 66–67, in which inquisitive readers can pair up seven different ethnic and racial groups in both female-male and male-female directions to "see" what "their" offspring will look like.⁴⁵

Intermarriage can now be a spectator sport. The actual physicality of the "event" is held at spatial and temporal distance, cleansed of its material messiness, the asymmetry of the political economy of race, gender, and class in America. This jettisoning of the materiality of the body, its effects, and its products into a cybernetic morphology performs the notion of pacification mentioned by Barthes.⁴⁶ Yet the very obviousness of this erasure of not only race, but the politics of race, belies an anxiety over the actualization of multiracialization and an ardent desire to leap beyond such concerns to a future time of reconciliation, wherein, somehow, those concerns have already been sorted out. While one can understand and sympathize with that utopianism, this positive view of multiracialization masks deeper anxieties over national identity and privilege that must be attended to in the present.

Two images present quite different views of the transformation of America under immigration and illustrate the persistence of race despite the celebration of symmetry. The first, from a 1993 cover of *Newsweek*, is a graphic illustration of anxiety over increased, "uncontrolled" immigration "flooding" the United States to such a degree that the icon representing the ideal of America as refuge for the world is drowned by a world unexpectedly mobile (and note here the submersion of the face). The second image presents a radically different depiction of the effects of immigration. It accompanies an article published in 1985 in *The New Republic*, "The Triumph of Asian-Americans: America's Greatest Success

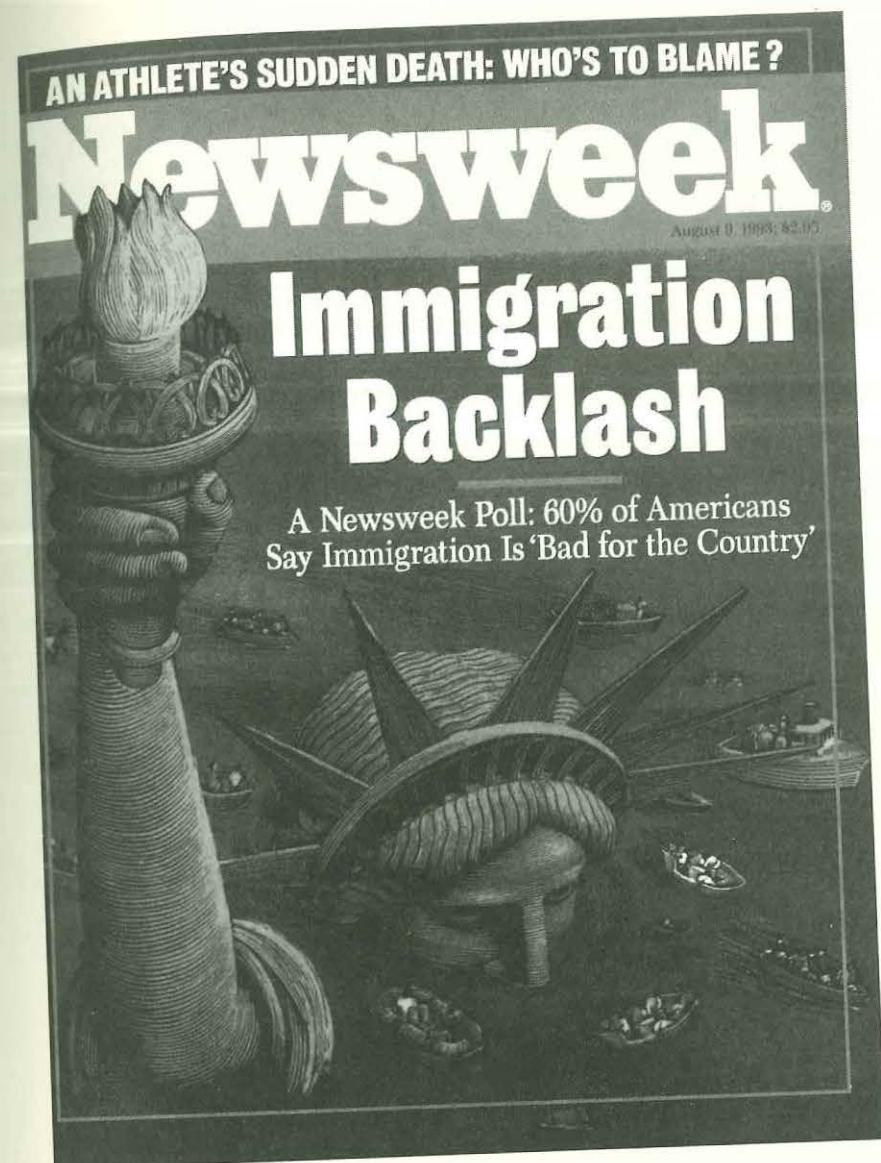


Figure 7. Cover of *Newsweek*, August 9, 1993. Illustration by Scott McKowen. Copyright 1993, Newsweek, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission.

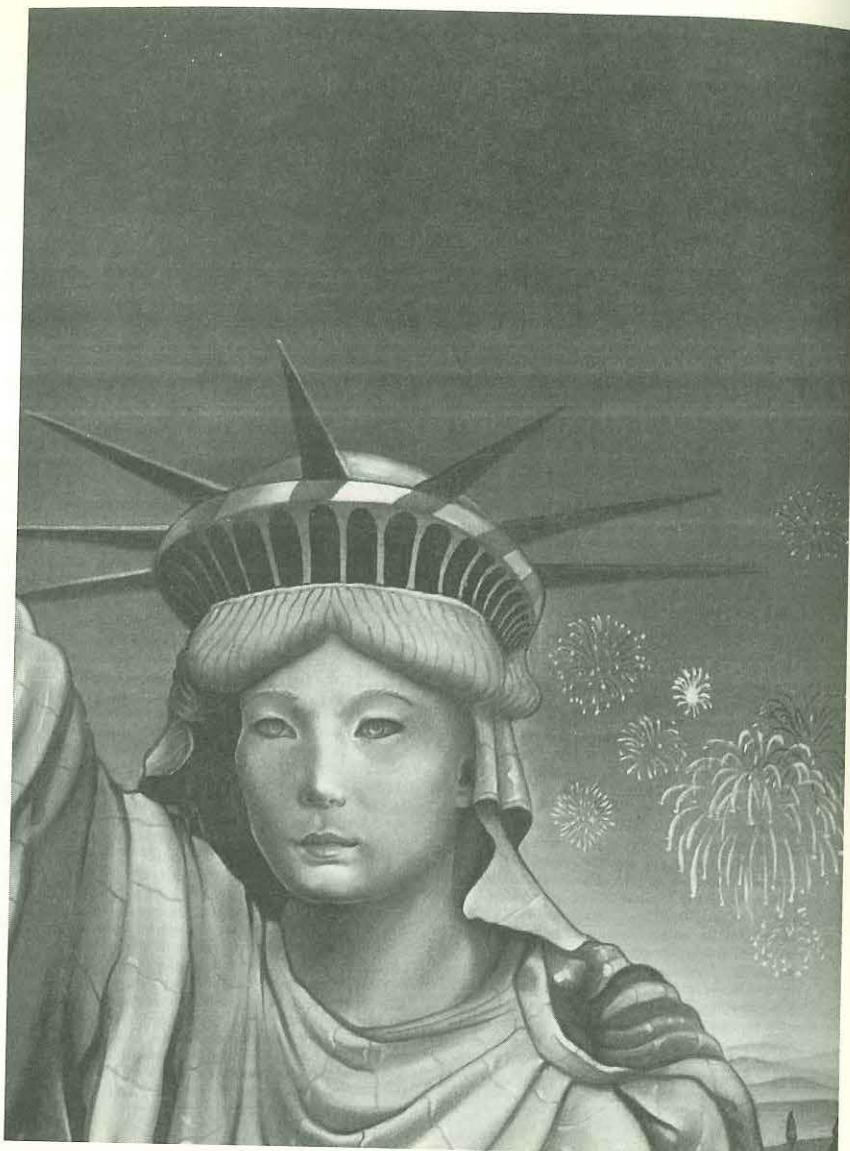


Figure 8. Illustration from *The New Republic*, July 15/22, 1985. Reprinted by permission of *The New Republic*. Copyright 1985, The New Republic, Inc.

Story."⁴⁷ How are we to explain, in the age of symmetry and hybridity, the morphing of the face of the Statue of Liberty not into a composite image of immigrants and citizens, but into the Asian face, which proudly presents itself *without* the epicanthal fold?

The author of the article, David A. Bell, begins by describing a scene from Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner* (1982): "It is the year 2019. In the heart of downtown Los Angeles, massive electronic billboards feature a model in a kimono hawking products labelled in Japanese" (24). He then writes, "Why did the critics praise *Bladerunner* for its 'realism'? The answer is easy to see. The Asian-American population is exploding. . . . The numbers are astonishing. But even more astonishing is the extent to which Asian Americans have become prominent *out of all proportion* to their share of the population" [emphasis added] (24).⁴⁸ The symmetry of "America" is thus destabilized as Asians exceed their share, but, notwithstanding the sensationalistic evocation of the dystopian world of *Bladerunner*, this is not a regurgitated image of Yellow Perilism. Bell goes on to assure us, "Most remarkable of all, it is taking place with relatively little trouble" (24).⁴⁹ In other words, demographic asymmetry is to be tamed by a psychic commonality.

How do we explain this nonviolent revolution? What does it mean that Ronald Reagan called Asian Americans "our exemplars of hope and inspiration"? What is signaled by the brilliant explosions in the background, announcing the triumph of Asian Americans, as "they seem poised to burst out upon American society" (31)? Bell's article, while acknowledging anti-Asian racism and the persistence of cultural difference, ends by asserting:

Their triumph has done nothing but enrich the United States. Asian-Americans improve every field they enter, for the simple reason that in a free society, a group succeeds by doing something better than it had been done before: Korean grocery shops provide fresher vegetables; Filipino doctors provide better rural health care; Asian science students raise the quality of science in the universities and go on to provide better medicine, engineering, computer technology, and so on. . . . This Fourth of July, there is cause for hope and celebration. (31)

But if the symmetrical hybrid that blends in and elides its points of racial origin is now replaced by a distinctly racialized face, what has happened to the idea of symmetry? The normalizing function served by symmetry is displaced onto a body that conspicuously *shows race*, but this raced image is then absorbed by another sort of norm.

We find the familiar image of the model minority. As usual, it defers in significance to how such success vindicates American ideology (this Fourth of July). There is thus a double movement—the calculated shock effect of the orientalized Statue of Liberty and the recontainment of the “explosion” of Asians in America to specific and discrete areas of activity: vegetable sales, rural medical practice, and the sciences. If the careful excision of race performed by symmetry is disrupted and the racialized face not only re-emerges but in so doing takes over the face of America, then this reappearance of race serves even more dramatically to both articulate that fear and pacify that unearthed, awful image of otherness by recontaining and appropriating it and making it safe for America.

But perhaps the most telling element in this illustration is not the Asiatic American face alone. Along with the dominance of the Asian gene in the reconstitution of the American body is the fact that the backdrop is land, not the harbor waters of New York. The transformation of the face of America, specifically the welcoming image set to face the new immigrant, has been transformed into a landlocked figure, testifying not to the process of immigration and assimilation (via either the Atlantic or Pacific), but the revision of the *interiority* of the state, led by Asian Americans. If the dramatic increase in Asian immigration causes panic, this panic is defused by asserting that things haven’t really changed all that much, or at least they have changed in a direction that does not essentially pull America off course. This may indeed be a more potent agent of pacification than the cybernetic and insistently “metaphysical” image of the “new America.” Asian America, in its delimited supporting role, displays itself in order to give itself over to the higher imperative of American triumphalism. Yet, just as the ideological traffic of the Asian eyelid is multivalent—submissive and yet potentially subversive—Asians are also placed in a condition of potentially productive *asymmetry* and identification. The breaking down of the “racial frontier” under the weight of postwar policies in the Pacific and a globalizing economy produces a specific refacement of the nation.

The imaging of the fusion of Asian and American, read within the general theme of hybridization in modern American life, can thus be understood as imagined within a particular aesthetic which uses the body as both touchstone and sign. “Culture” is located within the imaging of the beautiful and within the materiality of the body and its historical conditions. But this imagining can be read more theoretically, and more concretely, by tracking the penetration of the Asian body within the space of America—its lived environments, its socioeconomic and political discourses. The vacillation between “race-neutral” symmetry and the visibility of race produced by demographic “asymmetry” discloses

the contradictory impulses of America. Promoting the notion of symmetry and race-blindness as both ideal and a concession to the diversity produced by contemporary histories of migrancy and globalization, America cannot remain comforted by that rationalization completely. Race re-emerges at particular moments of historical crisis. The Asian face of America manifests that crisis (the shock of misrecognition); the text that frames the image attempts to contain that crisis (the familiar assurance that Asians are “just like” Americans). This oscillation characterizes the still unsettled status of Asia/America.

The next chapter extends this discussion of the body to the realm of literary aesthetics and the narration of Asian/American subjectivity. The notion of following the illusory ideal form of otherness into an assimilated core of national identity, as transacted upon the facial contours and bodies of the Asian/American, finds similar articulation in the imaginative constructions of the Asian body in Asian American literary texts. The plasticity that now informs a notion of modern and postmodern assimilation (not only imaginable, but now surgically and cybernetically and biologically enactable as well) informs as well the narration of Asian America. Culture, here, is thus placed within a politics of socialization and distantiation, the body in its narrative formation imbricated within a discourse of a particularly racialized negotiation of social subjectivity.

"desired Oriental shape." Eugene Franklin Wong cites a detailed description of the "advanced" techniques used to transform Shirley MacLaine into a geisha in a film (*My Geisha*) that explicitly thematizes the ability of a white to pass as Asian:

The technicians mixed a batch of dental plaster—a highly refined and smooth type of plaster of Paris—and poured it into the wax impression [of MacLaine's eyes]. When that hardened, we removed the wax and had a perfect reproduction of the top half of the familiar MacLaine face. It was on this model that we then proceed to work with modeling clay, curving the eye to the desired Oriental shape. Through another series of wax impressions and dental-plaster castings, we were finally able to bake rubber eyepieces fashioned from the clay additions we had sculpted into the plaster reproduction of her upper face.

These complicated procedures took four days, at the end of which time [Wally] summoned Shirley back to the lab. [He] glued on the eye-pieces with spirit gum, and to give the eyes a further slant [he] glued an invisible flesh-colored plastic tab to the skin near each of her temples. Rubber bands, attached to the tabs and hooked together at the top of her head, under a concealed wig, pulled up the corners of her eyes. With brown contact lenses obscuring her bright blue eyes, Shirley looked as Oriental as the Japanese Empress. (42–43)

49. *Variety* 17 (Jan. 1933).

50. Priscilla Wald (personal communication) points out that Asther's "yellow face" can be contrasted to Megan's partial transformation into May-li in the film's diegesis. Crucially, in both cases this "transformation" is partial, and discloses in stereoscopic fashion both the image aspired to and the traces of the former identity. Wald points out that Capra says Asther doesn't appear Caucasian, which is different from saying that he appears Asian.

51. Spence, 387f. See also Isaacs, 155f. For Pearl Buck, see Peter Conn, *Pearl S. Buck: A Cultural Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

52. See Isaacs, 79, for interviews with Americans who stated they preferred to see Asians in books and films, rather than encounter them in reality.

53. In James, 123.

54. Ibid., 127.

55. Althusser, 28f.

56. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 56.

Chapter 3: Written on the Face

1. Bryan Turner, 190. See also the essays collected in Featherstone et al. for a useful set of meditations on the sociology of the body. Among other things, this anthology connects recent scholarship with the all-important work of Foucault, as well as with the work of Deleuze and Guattari. See in particular the essay by Scott Lash. Also see Donald Lowe for a Marxist analysis of the body in late capitalism.

2. See Szwed for a study of the racial body as expression of racial culture.

3. "Human Migration and the Marginal Man," originally published in *The American Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 6 (May 1928): 881–93. Reprinted in R. E. Park, *Race and Culture*, 353.

4. R. E. Park, *ibid.*, 346. See R. Young, *Colonial Desire*, for further discussion of the history of hybridity in colonialist discourse.

5. R. E. Park, introduction to Stonequist, xviii.

6. Ibid.

7. Stonequist, 2.

8. Ibid., 221.

9. R. E. Park, *Race and Culture*, 379, note 3.

10. Ibid., 379.

11. *Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol. 2, 505. For a discussion of these findings with regard to contemporary issues of "refugee transformation" (addressed in Chap. 7), see Tollefson, *Alien Winds*, 45ff.

12. *Immigration Report*, 2: 505.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 506, 527.

15. R. E. Park, "Racial Assimilation in Secondary Groups," *Publications of the American Sociological Association* 8 (1914): 71. Quoted in R. E. Park, *Race and Culture*, 353.

16. In R. E. Park, *Race and Culture*, 244–55. First published in *Survey Graphic* 56 (May 1926): 135–39.

17. R. E. Park, 247.

18. Ibid., 249–50. Goffman's work reads social behavior precisely as a "performance" played according to intuited rules and protocols in order to gain certain benefits. Yet the reception of this performance is always fraught with the possibility of failure, of "losing face." We might read the increasing anxiety over performance and identity in the corporatized world of the 1950s and 1960s as taking place at the same time as racial tensions manifest another threat to white male identity. We will touch on this subject again in Chap. 9.

19. R. E. Park, 247.

20. Ibid., 244.

21. Ibid., 250. Here he is mistranslating—the term is to "lose face," not to "lose one's face." The latter is far too individually focused, and detached from the intensely collective phenomenon of "face."

22. Ibid., 250.

23. Ibid., 251.

24. Ibid., 248.

25. Stonequist, 105.

26. Palmer, 163f.

27. Chieng Fu Lung, "A Chinese Student and Western Culture," 24–38.

28. McCurdy provides the estimate of "in excess of 250,000 double eyelid operations performed annually in the Orient" (4).

29. The fact that Matsunaga is Asian American is not lost on Irene Chang, who writes on the subject for the *New York Times*. See "For Asians in the U.S., a New Focus on Eye Surgery."

Eugenia Kaw's excellent article discusses the evolution and perpetuation of normative discourses of occidental beauty and the stigmatization of the Asian face, and is

attentive to the economic logic of this esthetic industry. Indeed, all the accounts I read of the new popularity of this surgery abroad (in both daily newspapers and professional journals) contain some hierarchy of First World/Third World cosmetic industries. The most expensive (i.e., the best) surgery is performed in the United States, of course; those wanting to save money suffer from botched jobs: sutures in Korea come loose, etc. For a first-person account of motivations for the surgery and reflections on the operation, see Iwata.

30. The specifically *schizophrenic* aspect of this notion of imagining another observing one and assuming certain identificatory dynamics therein is discussed in detail in Chap. 9.

31. For a discussion of using racial features to ascertain and predict behavior, see Szwed.

32. Cited in Kaw, 85.

33. DuCille, 13.

34. See Kaw.

35. Millard, "Peregrinations," 325.

36. We might thus locate Palmer in between R. E. Park's and Millard's positions—Palmer believes that the physical and the psychic are mutually forming.

37. And here it would not be inappropriate to draw a link between such "progressive" attachments to science and the claims of eugenacists in the early part of the century. For example, see Haller, and Kevles.

38. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 178.

39. Millard, *Principalization*, 98.

40. Newsweek, June 3, 1996, page 60.

41. Nachman, "The Lure of Interracial Romance," 21.

42. Currently, "mixedness" is enjoying a highly publicized, positive articulation, due largely to the rising fame of the young multiracial golfer Tiger Woods. In early May of 1997, both *Time* and *Newsweek* ran stories on interracial marriage and changing attitudes toward mixed race in the United States. See Jack E. White, and Leland and Beals.

43. *Time* tells us: "The face of America has been dramatically altered in the final years of the twentieth century. America's face is not just about physiognomy, or even color. . . . It is about the very complexion of the country, the endless and fascinating profusion of peoples, cultures, languages and attitudes that make up the great national pool" (3).

44. Berlant's essay gives a provocative reading of this *Time* cover, and compares it to *Time's* 1985 special issue on immigration. In Chap. 9 I further develop these ideas on the shift from modernity to postmodernity and its relation to issues of race and ethnicity.

45. *Time* describes the process:

Time chose a software package called Morph 2.0, produced by Gryphon, to run on a Macintosh Quadra 900. The Morph 2.0 is an offspring of Hollywood's sophisticated special-effects equipment. . . .

Morph 2.0 enabled *Time* to pinpoint key facial features on the photos of the 14 people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds chosen for the chart. Electronic dots defined head size, skin color, hair color and texture, eyebrows, the contours of the lips, nose and eyes, even laugh lines around the mouth. The eyes in particular required many key points to

make them as detailed as possible; otherwise the results would be very erratic. Similarly, miscalculating the dimensions of an upper lip only slightly, for example, could badly skew the resulting face. . . .

Sometimes pure volume counts. The more information extracted from a given feature, the more likely that feature is to dominate the cybernetic offspring. Even when the program is weighted 50–50, if an African man has more hair than a Vietnamese woman, his hair will dominate; the same thing applies to larger lips or a jutting jaw. One of our tentative unions produced a distinctly feminine face—sitting atop a muscular neck and hairy chest. Back to the mouse on that one. (66)

46. For pacification and race, see Chap. 6.

47. Bell, 24–31.

48. Similar arguments of Asian Americans appearing in certain valued venues "out of proportion" to their demographic representation are of course found in the college admissions controversies of the 1980s. See Dana Takagi for an excellent study.

49. In Chaps. 9 and 10 we will specifically address the narrative of Scott's film, as well as the issue of cyberspace.

Chapter 4: Transacting Culture

1. A "classic" text in this regard is Milton Murayama's *All I Asking For Is My Body*, which I discuss in the appendix to this study.

2. I thank Sau-ling Wong for first bringing this novel to my attention with regard to this topic.

3. Throughout this chapter's discussion of the "presentation" of the Asian/American subject, one can profit from Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, in which Goffman, on observing "everyday life," discovers an open theater of specific social "performance." He considers "the way in which the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them" (xi). Here this analysis is complicated by the racial and ethnic aspect of such performances, how the racial other may not be able to assert such control, and how his or her racial identity may be deployed by others.

4. See my "Toshio Mori and the Attachments of Spirit" for another mode of reading Mori.

5. Frank Chin notes that Chinese American boys were enlisted in minstrel shows as blackface performers (see Chin, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers," 18–19). The dynamics of staging race are being studied by, among others, James Moy and Vincente Rafael. The issue of the presentation of one race by actors of different races of course informs the core of the *Miss Saigon* debates.

6. And to make the entry into the "universal" more fraught, even when the minority subject acquires the cultural capital of the Other it may not be enough. In the cultural politics that leverages a racist national subjectivity even as it presumes upon universal value, entrance can be constantly deferred, as is evident in the epigraph that

begins this chapter. Hence “entry” can be constantly withheld, and the universal cautiously protected against fulfilling its promise of inclusivity against its will. Etienne Balibar notes precisely the same strategy: “If it must be admitted that French nationality includes innumerable successive generations of migrants, their spiritual incorporation will be justified by their capacity to assimilate, understood as a predisposition to Frenchness, but the question can always be raised (as in the past about the *conversos* under the Inquisition) whether this assimilation is not superficial, mere appearance” (Balibar, “Class Racism,” 285).

7. “Psychopathologie des Comics,” in *Les temps modernes*, May 1949, 919ff. Cited in Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 147.

8. Shoyu itself is an ambiguous symbol. At once it marks ethnicity, but, in the context of the internment, it marks a weird kind of misrepresentation—internees were given shoyu has an all-purpose condiment for everything from rice to pancakes. The boys, upon hearing that the Kid’s constant nose-drippings are caused by eating too much shoyu, stop using it themselves. Their disgust stems from a striking, conflated image of themselves as Japanese *as imagined by the Other*—they are irrevocably “Japs.”

9. Nevertheless, despite the negativity found in each of these narratives, the sense I have underscored of predetermination and, indeed, the overdetermination of identification, it is crucial to note as well the complex and uneven deployments of identificatory markers. For example, Hayashi and Abramson’s study of “self identity” of Japanese American internees reveals at once the need to disaggregate any analysis of this phenomenon by gender and generation, as well as other differential categories. Such analyses show how Asian/American subjects renegotiate even the given terms of Asian Americanness, to different effect. Besides Hayashi and Abramson, see Gordon Nakagawa’s essay on the subject.

10. She is told by a prospective employer: “I’m just tipping you off. If you want to make a decent salary or to be recognized for your own work, and not as somebody’s secretary, get a job where you will not be discriminated against because you are a woman, a field in which your sex will not be considered before your ability” (234).

11. I thank Priscilla Wald for her careful reading of this analysis, and her suggestions.

Chapter 5: Citizens and Subnations

1. Garth, 71, 75f, 83f. Quoted in Carlson and Colburn, 35f.

2. Bean, 94ff; in Carlson and Colburn, 105f. See Gossett, chapter four, for an extensive account of craniology and racial categorization.

3. This schematization has not always been true historically. In the nineteenth century, studies claimed that “black and Asian immigrants . . . were culturally deemed to be somewhere between ‘half civilized’ Mexican and ‘uncivilized’ Indian populations” (Almaguer, 8). In other instances during this period, Asians were likened to the “lowest” group—California Indians—on the basis of the theory that the North American and Asian land masses were once contiguous. The shift in perspective is thus quite significant.

I thank Michael Omi for contributing information on this topic, and for his many good suggestions.

4. Quoted in Gossett, 150.

5. Rushton is heavily cited in that contemporary classic of scientific racism, *The Bell Curve*.

6. This schematization is found in Rushton, 162, fig. 7.4, which reproduces a graph from a 1992 study.

7. Smith, xiv.

8. Ibid., xiv.

9. See Sau-ling Wong’s essay “Ethnicizing Gender” for a fine discussion of ethnicization and gender.

10. C. Y. Lee, *The Flower Drum Song*, 244.

11. See Hamamoto for a wider examination of televisual representations of Asians in America and the relation to national and international politics to such productions.

12. See Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 120f.

13. See Balibar, “Paradoxes of Universality.” See also the special issue of *differences* (vol. 7, Spring 1995) on the politics of the universal.

14. See Žižek, “Identity and Its Vicissitudes.”

15. I would insist that, as similar as each evocation of the model minority myth may be to another, it is crucial to note the specific historical context of each evocation and the functions it serves.

16. Cf. Cumings (40), who notes “the inability of elites to do more than oscillate between free trade and protectionism, between admiration for Japan’s success and alarm at its new prowess.”

17. For a critique of this thesis and specific data that disaggregates and specifies “success,” see Casas; S. Chan, *Asian Americans*, 167–83; Grove and Wu; Hazlett; Hurl and Kim; Bok-Lim Kim; Osajima; Sue and Okazaki; and essays in Yun. For a comparable case in Britain, see Errol Lawrence.

18. See Orfield, “Race.”

19. John W. Connor’s findings seem to confirm Petersen’s notion that the more assimilated Japanese Americans become, the lower their academic achievement. See Connor, “Changing Trends in Japanese American Academic Achievement.” Also see McLeod, “The Oriental Express.”

20. For example, *Time*, July 8, 1985 (“Immigrants: The Changing Face of America”); *Newsweek*, August 9, 1993 (“America—Still the Melting Pot?”).

Chapter 6: Disintegrations and Consolidations

1. I want to underscore that I will be discussing the *image* of Korean Americans. As Elaine Kim notes, Koreans were not heard from within the mass media’s coverage of the rebellion, except for highly selective and fragmented representations. I want to make clear that I am arguing for a particular understanding of the functionality, and *not* assuming