Of Other Freedoms: Illiberal Aesthetics and Disruptive Futures in Nieh Hualing's *Mulberry and Peach*

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July 2020

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes Nieh Hualing's 1976 novel *Sangqing yu Taohong,* or *Mulberry and Peach: Two Women of China* as a literary imagination of alternative freedoms that refute the hegemony of Cold War American liberalism. As a refugee of both the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China, Nieh became a literary celebrity at the University of Iowa first as a student at the Iowa Writers' Workshop and then as the co-founder and co-director of the International Writing Project. Not simply a literary freedom fighter heroically escaping totalitarianism, Nieh was also a dedicated agent of a US public diplomacy mission that spread positive propaganda about American liberalism. Yet, *Mulberry and Peach* offers a disquieting critique of US imperial violence, especially through the Immigration and Naturalization Services. With this contradiction between work and auteur, I argue that Nieh's novel imagines alternative notions of migrant freedom foreclosed and delegitimized by her career as a Cold Warrior. To construct this argument, I bridge discursive gaps between scholarship from diplomatic history, East Asian area studies, critical migration studies, and American studies. My first chapter situates the novel in a genealogy of Chinese migrant encounters with the US immigration apparatus to offer a critique of liberal border-crossing and gesture toward an illiberal freedom found in defying the border's logics of autonomous individuality and national-belonging. My second chapter interprets the novel as a disruptive object in the archival history of Nieh's migration and career to forward my concept of an illiberal freedom contingent upon the possibility of imagining disruptive futures that have been discarded and cast aside by heteronormative liberal citizenship.

PRÉCIS

Cette thèse prend le roman *Sangqing yu Taohong* ou *Mulberry and Peach : Two Women of China* écrit par Nieh Hualing en 1976 pour une imagination littéraire de libertés alternatives qui réfutent l'hégémonie du libéralisme américain pendant la guerre froide. En tant que réfugiée de la République populaire de Chine et de la République de Chine, Nieh est devenue une célébrité littéraire à l'University of Iowa, d'abord comme étudiante au Iowa Writers' Workshop, puis comme cofondatrice et codirectrice de l'International Writing Program. Pas seulement un combattant de la liberté littéraire qui s'échappa héroïquement au totalitarisme, elle fût aussi un agent de la diplomatie publique des États-Unis qui diffusait une propagande positive au sujet du libéralisme américain. Pourtant, *Mulberry and Peach* fournit une critique de la violence impériale de l'États-Unis et surtout de son bureau d'immigration et naturalisation. À partir de cette contradiction entre œuvre et écrivaine, je soutiens que le roman de Nieh conçoit des modes de liberté migratoire en outre de sa carrière comme fonctionnaire impériale. À cette fin, je comble les lacunes discursives entre les études d'histoire diplomatique, les études régionales de l'Asie de l'Est, les études critiques sur les migrations et les études américaines. Mon premier chapitre situe le roman dans une généalogie des rencontres des migrants chinois avec la frontière américaine pour offrir une critique de la romance du franchissement libre. Ici, je postule que le roman geste vers une liberté illibérale qui se trouve à défier les logiques du dispositif frontalier qui soutient les dogmes de l'individualité autonome et de l'appartenance nationale. Mon deuxième chapitre interprète le roman comme un objet perturbateur dans l'archive historique de la migration et de la carrière de Nieh. Ce chapitre soumet mon concept d'une liberté illibérale qui exige la possibilité d'imaginer des futurs disruptifs qui sont refusés et illégitimisés par la citoyenneté libérale hétéronormative.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without all the encounters I've made in the last six years. First, I'd like to thank my advisor Gal Gvili who challenged me to find my way through East Asian area studies and suggested this project to me in the first place. Without her encouragement, exhortations, and critique, I would not have been able to push myself to explore the ideas that brought this thesis together. I have been incredibly fortunate to have an advisor who allowed me to wander as far as I wanted and always managed to bring me back on track.

Thank you to all the professors at McGill who have introduced me to various methods, disciplines, and worlds and stirred me to entangle them together. Classes with Michelle Cho, Shanon Fitzpatrick, Yuriko Furuhata, Maria Hwang, Laura Madokoro, and Jeremy Tai have built the foundations of my knowledge as well as the models of pedagogy towards which I aspire.

Thank you to the Department of East Asian Studies, McGill Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council for funding this work with travel grants and stipends. None of this assistance would have been possible without the ever kind administrative work of Lynda Bastien and all the wonderful staff in Sherbrooke 688.

Special thanks goes to the staff at University of Iowa Special Collections for giving me additional time and tirelessly getting box after box of archival material for me. I am especially grateful to Lindsay Moen who responded to many confused emails with the utmost support. Thank you as well to all the kind locals at the Dublin Underground, Pullmans, and Prairie Lights for making Iowa City live up to its midwestern hospitality and then some.

I would also be remiss without thanking my friends here and elsewhere. It's impossible to put into the right words the way that they make life meaningful outside work. Thank you to the always humorous academics who have made the East Asian Studies department a place of constant banter: Jean-Mathieu Beauchemin, Dahye Kim, Daniel Murray, and Hang Wu. To Mansen Yu, Ashvin Pradhan-Shenoy, Emily García, Edna Wan, and Chloe Palmer-Laporte, thank you all so much for all the time, care, and joy over the years and beyond.

Finally, thank you so much to my parents who have always given me the love and freedom to imagine migrant futures.

INTRODUCTION

In September 1979, writers from the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the Mainland and the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan came together for the first time at a literary summit called "the Chinese Weekend" hosted in Iowa City by the University of Iowa (UI) and its International Writing Program (IWP). Masterminding this epochal gathering were the IWP co-directors: Chinese novelist Nieh Hualing and her American husband, the poet Paul Engle. United by a hope that literary exchange could allow liberal freedom to defeat communism, the pair had been trying for over a decade to reconnect the two Chinas split by the Chinese Civil War (1937-49). For Nieh, herself exiled from both PRC and ROC since 1964, the gathering marked a cathartic reconciliation of the two Chinas that expelled her. Hoping for a world without ideological warfare, she claimed this event to be "completely without political motivation or intent," driven by a passion that "we are all Chinese, we are happy to be Chinese" (Nieh 1979).

In this midwestern American idyll, the reunion of PRC and ROC writers did not mark a violent clash of communism and liberalism but a congregation of different filaments to Chinese ethnonationalism. After debating the future of writing on China, in Chinese, and about being Chinese, the writers came to a common call to resurrect "an undying, continuing spirit and essence that lies behind all Chinese literature since the beginning of Chinese writing" deterritorialized through literary freedom (Hsu 1979). Stoking these flames, Engle praised his hosts for "reaffirming their Chineseness in the most typically American state in the USA" (Engle, 1979). Similarly, the PRC's state newspaper *People's Daily* ran an article lauding how the writers from various Chinas "cherished a fiery ethnonational fervor" (Yu 1979).[1] Foreboding

[1]怀着炽烈的民族感情. All Chinese sources are my translations.

the roots seeking 寻根 movement of the 1980s based upon a search for such primordial and chauvinist notions of Chineseness, this weekend at Iowa cast away the identity politics and disputes of the early Cold War in favor of what Wang Hui (2011) has called the "depoliticization of politics." Relegating the traumatic battles between liberalism and socialism, capitalism and communism to the past, the Chinese Weekend attempted to settle ideology and dissensus with a collective cherishing of a revitalized ethnicity that liberated their artistic pursuits.

With the communist takeover of the mainland in 1949, writers divided between the ROC and PRC had no channels for official communication as they were forced to choose between the literatures of the communist or liberal worlds. While the US had backed the ROC's Nationalist Party since its emergence in 1927, the 1972 Mainland visit of President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger began to unravel nearly five decades of liberal Sino-US relations by seeking to undo the diplomatic and economic embargo of the PRC's Communist Party. The 1972 meeting marked a death knell for the liberal bloc's defense of the ROC from communism as the US and PRC engaged in peace talks amid both countries' increased hostilities with the Soviet Union. Seeking a new Cold War strategy, Nixon and Kissinger hoped to convince the PRC of a shared security interest in forming a united front against the Soviets with the Vietnam War proving increasingly disastrous for the US and the 1969 Sino-Soviet Border Conflict ominously exacerbating the Sino-Soviet split (Goh 2005).

The resultant agreement, commonly known as "the Shanghai Communiqué," established that "progress toward the normalization of relations between China and the United States is in the interests of all countries" (US DoS 1972). The purported need for such progress is "peace in Asia," that would "[fulfill] the aspirations of peoples and nations for freedom and progress [since] the United States supports individual freedom and social progress for all the peoples of

the world, free of outside pressure or intervention." Emphasizing freedom and progress, this communiqué stressed an underlying desire to normalize Sino-US relations through a shared belief in American liberalism as the hegemonic truth of geopolitics.

It was not until 1979 that the Shanghai Communiqué became official policy as the management of the 1973 Oil Crisis, Nixon's impeachment trials from 1973-74, the 1975 Fall of Saigon, the end of the Cultural Revolution, and regime change following Chairman Mao Zedong's 1976 death took precedence to normalizing Sino-US relations. As Mao's death in 1976 ended communist governance, the PRC took its long-awaited liberal turn as the suppressed faction of market-oriented reformists led by Deng Xiaoping took over the politburo. With the PRC increasingly distancing itself from global soviet communism, the Soviet Union signed a mutual defense treaty with Vietnam in 1978 with a key objective being the containment of the PRC. In 1979, the US formally recognized the PRC as the sole government of "China" and announced an end to official diplomatic ties with the ROC with a second Joint Communiqué as the PRC prepared to enter a war it would win against the newly Soviet-aligned Vietnam in 1979.

Yet, the official recognition of the PRC as the legitimate China took care to assure the ROC that "the people of the United States will maintain cultural, commercial, and other unofficial relations with the people of Taiwan" (White House 1978). Taking precedence to commercial and ominous "other" relations, culture would take over for conventional diplomacy. This did not come out of nowhere as cultural exchange has been a central operation of American control over the ROC since their partnership's inception. In this context, the Chinese Weekend must be understood as much more than just a depoliticized US literary homecoming of China, "lost" by President Harry Truman with the communist revolution. The UI campus newspaper pronounced as much in celebrating how "Iowa's China policy, which seems better established, at

times, than that of the United States government, proved itself once again [as] participants celebrated increasingly open diplomatic relation between the U.S. and mainland China by sharing work and ideas in informal meetings" at the 1980 Chinese Weekend (Balk 1980).

No stranger to geopolitics euphemized as cultural exchange, the UI had been a clearinghouse of US State Department funds since the 1950s through its vaunted creative writing programs: the Iowa Writer's Workshop (IWW) and the IWP. Driven to correct America's philistine reputation, the IWW and IWP were key academic battalions of the US psychological warfare project of public diplomacy that sought to sway foreign governmental, academic, and popular publics through the spread of positive propaganda on American liberalism. A subset of public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy circulated producers and their work that celebrated individual genius, the freedom of imagination, and the artistic incentives held in the free market only attainable by following the American model (Saunders 1999; Barnhisel 2012).

At the helm of this literary Cold War was the Iowan Rhodes Scholar and Yale Younger Poets laureate Paul Engle who held a lifelong dream of transforming Iowa from a farmland backwater to the literary capital of the free world. Accordingly, many scholars have written on Engle's belief in modernist literature as the distillation of freedom and individuality (McGurl 2010), his imperialist motives and state liaisons (Bennett 2015), and his patriarchal rule over post-WWII US literary production and pedagogy (Dowlin 2019).

Yet, very little has been written on the role of his wife and co-director of the IWP, Nieh Hualing who followed the ROC to Taiwan on the eve of the 1949 establishment of the PRC and was later ferried to Iowa by the imperial transit of cultural diplomacy in 1964. While the Nieh at the Chinese Weekend seemed averse to politics in favor of art, her relationship to the geopolitics of freedom and public diplomacy is more enigmatic. Despite a career spreading the word of

American exceptionalism, her 1976 novel *Sangqing yu Taohong* 桑青與桃紅, or *Mulberry and Peach: Two Women of China*, impishly critiques US empire and the PRC-ROC split. In the study that follows, I reconfigure the iconoclastic *Mulberry and Peach* as a disruptive archival object in the history of Sino-US cultural diplomacy and migration policy to theorize a notion of freedom in defiance of both liberalism and the ethnonationalism of the two Chinas.

Exile and Free China

Born in 1925 in the south-central Chinese province of Hubei, Nieh grew up in the leisured class only to be thrown into an adult life of perpetual exile, expulsion, and deracination as revolutionary struggles swept across China. After completing a bachelor's degree in English literature at the National University of Nanjing, Nieh moved to Taiwan in 1949 for fear that the communist army, who killed her Nationalist Party father a decade earlier, would target her and her family with the impending establishment of the PRC. Exile in Taiwan left her in "a kind of intellectual, literary desert" as the Nationalist Party allowed no discourse with the PRC (Nieh 1981, 12). However, she found a wide array of American resources as the US State Department actively spread literature, film, and radio, while the ROC literati, almost exclusively educated in the US, rerouted their cultural connections to the island.

When the Nationalist Party fled to Taiwan in 1949, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek established a police state built on a regime of martial law called "White Terror" that vigorously suppressed and scrutinized the population for possible communist allegiances. While the US had its anti-communist purges of McCarthyism from the late 1940s into the mid-1950s, White Terror persisted until 1987 to preserve the rule of the Nationalist Party and ward off infiltrators detracting from the exiled state's mission of retaking the mainland. Just as McCarthyism

represented a defense of liberal American values against the Red Scare, the US initially tolerated the White Terror to protect the ROC's model liberalism in post-WWII American designs for East Asia. While the US had known of Chiang's autocracy and anti-intellectualism since the late 1930s, the two sides came to a tacit exchange where Chiang's absolutist governance would be whitewashed through his active funneling of intellectuals to the US and receipt of pro-US advisors. As Madeline Hsu (2015) argues, this concession from Chiang to tolerate liberal intellectuals was of utmost importance to maintain relations with the US that funded the ROC's infrastructural, economic, and military development in hopes of retaking the mainland.

Yet, Chiang would soon move to silence those who challenged his authority. The turning point was the 1960 crackdown of *Free China Journal* 自由中國半月刊 editor Lei Chen and three other writers who published editorials lambasting Chiang's undemocratic rule and refusal of multi-party elections. The state closure of the *Free China* magazine in 1961 effectively breached the ROC-US understanding that the US would turn a blind eye to Chiang's authoritarian tactics if he did the same to liberal intellectuals. A flagship publication of this deal, *Free China* was a magazine founded with Chiang's approval and support in 1949 by the preeminent liberal intellectual Hu Shih. From the US, Hu oversaw the journal to galvanize the ROC middle class to fight "International Communist terrorism" by starting a "Free China movement" which had the ultimate goal of retaking the mainland in the name of liberal democratic freedom (Hu quoted in Chiou 1995, 75-76). While it offered hope to intellectuals assuaged by the ROC's championing of so-called freedom, *Free China* was also backed by the Asia Foundation, a CIA front organization, that funded cultural production in Asia to give the

appearance of an organic liberal affinity among Asians.[2] Chiang's assault on *Free China* was then not only an attack on the liberal press but an attack on the US Cold War security apparatus that had been the ROC chief champion.

With the White Terror's escalation, the 1960s was a period of intense exodus as many fled for America as intellectual refugees through the machinations of the US State Department that had been funding, networking, and training intellectuals since the ROC's arrival in Taiwan (Oyen 2015). An employee of *Free China*, Nieh became one such émigré. After the magazine shuttered, Nieh found work with the State Department's foreign information bureau, the United States Information Service (USIS), as a translator of American literature. It was through these overlapping literary, diplomatic, and security networks that Nieh made her way through the geopolitical entanglements of the PRC, ROC, and the US to Iowa as Paul Engle's student and translator in 1964. Within three years, they co-founded the IWP that became the USIS's de facto stateside retreat for writers from countries at threat from either communism within or encroachment from without.

By the 1970s, Engle and Nieh had divorced their first spouses and wed as Nieh naturalized as a US citizen and made Iowa her new home. In the decades that followed, the pair tapped upon Engle's network of oil barons, military contractors, philanthropic foundations, and government cultural bureaus to shuttle writers from Europe, Africa, and Asia to learn the ways of American freedom. Consolidating the UI as a global literary powerhouse, the IWP became an international match to the IWW's stateside reign as the preeminent writer's haven.

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[2] See Klein (2017) and Shen (2017) for more on the Asia Foundation's work in Korea and Hong Kong respectively. Before the CIA declassified its files on the Asia Foundation in 2015, critics had long been skeptical to *Free China*'s "exaggerated view of the power of the 'free world' in general and of the United States in particular characterized their writings along with charges of the inhuman tyranny of Communism" (Mei 1963).

The only in-depth study of Nieh's career thus far, Yi-hung Liu's doctoral dissertation (2019) problematizes assertions that the IWP was a purely literary organization without politics. She does so by contextualizing Nieh's career in the geopolitical contestations of the legitimate China by the PRC, ROC, and US. From these historical and social conditions, Liu argues that the US circulates liberalism as a strategy of domination and coercion as the two UI literary programs should be understood as the product Cold War geopolitical conflicts. From these imperial networks, influential writers such as Nieh were able to use "Cold War freedom" and its celebration of individual imagination and creativity to live out and generate alternative lives to authoritarianism in Asia. The Chinese Weekend was one such event that reconfigured the conflicting Chinas of the 1949 split into a so-called literary reunion.

A key absence in Liu's work is an engagement with the theoretical possibilities imagined by other global organizations during the Cold War such as the Third World and Non-Aligned movements of the 1950s and 1960s that positioned themselves explicitly against US Cold War freedom. The theories of internationalism and liberation imagined by decolonial Pan-Africanism, Pan-Asianism, and Pan-Arabism at events such as the 1955 Bandung Conference attest to what Robin Kelley (2003) has called the "freedom dreams" of the racialized set against imperialist liberalism. Further, as Vijay Prashad (2008) has argued, non-aligned and decolonial countries may have differed in their understandings of freedom but a unifying political stance of these alternative freedoms is the resistance and rejection of the freedoms offered by the US and the Soviets. For the decolonial leftist thinkers in Asia, America, and Africa of Kelley and Prashad's studies such as Che Guevara, Sukarno, Zhou Enlai, Kwame Nkrumah, Aimé Césaire, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Vicki Garvin among others, freedom is not found inside liberalism, but rather by rejecting its monopoly over the freedom to imagine otherwise. In the Cold War, this meant a

third option outside of the US capitalism and Soviet communism binary. Moreover, as Lisa Lowe (2015) has argued, challenging and unsettling liberal freedom is a paramount critical gesture as it is the material realities of colonial domination that permit liberal humanism and thus Cold War freedom to emerge and attain hegemony in the first place.

Consequently, the key presumption in Liu's study is that there exists a progressive binary between freedom, a post-WWII liberalism and its attendant ideals of private individuality, and the unfreedom of the authoritarian PRC, ROC, among other East Asian post-WWII states. Limited to such an authoritarian-liberal dyad, Liu's work takes for granted that liberal freedom can exist on its own without external references or historical materialist conditions. While situating herself in decolonial and anti-militaristic scholarship, her championing of "Cold War freedom" as an alternative to authoritarianism reifies the colonial and militarized logics of the Cold War without critiquing the worlds delimited by the militarized freedom of US empire.

A way to push Liu's notion of freedom is to engage the history of Nieh and the UI's creative writing public diplomacy projects with critical migration studies—glaringly absent in the small body of scholarship on Nieh. This is invaluable as decolonial and anti-imperialist scholarship of the transpacific world comes out of the work of migration scholars who investigate the theoretical possibilities generated from both the creative and material experiences of migrants. A critique of Cold War freedom thus requires a closer engagement with the calls of these scholars to question the material and ideological obligations imposed upon migrants through their liberation to the US (Nguyen 2012); the "afterlives" that have been foreclosed by wars fought for liberalism (Espiritu 2014); and modes of justice beyond liberal frameworks of individuality and nationality (Yoneyama 2016). From this decolonial anti-militaristic stance, the freedom circulated by the liberal world during the Cold War was and continues to be a predatory

discourse justifying racial capitalist imperial expansion through accusations of authoritarianism in regions opposed to liberalism. Repurposing freedom without addressing questions of displacement, dispossession, and containment would then reaffirm Cold War imperialism and its attendant logics of domination.

Illiberal Aesthetics and Alternative Freedoms

This thesis examines Nieh's entanglements in cultural diplomacy and liberal geopolitics by putting her life and work in dialogue with the sociohistorical context of Cold War migration that provides the material conditions of her experience of freedom. My critique of liberal freedom then offers an account of illiberal freedom based upon the possibilities foreclosed and delegitimized by Cold War liberalism and its enshrinement of liberal individualism and aspirational citizenship. In Nieh's case, I argue that such an illiberal freedom beckons through her novel *Mulberry and Peach* that recounts the misadventures of two women consecutively exiled by the Sino-Japanese war, the Chinese civil war, the White Terror, and the US immigration apparatus. While it would be odd to think that Nieh, one of the key actors of global literary liberalism after WWII, would write fiction that challenges liberalism's key tenet of freedom, it is the precisely the aesthetic possibility of fiction that allows interpretation against what seem like the logics and contexts of its content.

Not a set of representative techniques, literary tropes, or generic forms, my use of aesthetics draws upon Jacques Rancière's (2004) understanding of the politics of aesthetics based upon reflexivity and relationality. In his model, the aesthetic describes an awareness of how formal techniques, the meaning of content, and the historical setting foreclose and limit the possibilities of interpretations. Through this awareness, the aesthetic gestures to a refusal to

comply with the meanings permitted and grounded in the normative representational conventions and historical imperatives of a given object, genre, or era. Aesthetics is thus a political act based on a twofold process of identifying and reorganizing the sensibilities and practices that normalize artistic conventions, hegemonic ideologies, histories, and interpretation—a disruption and reconfiguration of subjectivity and its social formations.

Building upon Rancière, Kandice Chuh (2019) formulates an aesthetics of "illiberal humanisms" and its imaginaries that call for attention to the care and appreciation of notions of human and life experienced beyond liberal dogmas of sovereignty, autonomy, and individuality. The aesthetics of illiberal humanism then attend to the relations and entanglements—sensibilities—between race, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, and other categories of identity that normalize dominant subjectivities, social formations, and their institutions that produce an organization of humans and lives based on binaries of adequacy-inadequacy and valuable-abject. An illiberal aesthetics locates and unfurls liberalism as a set of relations that domineeringly withhold and "crumple" alternative histories, freedoms, and humanisms into deterministic precepts of progress, individualism, and possession (20).

Narrating flights from normative society, subjectivity, and institutions, *Mulberry and Peach* provides a stark contrast to Nieh's career lived in the shadow of Cold War liberalism. Nieh's novel follows the consecutive displacements of a woman named Mulberry who leaves her home in Hubei after her mother expels her; the Mainland after the communists take over; and then Taiwan after the police arrest her husband. She finds refuge in the US, yet her failure to acquire permanent residency and an adulterous pregnancy drive her to insanity as her persona dissociates from her body. In her place, a new persona emerges: Peach. Instead of Mulberry's world-wearied depression and search for settlement, Peach refutes all the social conventions that

weigh on Mulberry as she assumes life as an undocumented migrant ready to raise her unborn child outside society. Spanning from Hubei to Iowa, *Mulberry and Peach* seems to reconstruct the historical periodization and geography of Nieh's migratory life. Yet, Nieh's life as a celebrated author in exile and career as a cultural diplomat is unmistakably different from her destitute characters. From this drastic quasi-autobiographical difference, I argue that *Mulberry and Peach* provides an illiberal aesthetics to Nieh's liberal career that connects her life of legitimation, favor, and desirability with the lives abjected in her wake. It is the lives of Mulberry and Peach that must be delegitimized and separated as unworthy and immoral to produce the celebrated life and career of Nieh.

Ultimately, this thesis claims that *Mulberry and Peach* develops an alternative imaginary of migrant illiberal freedom through Peach's denunciation of structures of nationality, border control, and citizenship that gestures to the bodies, collectives, and forms of life delegitimized in the name of Cold War liberalism. Methodologically, my approach to delineate this alternative freedom comes from Shelly Chan's (2018) call to engage the lack of communication between Chinese American, Chinese Overseas, and China studies to evaluate the role of emigrants in shaping the political economic histories of their countries of origin. Moving the other way, I put area studies concerns with Chinese literary forms and the geopolitics of post-WWII East Asian modernity to produce a critique of the liberalism endemic in Asian Americanist interpretations of Nieh as an individual expelled from unfreedom who found new purpose in America.

While it would seem that Nieh's novel falls into the category of a "Sinophone" text as an exiled Chinese writer speaking back to the monolithic PRC, I am disinclined to use such a label due to Sinophone studies' insistence on grounding critiques of Chineseness in linguistic discontents that dovetail with US empire's pillars of autonomous identity and authenticity. The

foundational intervention of Sinophone Studies, Shih Shu-Mei's (2008) critique of Chinese diaspora as a totalizing identity that prevents settlement is valuable for considering how Chinese migrants have become the oligarchical settler colonial classes of many Southeast Asian countries. Yet, the field's grounds for refusing Chineseness because of the linguistic hegemony of the PRC is a limited argument that critiques the PRC "regime of authenticity" with a desire to form a Sinophone counterpart (Shih et al 2010). The supposed freedom of marginal Sinophone practices derives in large part from a reified myth of the PRC's monolithic Chineseness that persists through Cold War liberalism's depictions of Chinese monoculture and absolutism. To me, this is particularly due to the unacknowledged debt of Sinophone studies to the legacy of US public diplomacy. In her study of the Asia Foundation in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, Shuang Shen (2017) has intimated as much by showing that the discourse of authenticity championed by Sinophone studies derives from US public diplomacy rhetoric that sowed the seed money of Chinese literary networks to make American freedom seem like authentic local expressions. Yet, like Liu, Shen reads these literary circuits as places where Sinophones could write alternative notions of liberal Chineseness into existence.

From an illiberal position, my central concern is not the construction of radical Chinese identity but the rejection of a need for a subject in the first place—a rejection of the need to desire liberation, individuality, autonomy, and self-determination. Accordingly, I also eschew a label of "Asian American" to both this study and Nieh's novel in heeding Kandice Chuh's (2004) call to rethink Asian American literary studies as a "subjectless" critique that does not construct an ethnic group but rather locates the geopolitical and historical relations that simultaneously produce and deconstruct sexual, racial, and national subjectivities. My study of Nieh and her novel then scrutinizes the failure of normative and desirable subjectivities and

assigned identities to locate alternative theories of freedom that offer a critique of how Cold War liberal freedom produces national subjects at the cost of social relations outside these parameters.

By reading *Mulberry and Peach* as a novel of illiberal aesthetics that generates an alternative form of freedom, I pose the question of how the Chinese literary forms of Nieh's novel critique the impossibility of an authentic Chineseness in relation to the false liberation of US empire. Key to this argument on Nieh and her work is triangulating the blockade between Chinese area studies and Asian American cultural studies through their mutual blind spot to sociological studies and histories of Chinese migration to the US and its intersections with public diplomacy initiatives. While this thesis studies a single author and work, the impulse is not to celebrate her rebellious autonomy or ingenuity. Instead, this thesis aims to use the discord between Nieh, her work, her life, and their larger sociohistorical context to imagine the other possibilities of freedom beyond the liberalism underwriting the structures that have endured.

Chapter one studies the illiberal aesthetics of refusing subjectivity by situating *Mulberry and Peach* in a genealogy of US border policing that has mobilized documentary rationality to use the Chinese woman's body as a boundary-marker for citizenship and residency due to their supposedly incorrigible unfreedom. From this genealogy, I argue that the novel's politics of refusal is not found in border-crossing but in seeking alternative social formations that disrupt the border's state logics from within. The alternative imaginary comes from the Chinese literary genre of the *jianghu* that posits a world of fugitivity, statelessness, and antagonism to bureaucracy that exists inside and in defiance of the state. Through an analysis of Mulberry's expulsions from legal residency and Peach's refusal of subjectivity as flights from normative society, I put the *jianghu* in conversation with the work of Antillean theorist Édouard Glissant

(1997) to posit a relational *jianghu* that wanders and flees not only from society but from subjectivity altogether. The illiberal freedom of this chapter is then the possibility of confronting the border's violence not just by crossing but by resisting its logic to create social relations that defy the border's protection of ethnonationalism, sovereignty, and citizenship.

Chapter two develops a notion of illiberal freedom built upon a rejection of the border's power over identity to argue that *Mulberry and Peach* operates as a disruptive archival object in Nieh's personal life by presenting an alternative future to her career as a domesticated cultural diplomat. This chapter begins from the novel's persistent interrogation of normative sexual conduct to draw upon theorists of queer archival studies such as José Muñoz (1999; 2009), Martin Manalansan (2014), and Gayatri Gopinath (2018) who exhort a method of rewriting alternative futures by attending to the suggestive, disorderly, and inconclusive objects refused by normative archival history. With such a queer inquiry into Nieh's hagiographic migration, an entangled history of public diplomacy at Iowa and Chinese refugee resettlement emerges around Cold War prerogatives of sexual normalization and liberal domestication. Nieh's reputation as a saintly wife to Engle and surrogate mother to their IWP hosts clashes with *Mulberry and Peach*'s depictions of marriage and heterosexuality. Mulberry experiences sex as mess of abusive partners, adultery, and illegitimate pregnancy that make legal status and the semblance of domesticity impossible. Peach's intervention is not to settle into marriage but to refuse notions of family, lineage, and settlement as she sets off, pregnant, in defiance of any claims to her identity, body, or child. The novel's refraction of Nieh's life is then a critique of how her performance of the idealized wife restricts the possibilities of migrant futurity into the straight time of monogamous liberal citizenship. The illiberal freedom of this chapter is found in the possibility of imagining alternatives to migrant futures circumscribed by belonging to a nation-state.

CHAPTER ONE: ILLIBERAL FREEDOM AND THE RELATIONAL *JIANGHU*

A question of borders haunts Asian American immigrant literature. In the canonical Asian American study of literary border-crossing, Sau-Ling Wong calls for a heterogenous and hybrid approach to literary analysis that can analyze "what happens when a literary text of 'Asian' provenance crosses national, political, linguistic, and cultural borders and ends up being claimed by a variety of critical (and pedagogical) practices" (Wong 1999, 130). As Wong's case study, Nieh Hualing's *Mulberry and Peach*, offers unique textual instability due to its various translations, expurgated re-editions, and interpretive flexibility. Wong argues that the novel's solicitation of Anglo-American feminist, Asian American, and Chinese nationalist analyses entwines different geographies, identities, and methods that liberate the critic from disciplinary borders. Subsequent scholarship has studied the novel for its treatment of Chinese, Asian American, and feminist identity politics as well as the political contexts of the novel's various translations and re-editions.[3] Yet, the overuse of "border-crossing" in literary and translation studies also conceals the material, historical, and political violence of borders by celebrating the unique power of the critic and scholar to transcend disciplinary and geopolitical boundaries (Apter 2014). Instead of taking Nieh's novel as a paradigmatic text of border-crossing, I argue that the novel critiques the border's racializing violence through the main character's failure to acquire and ultimate rejection of nationality, citizenship, and belonging—a failure to cross borders.

In four parts, *Mulberry and Peach* traces the traumatic migrations and breakdown of a woman fleeing political and personal crises in China, Taiwan, and the US. Chronologically, she

[3] For critiques that address the entanglements of Chinese, Asian American, and Taiwanese subjectivities see Pai (1976), Cho (2004), and Fitzgerald (2014). For feminist critiques, see Chen (2006) and Fusco (2012). For studies of translation, see Bo (2018).

begins the narrative in part one as Mulberry, stranded on a boat in the Three Gorges during the Sino-Japanese War. As communists besiege Beijing in part two, Mulberry marries into a landlord family and flees the mainland. A fugitive in Taiwan during the third part, she hides out in an attic after her husband embezzles public money. Finally, Mulberry flees to America only for an Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) agent assessing her permanent residency appeal to provoke a mental breakdown as a new persona of Peach emerges and embarks upon a life of wandering. Though repeatedly crossing borders, Mulberry never once traverses the border as a legitimate subject, instead living out refugee, fugitive, and illegal positionalities.

Before this core narrative, the novel begins with a prologue where Peach confronts the INS man as the book's structure frames a conflict with border-crossing. When the man questions her about Mulberry's case file, Peach insists that not only is she not Mulberry, but that she has killed her. Peach then promises to send him all the information she has on Mulberry while on the road. The novel's four parts are then four fictionalized postal parcels from Peach that comprise a letter to the INS man and one of Mulberry's journals from the Three Gorges, Beijing, Taiwan, and the US. An epilogue concludes the novel with the myth of a bird mounting an allegorical assault on geographic borders by attempting to fill up the ocean with stones to bridge lands.

While the prologue and epilogue are in third-person narration, the main text's first-person narrative amounts to a four-part bureaucratic document curated by Peach to sabotage Mulberry's desire to cross the border by revealing all her moral and legal trespasses. A fictional compilation of journals, maps, letters, identification cards, and pictures, this bureaucratic file sacrifices Mulberry to embrace the fugitivity and refusal of legality of becoming an undocumented wanderer. Peach's choice to live in opposition to settlement constitutes a refusal to honor the border's power that would have her submitting herself to the INS. As each letter taunts the INS

man with a trail of false clues and directions to find her, Peach positions the reader and critic scrutinizing the novel as collaborators with the INS man tasked with arbitrating a migrant's case file. While the novel offers a seductive temptation to read through the INS' legislation of border-crossing, Peach's recalcitrant fugitivity invites the reader to instead imagine alternative forms of migrant subjectivity that do not conform to the logics of border-crossing.

By turning down the enticements of border-crossing, *Mulberry and Peach* also directs the reader to what borders govern—the liberal freedom of citizens to move between nation-states. The novel summarily disfigures each of these categories as Mulberry has no recourse to citizenship or nationality and thus political subjectivity. As Peach satirizes the excesses of independence and individuality, a new notion of freedom emerges in border-crossing's place that is predicated on the refusal and contestation of settlement, citizenship, sovereignty, and nationality. This freedom gestures toward an "illiberal aesthetics" that offers an account of lives lived beyond liberal humanism's sanctification of the autonomous individual, sovereign nation-state, and freedom of capitalism (Chuh 2019).

This novel's particular illiberal aesthetic draws upon the *jianghu* 江湖 (literally rivers and lakes) which designates a Chinese literary world of outlaws premised on statelessness, fugitivity, and alternative society. Not simply a genre of leisure, the *jianghu* form has been a central political paradigm for dissidence in Chinese literature, especially through Shi Nai'an's fourteenth century classic novel *Water Margin*. This novel revolves around the adventures of a band of outlaws who have retreated from normal society in favor of the peripheral marshlands of a mountain as they battle supernatural demons, corrupt bureaucrats, and foreign invaders. The novel's enduring popularity has made themes of retreat from the world of governance, a refusal of conventional homes, and a militant aversion to bureaucracy central metaphors in Chinese

vernacular language and culture. *Jianghu* has become a protean phrase that describes various social formations from street vendors, martial arts, governments, and gangsters. In Nieh's novel, the *jianghu* offers a way to understand migration through the political and personal injustices of empire, war, and patriarchy that expel Mulberry from conventional life and settlement, while Peach wanders around the US defiantly opposed to life as a settled subject of the state.

Just as Mulberry's story ends and cedes way to Peach, the novel's *jianghu* transforms. Where Mulberry's clandestine flights occur in common sites of *jianghu* marginality such as boats, labyrinthine cities, and attics dominated by chauvinist male partners, Peach imagines a *jianghu* of unfastened mobility through her aimless exploration. Tempting the INS man to follow her path, she attempts to humiliate and demean him as she does not even know her next steps. As a life of fugitive detours and re-routings of authority, Peach's *jianghu* resonates with Édouard Glissant's (1997) notion of relation that offers a framework for migration literature premised on wandering without teleological destination, structural fixity, or any attachment to a root or home. Gesturing toward a relational *jianghu*, *Mulberry and Peach* submits a notion of illiberal freedom predicated on a rejection and rupture of the liberal freedom embodied by ideas of nationhood, citizenship, and border policing.

To situate my analysis of *Mulberry and Peach*'s critique of freedom and border-crossing, this chapter begins with a genealogy of how freedom has policed Chinese migration to America from initial nineteenth century encounters to the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. Nieh's fictionalized refusal of border-crossing not only gestures toward an alternative freedom through the relational *jianghu*, but also generates a critique of both the INS' sedimented racism toward Chinese migrants and the chauvinism of Chinese ethnonationalism. Understanding Mulberry's traumatic transformation into Peach at the border requires historicizing the US border's reliance

upon a discourse of liberal freedom to racialize migrants. Afterwards, the analysis of *Mulberry and Peach*'s construction of an illiberal freedom through the relational *jianghu* unfurls in two parts. First, I inquire into how Mulberry comes to see the border as an escape from the patriarchal *jianghu*, then trace how Peach rejects the border for the relational *jianghu*'s fugitivity by sabotaging Mulberry's immigration case.

Genealogies of Chinese migrant freedom

Freedom has been a central technology for legislating Chinese entry to the US from the 1862 Anti-Coolie Act to the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act that ended explicit racial exclusion in favor of a policy based on taking on college-educated professionals to give the appearance of multicultural tolerance. Entry depends upon migrants convincing border police of their freedom in labor, marriage, thought, or faith as the border operates as a policing apparatus that legitimizes migrant residency according to their compatibility with American liberalism. Freedom maintains a racial capitalist regime where entry to the US depends on the potential economic, social, and political value of migrants' racial, gendered, classed, and cultural features.

As British Empire increasingly dominated Asia in the nineteenth century, a global trade of Indian and Chinese contract workers emerged as an alternative to indentured African and Indigenous workers. Of indeterminate etymology and history, coolies promised to liberate British West Indian sugar colonies from their newly illegal reliance on slave labor. While Northern US abolitionists called for coolie labor, Southern planters sought to ban Chinese workers who would disrupt their plantation world order based on indexing white freedom to black bondage (Jung 2006). While few coolies but many Chinese laborers went to the US, anti-coolie and anti-Chinese hostility dovetailed as the 1848-55 California Gold Rush attracted those

fleeing the anti-imperial 1850-64 Taiping Rebellion that left Southern China in famine with their agricultural economy destroyed. At the American frontier, Irish pioneers vilified Chinese migrants as diseased and unassimilable coolies threatening to depress wages (Hing 1993). As planters and pioneers legally prevailed, the 1862 Anti-Coolie Act passed as the final law that explicitly defended a notion of white freedom premised on a racial triangulation between the bondage of black bodies, the possessive capacity of white citizens, and the hypocrisy of the predominantly British trade in 'unfree' coolies. At the peak of the US Civil War, the Anti-Coolie Act sought to preserve an American belief in free labor by outlawing the supposedly unfree labor of Chinese migrants that paved the way for the outlawing of all slavery with the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation (Jung 2006). Crucially, the Anti-Coolie act was also the first to discriminate against foreign migrants by taxing laborers and their employers to maintain the primacy of white labor and its freedom from competition with foreign workers who were coerced into taking lower wages. Despite this act, Chinese migrant workers took up a variety of professions in addition to mining work such as performing various domestic and leisure services for white miners throughout the Gold Rush.

As Chinese settlements emerged largely around the provision of laundry, recreation, food, and entertainment, Chinese women also started migrating for economic possibilities and sometimes to reunite with their sojourner husbands who had left for work. While Chinese men were seen as threats to free white labor, Chinese women were seen as diseased temptations for white men and as vehicles of Chinese population growth. With the 1875 Page Act, Chinese women became the first to be excluded from US migration on racial grounds as they could only pass through the border by proving their freedom as legitimate wives. Border police then came to label almost all Chinese females as unfree prostitutes due to their foreign gender and sexual

social formations that failed to conform to Euro-American heterosexism (Luibhéid 2002).[4] Soon after, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act excluded all Chinese laborers but allowed students, merchants, diplomats, and relatives of residents as the maintenance of freedom depended on delegitimizing the working class. In tandem, an ever-expanding bureaucracy of "gatekeepers" arose to maintain a border regime based on protecting the freedom of white America against counter-bureaucratic tactics such as forged documents and identities, smuggling rings, and undocumented labor (Lee 2003).

Regulating the entry of racialized bodies was not only a question of defense but also a productive act to generate and ensure the citizen as a free subject. Around the globe, Chinese exclusion was a watershed in the emergence of a global border regime of mobility control based on policing identity through a documentary system of passports, visas, and permits that convert a person into their sortable physical and demographic categories (McKeown 2008). Increasingly powerful border police produced wanted and unwanted identities based on the data generated through liberal rational technologies of bodily measurements, photography, and biographical truth. Permissible identities freely passed between sovereign nation-states, while incongruent identities became the targets of policing and deportation apparatuses intended to protect the identities and statuses that constituted nationality.

The sovereignty of free nations then came to depend on the inalienable right to govern who could enter their borders, populations, and what people could count as human. Exemplifying

[4] Eithne Luibhéid (2002) argues that the Page Act's fundamental premise that there exists a difference between unwanted prostitutes and moral wives relied on a liberal myth distinguishing marriage from sex work. To police this distinction between permissible private sexual relations and threats to public morality, US border police employed new surveillance technologies such as bertillonage, photographic profiling, and individual case files—technologies meant to secure freedom as a distinct form of liberal humanist life. As a threat to the freedom of white Americans though their population increase and cultural difference, Chinese migrants needed to be enfolded into liberal America all the same through both a need for their labor *and* their transformation into, as Luibhéid argues, data points serving the construction of the proper American population.

this freedom, the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act protected the whiteness of America by banning all Asians from immigrating due to their racial incommensurability with citizenship and nationality. To expand whiteness, once non-white Southern and Eastern Europeans received national quotas as Asians became the impossible subjectivity of "illegal aliens," permitted within US territory, yet denied naturalization and full membership in the body politic (Ngai 2004). The process of "alienage" creates an obverse to citizenship through the exclusion from national subjectivity and history that produces illegitimate bodies as abject detritus necessary to both labor for the state and reinforce the sanctity of citizenship through their non-status (Keith 2013).

Upon these new categories, border security's rationalization technologies capitalized upon the superficiality of skin-color to advance notions of racial purity and desirable national appearances. Further, alienage and exclusion encoded racial difference as an inability to enter the collective future and society of the normative American citizenry as the Chinese were to live in a deviant time and place (Lew-Williams 2018). Unconscionable at the beginning of the twentieth century, race-based deportation became globally routinized after 1924 to secure the racial purity of the citizenry and maintain the nation's freedom and sovereignty (De Genova 2010).

Yet, exclusionary laws have always permitted the entry of 'free' merchants, diplomats, students, and intellectuals. These subjects service a progressive racial hierarchy where 'free' bodies proved the desirability of assuming the class and social conventions of white Euro-American bourgeoisie, while also charging alternative social formations with a racial fault that justified domination. The border's production of freedom is thus dialectical as it excludes the unfree to cultivate the freedom of valuable and desirable human capital. The afterlife of anti-coolie sentiment based on protecting the freedom of white America then elevated a liberal intellectual class of trans-cultural interlocutors who could transcend their racial handicap and

assimilate into white America (Hsu 2009). The freedom of overseas students is not just incidental but central to the delegitimization of the working class as the 1943 Magnuson Act repealed Chinese exclusion specifically for the naturalization of elites already in America through the appeals of influential Chinese diplomats, intellectuals, and their American allies. With such legislative changes, the racial capitalist relation between Asians and Americans came to be understood through a rapprochement that illustrated the superiority of liberal American society where the welcomed foreign elites desired assimilation and integration.

No migrants better exemplify freedom's obfuscation of racial and classed exclusion than Chinese refugee intake to America in the 1950s and 1960s. After the 1949 founding of the communist People's Republic of China (PRC) in mainland China, a refugee crisis arose as the US-backed Republic of China (ROC) government escaped to Taiwan.[5] Peasants in the South fled to Hong Kong, ROC-aligned people fled to Taiwan, while many diplomats and intellectuals were stranded in the US without a home, nationality, or country. At the same time, the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights (UNHCR) debated the qualifications of 'refugee' in their 1951 Refugee Convention that defined refugee as people persecuted into fleeing from their country of nationality in Europe before 1951. Laura Madokoro (2016) has argued that this narrow definition allowed European and settler colonial countries to protect the whiteness of their populations by evading legal obligation toward racialized bodies of newly decolonial

[5] After the fall of the Qing empire in 1911, American influence in China developed exponentially as the establishment of the ROC in 1912 saw ever-growing missiological, humanitarian, pedagogical aid. The Rockefeller Foundation was perhaps the key organization behind this cultivation of influence as they funded a variety of such campaigns from 1908 until the ROC's flight to Taiwan in 1949 (Ninkovich 1984). In addition to private and religious actors, the US war machine financed military campaigns during the 1930s and 1940s against threats of Japanese fascism and Soviet communism. Students were also a key commodity exchange between ROC and US governments as various Rockefeller backed organizations such as the International Institute of Education and the China Institute had been soliciting and training Chinese students in American since the 1920s.

regions.[6] The Convention's limited definition of refugee did not just abet limited responsibility but also empowered liberal nation-states to solicit famous refugees as "freedom fighters" fleeing communism in the US-Soviet Cold War competition for humanitarian repute.

A form of "migration diplomacy" (Oyen 2015), US resettlement of Chinese refugees was spearheaded by the Department of State—locus of foreign policy and international relations—and not the Department of Justice's Immigration and Naturalization Services that handled conventional migration and refugees. The Department of State conducted this mission through Aid Refugee Intellectuals Inc. (ARCI), a Central Intelligence Agency front operation tasked with finding and reestablishing displaced Chinese intellectuals and their families in Hong Kong, Taiwan, or the US.[7] Soliciting anybody with college education and willing to denounce communism, ARCI failed to find the right refugees to be the future leaders of liberal China, yet secured asylum for several intellectuals while leading on many others (Hsu 2014).

Strategically, refugee settlement offered the US a publicity campaign that could simultaneously delegitimize the PRC as an inhumane refugee-producer and strengthen American

[6] The displacement of colonial bodies made them an issue for decolonial nation-building—not an international problem for the UN. Were people to seek asylum from decolonization, liberal nation-states could refuse them status by interpreting them as not-yet citizens of not-yet nations. Thus, the UN obviated the responsibility of Western imperial forces to extend them the protection under 1948 UN Declaration of the Rights of Man. Just as empire relegates colonial bodies into a "waiting room of history" by denying the legitimacy of their cultural and social forms (Chakrabarty, 2000), the international border regime subjected asylum-seekers ineligible for refugee status to a state of waiting for emancipation. The UN employed refugee status as a material, not just legislative or discursive, technology to preserve and strengthen a racial capitalist order that secured humanity, freedom, and rights as the property of white citizens in Europe and settler colonial states.

[7] See Hsu, 2015. The ARCI was run by an assemblage of philanthropists, statesmen, media moguls, missionaries, and capitalists who had lost their investments in the mainland after the PRC evicted and seized their colonial holdings. It was conceived by Ernest Moy, an American-born and ardent anti-communist agent of the ROC, who sought to use the refugee situation in Hong Kong as a way to delegitimize the PRC. Moy initially petitioned both the State Department to no avail but finally received confirmation of the project through Congressman Walter Judd in 1951 with the aid of the CIA under the operation of Harold Oram, an influential fundraiser for CIA shill-organizations to combat communism, and Marvin Liebman, who headed the Committee of One Million Against the Admission of Communist China to the United Nations. Moy, whose presence would expose the ostensibly humanitarian efforts as a counter-intelligence operation, would disappear from the record as the operation was taken over by these much more powerful Cold War actors.

self-branding as defenders of freedom, while taking in much needed scientists and other specialist workers. Propped up by the US as the legitimate Chinese nation-state at the UN, the ROC dutifully supported the exclusion of unwanted bodies in the UNHCR to protect their fledgling nation-state from potential PRC infiltration and general resource taxation. A problem for refugee settlement was that ROC President Chiang Kai-Shek had implemented martial law, known as White Terror (1949-1987), to crackdown on intellectuals amid fears of communist espionage. Since the defeat of the Japanese in 1945, the US Navy and ROC had been ferrying troops from the Mainland to convert Taiwan from ex-colony into a territory of the liberal world. When the communist forces overtook the ROC and established the PRC in 1949, Chiang and his followers fled to Taiwan to bide the time for retaking the mainland. Yet, the Taiwan they found was under-resourced and under-developed for this revanchism. As a police state desperate for manual labor and resource extraction, Chiang's Taiwan both repelled intellectuals fearing surveillance and unemployment while requiring them for diplomatic purposes as Chiang preferred to use intellectuals as diplomatic envoys to legitimate his military state to the rest of the liberal world—a strategy that limited domestic dissent and increased an air of cosmopolitanism.

Accordingly, the State Department saw ROC relocation as a key tactic to undermine and humiliate communism, while hoping that refugee intellectuals could liberalize Chiang's long-known autocratic governance. Throughout the 1950s, US-Chiang relations soured while refugees struggled to work and live safely under increasingly draconian surveillance. By the end of the decade, the priority shifted to US resettlement of liberal intellectuals the name of saving them from the specter of unfreedom now looming over both two Chinas, racialized as totalitarianism as opposed to the freedom of American liberal anti-communism. The costs of this policy shift was the further delegitimization of non-bourgeois Chinese immigrants. Prominent liberal

American sympathizers in media, philanthropy, and government who had lost their enterprises in the Mainland repeatedly petitioned the White House to parole intellectual refugees from the ROC because they embodied the true Chinese who were assimilable and friendly, unlike illegal Chinatown migrants or PRC stooges. Madeline Hsu aptly notes that instead of addressing the criminalization of Chinese bodies, "the United States had simply begun importing high-achieving scientists and engineers from overseas" to both boost research manpower and roll out a public relations campaign to show its benevolence to the rest of the world (Hsu 2015, 240).

Exemplifying what Mimi Thi Nguyen (2012) has called America's militarized "gift of freedom" for refugees,[8] US intake of Chinese refugees was a foundational moment in the transition from outwardly violent coloniality to a liberal empire of human rights and international law. Despite claims that intellectual refugees were tailored for middle-class America, most settled into the working-class communities of longer tenured Chinese in America, silently grateful for American settlement. Hsu has noted that this "disappearance" of Chinese refugees into a newly multiracial, democratic, and freedom-championing America was central to ending racial and national quotas with the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act as the success of high-profile refugees proved that America could benefit from liberalized immigration policy (Hsu 2012). This disappearance thus attests to the power of the "economy of affirmation and forgetting within a regime of desiring freedom" (Lowe 2015, 39), as the disappearance of

[8] While Nguyen writes specifically about the American intake of Vietnamese refugees at the end of the Vietnam War in the 1970s, the intake of Chinese refugees can be understood as both a legislative and conceptual precursor. As Madokoro (2015) has argued, the Chinese case served as a lynchpin at the 1951 UNHCR delegations that allowed liberal nation-states to evade obligation for Asian refugee intake. As the legislative history of Vietnam refugee intake was crucial to expanding the UNHCR's coverage, both these cases address the gift of freedom that signaled a transition from coloniality and explicit racial oppression into a liberal humanitarian world order premised on exchanging political rights for diplomatic power.

exclusionary laws obfuscates histories of coolies, prostitutes, and refugees that precondition the freedom of international border regime, international human rights, and liberalized migration.

Coerced Freedom: Mulberry's Patriarchal *Jianghu*

It is out of the genealogy of Chinese migrant freedom that Nieh Hualing found herself in America and in which *Mulberry and Peach* addresses the US border. Exiled to Taiwan in 1948, the mainland-born Nieh worked as a journalist, translator, and teacher for local publications, colleges, and the US State Department. In 1964, the State Department brought her to the University of Iowa's Iowa Writer's Workshop as a refugee intellectual extracted from Chiang's White Terror.[9] Chapter two of this thesis will provide a more detailed account her migration's logistics. While working as an administrator and teacher of American freedom in Iowa, Nieh also wrote draft after draft of a novel that contemplates how the US border polices Chinese women. First serialized in the early 1970s in a Taiwanese newspaper, *Mulberry and Peach* resonated with questions of exile, historical imprisonment, and war haunting the ROC's sojourning intellectuals. Just as the ROC state cracked down on Nieh's former employer, *Free China Fortnightly* that advocated for American liberalism and criticized Chiang, *Mulberry and Peach* would never finish its original run, banished for its lewdness and critique of the White Terror in the novel's third part. Like its author, the novel went on exile but to Hong Kong where it was first serialized in *Ming Pao* 明報 before *Youlian Chubanshe* 友聯出版社 published it as a novel in 1976.

The novel itself has undergone various transformations since 1976 as it eventually found its way to the PRC in 1980, through Nieh's Chinese Weekend that brokered a long-lasting

[9] See Bennett (2015) for an account of the actors involved in transforming the University of Iowa into a key clearing house of State Department operations in the Cold War.

literary relationship between the UI and PRC writers. Yet, the 1980 *Zhongguo Qingnian Chubanshe* 中国青年出版社 version excises the entirety of the American narrative and cleanses the novel of any anti-patriotic or anti-communist content. In 1981, an English translation emerged as UI students Jane Parish Yang and Linda Lappin co-translated the novel as part of a cross-cultural translation program led by Nieh and Paul Engle. Yet, this English edition published by both the Beijing-based *Xin Shijie Chubanshe* 新世界出版社 and New York-based Sino Publishing Company would also undergo several cuts and revisions much like the 1980 version. Only in 1988 with Beacon Press did the novel appear in the unexpurgated English version first translated by Yang and Lappins. While the Beacon edition did not sell well, the primary English version—revived by the emergence of college Asian American literature courses—has been the 1990 version from The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, which features an afterword from Sau-Ling Wong that later became her canonical essay on border-crossing.

For my close readings of literature, I select the first Chinese edition of the novel because it contains the most comprehensive material that shift through the novel's subsequence re-issues. This is not to champion the purity or authenticity of an original, but to remain within the novel's initial historical context as my main arguments about the book itself concern events that occur up to the 1970s. When I make reference to different editions, it is to examine how encounters between different ideological frameworks evidence the disruptiveness of the novel itself across a variety of social formations rather than to critique the censorship and bias of certain regimes.

Oddly ignored in the scholarship on *Mulberry and Peach*, the novel's first full run with *Ming Pao* immediately situates Nieh in the *jianghu* world with the newspaper's aesthetic direction. At the helm of *Ming Pao* at that time was Jin Yong who remains the Chinese world's

best-selling author famous for popularizing the *wuxia* 武侠 martial arts fiction of outlaws on the *jianghu*, then banned in both the PRC and the ROC. Often mischaracterized as chauvinist celebrations of Chinese civilization,[10] Jin Yong's novels use the *jianghu* world of classical Chinese literature to craft a rebuke to postcolonial nationalist intellectuals who rejected Chinese sociocultural forms in favor of the Euro-American forms that celebrate the imperatives of liberal modernity. In addition to Jin Yong's mythical martial arts world, *jianghu* more generally designates the literature of wandering and transience, while also serving as a common metaphor for complex and clandestine social systems. *Jianghu* then conceptualizes an active antagonism to stable meanings and fixity itself (Wu 2012). Entangling this oppositional function with geopolitics, Petrus Liu (2011) theorizes that the *jianghu* produces its hero, the *xia* 侠 (knight errant), as a "stateless subject" in defiance of "the liberal conception of an autonomous rights-bearing citizen" by inhabiting and creating social spaces that the state cannot create due to its adherence to governance (6). *Jianghu* societies do not mean to govern over its people; its people create new codes of conduct and communication through encounters in clandestine and transitory spaces such as bars, hostels, attics, basements, and boats. Yet, the literary *jianghu* is an illusorily radical space that primarily stages the stories of chauvinistic men challenging the corrupted world of laws and bureaucrats. Women appear as *nüxia* 女侠 (lit. female *xia*) who are largely gendered as prostitutes or cross-dressing warriors fulfilling male sexual and narrative needs.[11]

[10] See Chen (1992) and Chan (2004) for laudatory accounts of revolutionary *jianghu* nationalism.

[11] See Zeitlin (2007); Altenberg (2009); Li (2014) for studies of *nüxia* in literary works of the late imperial era. See Bao (2005); Edwards (2010); Chen (2012); Ma (2019) for studies of *nüxia* in Republican Era (1912-37) film.

While Jin Yong's *jianghu* primarily operates through allegorical connections between the corruptions and contradictions of past and present China, Nieh's *jianghu* critiques statehood and liberal freedom during the Cold War through Mulberry and Peach's flights away from the idea of a national home. Typifying a patriarchal *jianghu*, Mulberry's journals depict a reluctant *nüxia* serving the fugitive men taking her into the underworld as she finds herself living in "confinement within the trajectory of forced flight" (Cho 2004, 160).

Take for instance the third journal when Mulberry lives in an attic in Taiwan as an undocumented fugitive after her husband Shen Jiagang embezzles public funds. In the attic, Shen has become an invalid, while Mulberry raises their daughter Sangwa alone. With no memory of the outside world, Sangwa asks Mulberry why they cannot go to the courtyard she longingly stares at through the small attic window. Mulberry responds with a meditation on the border's dualism as a tool of confinement and opening-up:

> I told her. They can't just go where they want either. The courtyard's four sides are a walled enclosure [圍牆]. The walled enclosure borders [那邊] the sea. The sea borders [那邊] the earth's limits [邊緣]. The earth is a giant attic. A giant attic divided into thousands of thousands of smaller attics. Just like our attic. I want Sangwa to know that all the world's people live like us. (Nieh 1976, 200).[12]

To correct Sangwa's impression that people outside are freely border-crossing, Mulberry conjures up a metaphoric world of confinement that underwrites the seeming freedom of people outside the attic. For Mulberry, confinement comes from any presence of boundaries as the courtyard, sea, earth, and attic are all bordered spaces despite their illusory openness. For Sangwa, the courtyard beckons with freedom as she overlooks it from her window since the

[12]我告訴她。他們也不是愛到哪兒就到哪兒。院子四周是圍牆。圍牆那邊是海。海那邊是地球的邊緣。地球是個大閣樓。大閣樓分成千千萬萬小閣樓。就和我們一樣。我要桑哇知道世上的人都是和我們一樣的生活。

courtyard's top is open. Enveloping open space, the courtyard simultaneously presents Sangwa with a finite freedom, while also intimating its limits through the walls.

Mulberry's lesson for Sangwa is that the border does not simply hold out a binary of freedom and unfreedom but rather, borders produces different perspectives and standpoints. Borders hold the possibility of opening-up and movement as Mulberry repeats the last and first words of her sentences to move from the walled enclosure to the sea and to the earth, going through borders to highlight their semi-permeability. The sea and the earth convey this duality as Mulberry names their borders as 那邊, a prepositional phrase that combines 那 (that) with 邊, meaning edge or limit—functions that simultaneously mark a boundary and hold the possibility of interfacing outwards towards the alterity of 'that.' Mulberry's message is thus not one of total desolation but of alternative imaginaries. It is not that "all the world's people live like us" in suffering. Instead, all the world, as a labyrinth of attics, lives with borders that confine but also hold the possibility of something else, just as the attic window lets Sangwa imagine otherwise.

The possibility presented by borders preoccupies Mulberry throughout this journal as she thinks about forcing Jiagang to take up a life of exile: "even criminals can illegally leave the country. He can flee to the US. He can flee to South America. Might as well become a person outside of nationality [乾脆做個外國人]" (200).[13] By suggesting that illegal smuggling does not discriminate against criminals, Mulberry gestures to the ways that the *jianghu* world of fugitivity dissolves the logics of statehood by undoing classifications such as criminality. The particular escape she fantasizes is a romantic form of alienage as the escape from nationality. Reflecting Mulberry's daydreaming, the passage's linguistic conventions break down as Mulberry plays

[13] 就是犯了罪也可以偷渡出境。他可以跑到美國，到南美去。乾脆做個外國人。

with the literal and denotative meanings of *waiguoren*, 外國人 (foreign national). Illegally—physically, yet undocumented—leaving Taiwan cannot produce the liberal citizen of the 'foreign national' as *waiguoren* conventionally means. Instead, the sentence employs *waiguoren* for its literal meaning of a person outside nationality, as the adverb 乾脆 cues us to the statement's resignation and bluntness. What Mulberry exhorts is then an escape from the border as a stateless subject in the *jianghu*'s terms, or as an "impossible subject" in Mae Ngai's (2004) terms for Chinese migrants in America who exist in the state's territory, though outside legal subjectivity.

On the *jianghu*'s spatial relation to national formation, Carlos Rojas (2015) has argued that the *jianghu* gestures to "a realm of cultural production and imagination wherein sociopolitical concerns can be engaged and reimagined" through alternative notions of individuality and collectivity crafted by wanderers (294). Mulberry hopes for such an alternative space by longing for escape from the attic through a feverish dream entry to her journal. In this dream, her family has fled the attic for a boat smuggling them to Hong Kong. Yet, just as they board, the border guard arrives and proclaims:

> Imperial fishing boat number one smuggling Shen Jiagang and six others across borders. We have telegraphed the International Criminal Police Organization alerting them to the discovery of criminal Shen and others. We will capture and repatriate criminal Shen and others for sentencing. Shen is a known embezzler of public funds. Heed our warning, criminal Shen and others. It doesn't matter where you go. All the ocean patrol boats have been mobilized. Every nation's port has been fortified. Return to port immediately and turn yourselves in. (Nieh 1976, 211).[14]

As a metaphorical international alliance mobilizes its borders against migrants thrown into fugitivity against their will, Mulberry and Sangwa fall under Jiagang's criminality by virtue of the border's patriarchal processing of families. Despite this episode's oneiric nature, the global

[14] 天字第一号渔船载有沈家纲走私犯六人偷渡出境。我方已电国际刑警组织查缉沈犯等。沈犯等必将就擒遣返我国接受法律制裁。沈犯另挪用公款通缉在案。沈家纲等犯人注意收听。你们逃到哪儿也没有用。海上巡逻艇已全部出动追缉。海上各国港口已严加戒备。希望你们赶快回航归案。

mobilization of borders manifests the historical reality of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention's global refusal to mandate intake for subjects like Mulberry and her daughter. The pivotal phrase in this particular episode is the border patrol's call to "return to port immediately and turn yourselves in" [回航归案]. The use of 归案, meaning to be brought to justice, echoes the coded *jianghu* language of 找岸, finding the shore, that marks the abandonment of *xia* subjectivity and the fight against bureaucratic injustice. Homophones, the shore of 岸 and the casefile of 案 envelop Mulberry into a struggle with documentation as the patroller calls for her to be processed through a bureaucratic system that consistently fails her by forcing them to return to port. For asylum-seekers such as Mulberry, there is at best partial deliverance in submitting to a border police that hounds them or reterritorializing into a system of documentation that has no room for them.

In reality, Mulberry's exit from the patriarchal *jianghu* attic begins as she exchanges sex and companionship for an identification card with the owner of the attic. This identification card infuriates Sangwa who calls her mother a whore, following after Shen who lies in bed all day muttering. When Sangwa asks for a card, Mulberry says that identity cards prevent people in public from going to jail, so their security in the attic obviates Sangwa's need for such a card. Further, Mulberry tells her that "wearing an identification card allows people on the outside to eat other people" as the police can use information on these cards to punish people (217).[15] Just as the attic introduces Sangwa to an understanding of the world's illusory freedom, the cannibalism of identification cards explains the documentary violence of the border regime to Sangwa. One night when Sangwa sneaks out of the attic window, the police patrol arrests and

[15] 外面人挂身份证还可以吃人。

follows her back to her parents. As the police inspect the family's household registration documents, they discover the prized criminal Shen whom Mulberry gives up without hesitation, thus freeing her and Sangwa from the attic. With Shen responsible for Mulberry's internment to the attic, it is fitting that Mulberry escapes to America in the fourth journal at the cost of shedding her family as Shen dies and Sangwa estranges herself. Yet, she does not escape her life in the *jianghu*, merely delivered out of Shen's patriarchal criminality into an illegality of her own as a migrant without family or status in the face of the INS.

Undoing Subjectivity: Peach and the Relational *Jianghu*

In the novel's 1980 PRC release, Nieh similarly finds her work liberated from decades of embargo but at the cost of the total expurgation of the fourth journal set in America. Lacking the context of their struggle in America, Mulberry simply becomes Peach with emigration glossing over the relation of the two personas. In the preface to this edition titled《浪子的悲歌》 "The Wanderer's Lament," Nieh (1980) writes that "*Mulberry and Peach* typifies a writer who 'knows their place' ['安份] trying to 'unknow their place' ["不安份" 的尝试]" (1).[16] The quotation marks for such a self-deprecating phrase leave a clue to read the novel as a rebuke to the conventions and the people who police her 'place' in the world, whether in gendered, racial, or national terms. Though assenting to PRC editors who eliminated and revised the novel's lewder and anti-communist sections, Nieh offers her response through impish subtext and insinuation. In addition to the sarcastic scare quotes around 'place,' she mockingly asks: "where is an exiled author supposed to find her people? I can only rely on the demands of art" (6).[17] Despite the

[16]《桑青与桃红》是一个 "安份" 的 作者所作的一个 "不安份" 的尝试。
[17]我这个流放的作者到哪儿去找人民? 我所能凭借的只有艺术的要求

platitude about art, the overture to exile snidely accosts the geopolitical confrontations between the PRC, ROC, and US that displaced her. Though publication of this expurgated version returns Nieh to the mainland as a pseudo-nationalist writer, Nieh's self-identification as a wanderer also distances her from ideas of nativity and essential Chinese identity emerging in the 1980s with roots seeking literature that sought to construct a genre enshrining a timeless Chinese essence against encroaching foreign culture and capital.

Accordingly, many critics have argued that this 1980 edition, edited to read as a paean to reunify the two Chinas, expressed a reconciliatory ethnonationalism on Nieh's part (Wong 1998; Fusco 2012; Bo 2018). While she may be on the record as an ethnonationalist, Nieh's literary self-identification as a wanderer playfully encourages a more disruptive suggestion to approach the novel as a critique of ethnonationalist Chineseness especially in the expurgated fourth section. In this sense, the "demands of art" are not merely fanciful ideals but rather a recourse to literature as a deconstruction of the prerogatives expressed by her public liberal persona. Instead of taking the novel's repatriation as a desire for a Chinese Renaissance, Nieh's persistently slippery and mischievous language resists identification and nationality as embodied by the unruly Peach's refusal of settlement and status.

Fittingly, Mulberry's move to America inaugurates a significant rupture to the novel both in terms of the story and the novel's paraliterary life. The cause for such a divisive fourth journal is geopolitical as the first three journals' concern with the ROC and PRC schism becomes triangulated through her desire to settle in the US. Migration to America is not just escape but a transition that plunges the narrative deeper into the hostilities produced out of the ROC and PRC split. A middle ground between open printing and an outright ban as earlier imposed on Nieh's works, the PRC revision of the novel without the American section speaks to conflicting

worldviews among the different readerships. The novel's outlaw infamy in Taiwan and Nieh's reputation as a freedom fighting refugee reflects a latent drive towards America established by the Chinese liberal movement's moral, ideological, and material affinity for the US. In the PRC, the novel both critiques the autocracy of Chiang and the ROC, while emphasizing the outside world's failure to understand the revolutionary upheavals of the PRC. This is especially so since the novel never takes place in the PRC while purporting to be a novel about China. In America, the novel's border-crossing potential, as implied by critics following in Wong's direction, is a multiculturalist celebration of the import capital of foreign imaginaries, worlds, and methods that can build a transnational literary practice housed and domesticated in the US.

Nieh's strategic compliance in having antagonistic, if not outright contradictory, editions of the same novel should not be read as proof for PRC censorship's hate for freedom or as a testament to US narratives of the free press. Instead, having so many editions, especially in consenting to censorship, allows Nieh's novel to fragment the idea of China, interpreted differently according to the different readerships—shifting with her circulating books. By having translations and expurgations to her novel, Nieh acknowledges her place as a writer subject to a geopolitical dissensus that deflates the fantasy of an individual and autonomous identity.

Read by different audiences with different interests and notions of China, the different editions of *Mulberry and Peach* disables the idea of a singular and monolithic China. Whether defined by PRC, ROC, or US imperatives, there is no ideological subjectivity or national identity that coheres as identification and settlement reveal themselves to be impossibilities. The ideas of "origin" and "expurgation" are grounded in a logic of purity that services, above all else, a documentary regime akin to the border and its investment in legislating the good and true from

the bad and misleading. The novel's idea of China is indeed an idea of the *jianghu* as the encounter of relations of fracture, impermanence, and modularity.

Where the *jianghu* popularized by Jin Yong, no matter how radical the interpretation, always has China as its geographic and allegorical reference, Nieh's novel, by virtue of its 'border-crossing' editorial history, offers something closer to Édouard Glissant's understanding of relation. Theorizing ways to uncover lost and obscured Antillean histories, Glissant (1997) proposes relationality as an analytic of detours, reroutings, and encounters that dispute the centrality and fixity of colonial languages, homes, and roots and their mutations into nations, cultures, and identities. A movement of yearning *against*, errantry is a constant opening-up of desires for totality, teleology, and conclusivity. In addition to the wanderer's errantry, Glissant gestures toward the relationality found in the fugitive's clandestine and baroque implements of "bypasses, proliferation, spatial redundancy, anything that flouted the alleged unicity of the thing known and the knowing of it, anything exalting quantity infinitely resumed and totality infinitely ongoing" (78). A consonant pairing, Glisssant's poetics and the *jianghu* world both foreground the deracinating potential of fugitivity as key to alternative migrant imaginaries. The result is not a binarized rejection of settlement for flight but the production of a relation between settlement and flight as various possibilities of a future that keeps opening up to difference.

The key difference between the *jianghu xia* and what I call the "relational fugitive" of Nieh's novel is then a question of outcome. Where the *jianghu xia* seeks a definitively better world of underworld justice, the relational fugitive refuses the notions of superiority to deviate from the oppressive potential held in singularity and comprehension. Relational fugitivity is thus not an ideal subject but a processual undoing of subjectivity through flight. Glissant's notion of relationality also revolves around the opacity of knowledge such that documentation,

surveillance, and rationalization are relegated to failed attempts at mastery rather than upheld as superordinate forces. Key to his critique of comprehension and understanding is the logic of the French word "comprendre" (to understand) that designates the violence of grasping, seizing, and fixing (219-20). Comprendre/understanding then afford physical, psychical, and epistemological violence that force racialized bodies within a system of domination. The emergent and virtual world of relation is that which can be imagined through rerouted spatial gestures that do not seek to fix, but always seeks to open up. The opposite of 'comprendre' is 'donner-avec,' or 'gives-on-and-with,' that looks to the continuation of possibilities. In this case, violence operates differently from a purely dominating and destructive sense. Violence and opacity are central to Glissant's notion of Relation as a choice between the violence of comprehension that disables subjectivity from thinking or being otherwise and a resistant and insurgent opacity that constantly diverts, reroutes, and opens outwards.

In Nieh's novel, Peach only becomes a willing undocumented wanderer when she diverts Mulberry's desire to root herself to permanent residency into permanent fugitivity. While Mulberry exits the patriarchal *jianghu* by appealing to the border for clemency and salvation, Peach throws herself into a relational *jianghu* that yearns against any kind of promise tendered by the border or settlement. Heeding the call from her dream to turn herself into the border regime in search for stability and settlement after a life of exile, Mulberry's bargain with the law immediately brings her to task as the fourth journal beings with Mulberry meeting with the INS man. While the police extricate her from the attic and the impotent Shen in Taiwan, the INS man harasses her with random visits and scare tactics that lead to her mental breakdown.

In their final meeting, Mulberry recounts that the INS tells her that "the Chinese are foreigners without a place to be deported" as the non-recognition of PRC and the refusal of the

ROC to take deportees conspires to transform Chinese migrants into undocumented illegal aliens in the eyes of the US immigration apparatus—a subject without subjectivity (Nieh 1976, 289).[18] Since Mulberry ambiguously identifies her citizenship on the permanent residency application as "Chinese person [中國人]" (247), she belongs to no nation-state as her sense of patriotism clashes with the geopolitical reality that there exists no valid Chinese nationality. Identifying as a "Chinese person" rebukes the claims to China made by both PRC and ROC as both nation-states have forced the self-identified 中國人 Mulberry into exile. Her inability to claim citizenship then leaves her at the limits of both border and national logics since Mulberry is both a threat due to her foreignness, yet undeportable due to the peculiar entanglements of US-PRC-ROC relations.

The INS man's address of Mulberry as an undeportable impossible subject (Ngai 2004) positions her so outside her desired normality and stability as a legitimate subject that Mulberry's narrative subjectivity disintegrates and results in Peach's first emergence in the narrative:

> You are dead! Mulberry! I live. I've always lived. Only now, I have independence! You don't know me. I certainly know you. We are totally inimical. We live together in this shared body (how unfortunate!) [...] You are scared of the INS man, I ignore him because I look down upon him. […] We are always on the brink of destruction like the world's two superpower nations. […] You have limited my freedom. Now, you're dead, I hope you don't live again, so I will have total freedom. (290)[19]

Negating Mulberry's pursuit of settlement, Peach emerges out of the identity, migration, and border issues that have shattered her psyche. While Peach's fixation on freedom can be read as an embrace of American beatnik identity (Fitzgerald 2012), her incessant use of the term also

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[18] 中國人是沒有地方可遞解的外國人。

[19] 你死了! 桑青! 我就活了。我一直活著的。只是現在我有個獨立的生活。你不認識我。我可認識你。我和你完全不同。我們只是藉住在一個身子裡（多麼不幸福啊!) […] 你害怕移民局的人; 我不理他, 因為我看不起他。 […] 你和我互相「迫害」就和這個世界上的兩大超級強國一樣。有時你佔優勢，有時我佔優勢。我佔優勢的時候就可以強迫你做你不故意的事 […] 因為你限制了我的自由。現在, 你死了, 希望你不要復活了, 我就完全自由了。

gestures to a satirized deflation of freedom. The singsong celebration of "freedom" then comes at the cost of the violence between the world's two superpower nations. Not necessarily between two countries, this metaphor speaks to the global Cold War's ongoing destruction of peoples, places, and histories (Kwon 2010) that produces Mulberry as an impossible subject. Peach thus asserts a mastery over the INS man as, instead of Mulberry's cowering prostration, she "[looks] down upon him" [看不起]. While connotatively equivalent of "looking down upon," 看不起 literally means the inability to look up to him as Peach refuses to elevate the INS man and the nexus of border police, Cold War, and imperial relations he represents.

This is especially apparent in Peach's opaque embrace of the INS man knowing all he wants about Mulberry, but her adamant refusal to divulge any information about herself. As a refusal of settlement, Peach's encounter with the INS man in the prologue chronologically occurs after she has fully taken over her shared body with Mulberry. In this clash, Peach asserts superiority by refusing to divulge her personal history but volunteers all her intelligence on Mulberry. While Mulberry sells out Shen to free herself from the attic, Peach betrays Mulberry by sabotaging the man's autobiographical solicitation, telling him: "if you want to know anything about Peach, no comment [無可奉告]. If you want to know about Mulberry, I will give you everything I know" (6).[20] With the formality of 無可奉告, Peach seizes the INS man's authoritative tone, a demeanor Mulberry could never claim. By sending him journals that prove Mulberry's residency-disqualifying adultery, Peach dissociates herself from ideas of documentary truth, puritanical virtue, and liberal conjugality that characterize the US border's expectation for female migrants. Mulberry's 'murder' is not just a split personality, but also an

[20] 假若問題是關於我桃紅的，無可奉告。假若問題是關於桑青的，我絕對盡我所知道的告訴你。

abjection of the gendered biographies desired by the border regime. Peach relinquishes and gives up on her own roots as she voids, with the help of the border's adjudication, Mulberry's validity as a personal history to possess. This rejection reinforces her refusal of roots as she mockingly tells the INS man, "you're all from a mother's womb. I will defy nativity wherever I go" (7).[21]

Ultimately, Peach insists upon a life on the relational *jianghu* in defiance of identity, residency, and the state, ending the narrative as "a woman from a nameless planet" (244).[22] As the novel's last chronological event, Peach removes herself from earthly nativity and settlement by consummating her defiance of citizenship into a claim for figurative alien status, a translingual pun on the term "illegal alien." While the Chinese text never uses 外星人 for extraterrestrial or 外僑 for illegal alien, it has become commonplace for the English translation and studies of the novel to translate the term "*waiguoren*" (lit. foreign national) as "illegal alien" (Nieh 1997; Wong 2001; Cho 2004; Chen 2004; Fusco 2012). By translating *waiguoren* into "alien," this Anglophone scholarship centers the logic of the US border by parsing Mulberry and Peach through the INS man's bureaucratic gaze.

Yet, the linguistic and narrative alienage of Mulberry and Peach is precisely what allows an alternative analytic that does not reproduce the bureaucratic gaze as alienage extricates its subjects from the time and world of the nation. Instead of taking the alien as a pitiable subjectivity to be reconstituted into the nation-state, there lies, especially in fiction, the imaginative possibility of standing outside of this normativity as Peach does to explore what life may resemble elsewhere. The slippage between the *waiguoren* and the illegal alien then gestures to a misunderstanding of the different worlds that Mulberry and Peach inhabit. While Mulberry

[21] 你們都是娘胎裡出生的。我到哪裡都是個外鄉人。

[22] 來自不知名星球的女人。

is documentarily an illegal alien on an expired visa applying for residency, Peach understands herself as a vagrant from a perpetual elsewhere traveling toward nothing in particular to probe the detours and complications of her journey. An alternative to understanding the transition from Mulberry to Peach as that of an illegal alien gone schizophrenically rogue, the relational *jianghu* offers a way to interrogate what exactly Mulberry escapes from and Peach emerges out of—the liberal freedom constituted by borders, states, nationality, and citizenship.

The freedom offered by the relational *jianghu* is Peach's ability to aspire toward a life lived outside the border's liberal pressures of nationality, citizenship, and belonging that rend Mulberry apart. Peach's devilish persona full of puns, mockery, and diversions does not aspire toward any final destination. Instead, the letters she sends to the INS are constant exhortations for him to join her on the road. While the maps added to these letters can be read as faulty forgeries to critique US empire's cartographic conquests (Cho 2004), Peach's enticements further critique the immigration case file itself through parodic simulation. Addressing the INS man, Peach thus presents the reader with an option to follow the INS man's perspective and read the novel through his imperial logic of finding the correct Chineseness. Alternatively, the reader can follow Peach's approach for its relational challenge to the border's territorializing and subject-producing power. The freedom of the relational *jianghu* is thus a world where the INS man futilely chases Peach who has refused the border's dominion and adopted a life as an undocumented wanderer in search for what life looks like beyond the border regime.

Through the relational *jianghu*, *Mulberry and Peach* critiques the myth of border-crossing by conceptualizing an alternative migrant form to liberal humanist tenets of citizenship, nationhood, and fixity. Though Mulberry physically crosses many borders, she is never a

politically legitimate migrant. Expulsion after expulsion, she becomes a wanderer in a patriarchal *jianghu*, living in fugitivity, beholden to dominating figures such as her parasitic husband and the pitiless INS man. Even as Mulberry delivers herself to the border regime in hopes of gaining the stability of belonging to a nation-state for the first time, there is no freedom or citizenship at the end of her submission. Instead, she learns that her life of constant exile has so excluded her from the possibility of citizenship such that she is not even eligible for its abject refusal through deportation. From this realization, Mulberry's persona collapses as the new persona of Peach takes over their hitherto shared body. Explicitly hostile to law and order, Peach sabotages Mulberry's permanent residency application by denying the INS man's desires to possess both their biographies. Embarking upon the relational *jianghu*, Peach refuses to become the idealized migrant subjectivity of the liberal rights-bearing, border-crossing autonomous citizen. Instead, an illiberal freedom emerges, premised on the rejection of the border's logics to open-up the potential of imagining a migrant figure yearning against settlement, fixity, and belonging.

Indeed, the presence of two *jianghus* respectively aligned with Mulberry and Peach posits that they are two distinct women that live out two migrant possibilities. They are two forms of female fugitivity as the novel's English subtitle *Two Women of China* insinuates. The split between the two further offers a rupture of gender as Mulberry and Peach do not cohere around an idea of common womanhood, though the various patriarchal figures of the novel attempt to force them into such a binarized other to their positions as husband, the law, and savior. The next chapter then investigates the gendered possibilities of the novel's illiberal aesthetics.

CHAPTER TWO: FREEDOM FROM NORMALIZATION AND ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

> "I am not named Mulberry! Mulberry is already dead!"
> "Then, if I may, what is your name?" The US Immigration and Naturalization Services person asks.
> "Call me whatever. Pearl, Silk, Beautiful, Fragrant Spring, Autumn Sunset, Wintersweet, Heroine, Jade Flower, Girly, Precious, Jewel, Lotus, Osmanthus, Crysanthemum. Might as well call me Peach!" She wears a pink shirt, flesh colored briefs, barefoot, legs exposed. (Nieh, 1976: 1)[23]

As a novel concerning the possible futures of Chinese migrants, *Mulberry and Peach* chronologically begins with Mulberry expelled from her childhood home by war and concludes with Peach setting off to explore America as an alien in defiance of status. Yet, this story does not unfurl as a progression from Mulberry to Peach. Instead, the novel switches through episodic journals by Mulberry and letters by Peach bookended by a prologue and an allegorical epilogue that erratically trace a series of migrations through time, space, and reality. In the time between the end of the journals and the beginning of the letters, the prologue, aptly titled 楔子(wedge) starts the novel with the above genesis scene as the INS man interrogates Peach into existence. While the story implies a linear transformation, the novel's structure presents alienation, refusal, and fragmentation as key forces in the construction, unmaking, and reckoning of identity.

The novel's cold open is immediately striking as Nieh conveys the division between life and death as a question of renaming and identity transformation that breaches the alignment between life and body. Mulberry's death creates a temporality in which the body of the speaker continues living, though under a changed persona. In the novel to come, the speaker's body hosts

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[23]『我不叫桑青! 桑青已經死了!』
『那麼, 請問, 你叫什麼名字?』 美國移民局的人問。
『叫什麼都可以。 阿珠，阿綢，美娟，春香，秋霞，冬梅，秀英，翠芳，妞妞，寶寶，貝貝，蓮英，桂芬，菊花。乾脆就叫我桃紅吧! 』她穿著桃紅襯衫，光著腿，赤著腳。

three lifetimes: its biological and sexual persistence, Mulberry's finished life, and Peach's new life to come. It is this triplet that produces the INS man's confusion as his immigration case file cannot identify the life of the body. As Peach takes over, the INS man's task has become a futile policing of a corpse since he fundamentally misrecognizes the person in front of him for the one documented in his casefile. The story of *Mulberry and Peach* is thus a story of alternative temporalities of living. Mulberry lives in the pluperfect time of "already" as a life that, while contained and terminated in the past, continues to haunt the body newly named Peach even after death, while Peach lives is in the lifetime to come. Just as Peach's final departure from earth gestures toward an imagination of life lived otherwise from the policed regimes of citizenship and border control, the break between Mulberry and Peach can be understood as a departure from the reality of migrant life into an imaginative world as Peach' playful and fugitive sexuality challenges Mulberry's experiences of misogyny and racism.

While the relational *jianghu* of chapter one affords an understanding of how Mulberry and Peach challenge the border, the relational *jianghu* model alone is insufficient to account for the novel's treatment of gender and life after the change to Peach. Just as studies of the novel have thus far taken border-crossing as an overly metaphorical process with scant attention to its sociohistorical implications, there is a problematic commonplace that uses schizophrenia to explain Mulberry and Peach as two personas of the same person because they share a body, especially in studies that take mental illness in the novel as allegory or metaphor (see Martin 2006; Kim 2017). Deriving from the same profligacy as metaphorical border-crossing, the premise of schizophrenia or mental illness as a figurative technique fetishizes disability as art and relegates the novel's treatment of gender to an overly symbolic dimension.

Instead, this chapter understands the difference and division between Mulberry and Peach as two distinct people, as both characters assert throughout the novel, to examine two imaginaries of migrant life that account for the border's imposition of normative sexuality and life on female bodies aspiring to citizenship. It is no coincidence that the novel opens with the intrusive INS man introduced with dialogue tags pestering a disembodied voice whose first utterance declares the death of one woman so her second utterance can create a new life out of an orientalized catalogue of names and an erotic depiction of her body. This opening marks the production of the alien-embracing Peach persona out of the death of the residency-aspiring migrant Mulberry persona. Beginning with Peach's insistence on her discreteness from Mulberry, the novel highlights the gendered and racial violence that occurs between the subjectivities of migrant and alien and thus between normative history and alternative futurity.

In addition to death, Peach's persona emerges out of an inquisitive sexual drive and parodic antagonism to the INS man's officiousness. As the opening scene conveys, mockery—the disidentification with bureaucratic rigidity—is a key plot device since the narrative depends on the futility of the INS man's governmental mission of tracking down Peach who uses a combination of language games, flirting, and whimsical hitchhiking to defy his mission. Building upon the foundation created in chapter one by the relational *jianghu*, this chapter will engage with queer theories of archival history that encourage the incorporation of disruptive objects such as novels to upend normative accounts of history and subject formation. While Mulberry and Peach both have homosexual relations throughout the novel, the notion of queerness I use in this chapter is a practice of living in disruption and defiance of normative formations of race, gender, sexuality, and ideology. The queerness of Peach's narrative play then extends beyond the border

to examine the relation between Nieh's career as an ambassador of literary liberalism to the world and her novel that offers a wholehearted assault on the tenets of liberalism.

By using the illiberal intimations of *Mulberry and Peach* to queer the archive of creative writing and public diplomacy at the UI that houses the story of Nieh's journey to the US, this chapter argues that the public diplomacy practiced at the UI was part of an imperial project for the domestication and normalization of difference. This enterprise proceeded through the hope of establishing global literary liberalism predicated on values of individual artistry, the freedom of imagination, and conjugality both linguistic and sexual. Despite her career's drive to containment, Nieh's novel gestures toward an alternative freedom that explores and foregrounds the lives lived against the normative metrics and desires of a border regime predicated on the production of the right kinds of migrants. Indeed, Nieh's novel is itself an archive curated by Peach who organizes the detritus of Mulberry's life in her journals from fragmentary eras guided by Peach's wayward and leering letters for the INS man's impotent perusal. Fittingly, the plot's conclusion with Peach happily escaping society submits a notion of freedom premised upon the possibility of imagining alternative futures and lives through the disturbance and reconfiguration of past lives and histories.

Queer Aesthetics and the Border

Queer aesthetics primarily recur throughout the novel around the issue of what sexual behavior and decorum permits migrant life in the US. As a relatively one-dimensional character, the INS man embodies US state power over both Mulberry and Peach's sexual subjectivity. While he is the first character explicitly introduced in the prologue, chronologically, the INS man first appears when he interrogates Mulberry about adultery the owner of the Taipei attic. At first,

Mulberry thrice responds with ellipses, "「……」," that fill the time until the man coaxes out a response that she had "gotten close for a while" [接近過一陣子] (Nieh 1976, 254). As this interrogation occurs in line after line of dialogue without narration, Mulberry's rhetorical silences evacuate language from the page before offering a vague euphemism as she tries to stifle the INS man from making her legible. While he does eventually prevail, he can only do so by telling her what to say: "you cannot use evasive wordings [空泛的字眼] such as 'getting close' [接近]. What I am investigating is your conduct. 'Adultery' is conduct. You must use exact [確切] answers such as 'yes' or 'no' to answer" (254).[24]

As discussed in chapter one, the INS has historically relied on the imposition of a moral order premised on heteropatriachal monogamy to police the mobility of women. Eithne Luibhéid (2005) has noted that US immigration policy from the end of WWII to the 1990s prohibited the immigration of people considered sexual deviants, including homosexuals and those of psychopathic personalities and abnormal sexual behaviors. The parameters of an admissible citizen then rely upon the fulfilment of the right kind of sexual and social disposition—both heterosexual and neurotypical—to preserve the sanctity of the US citizenry as white nuclear families.[25] While successful migrations become heroic narratives of freedom, migrant women who do not conform are thus taken as repositories and archives of a foreign essentialized culture

[24] 你不能用「接近」 那一種空泛的字眼。 我要調查的是你的行為 。「通姦」就是行為。你必須用確切的 「是」或「否」回答我的問題。

[25] The liberalization of the INS and the gradual admission of nonnormative migrants since the 1965 Immigration Act then service narratives of heroism where people move from various forms of repression toward their respective forms of freedom. The circulation of such stories then impedes and frustrates structural questions of how various modes of repression elsewhere are constructed to bolster American freedom, democracy, liberalism, and capitalism. The desire to migrate stateside accordingly modulates into a justification for delegitimizing life elsewhere as queer migration is thus a movement of sexual, gendered, racial, and classed relations through the global striations of liberal hegemony.

that bolsters the desirability and freedom of normative US life. As Lisa Lowe (1996) has argued, the cultural production of Asian American migrants is "in excess of and in contradiction with the subjectivities proposed by national modern and postmodern modes of aesthetic representation" (32). By surpassing and reconfiguring the logics of the nation's aesthetic regimes, cultural objects such as Nieh's confront the failings of the US border and citizenship regimes to provide an alternative space to imagine gendered and racialized bodies in relation to their historical conditions rather than the normative demands of the nation.

Nieh's wordplay attests to such a divergence as the INS man seeks to straighten Mulberry's more suggestive language of "getting close" that avoids his inquisition. By demanding a binary yes/no answer and juxtaposing 空泛的字眼, meaning formless word images, and 確切, meaning truthfully precise, the INS man's interrogation is a process of sexual subject formation that tries to enforce Mulberry to identify herself as a deceitful adulterous woman under the INS' sexual order. At the end of the interrogation, he emphasizes that "what **we** are looking for, is not your mood, nor your emotions, nor your motives. **I** reiterate: what **we** are looking for, is your conduct. Conduct is something anybody can see" (257, emphasis added).[26] Masquerading his threat as explanation, the INS man switches from the first to the third person as he invokes the totality of state power true to his nameless persistence as the metonymic INS man. This move to "we" clarifies the INS mission of making women legible to their database through a binarized understanding of conduct through American sexual morality. The denunciation of affective nuance in favor of visible metrics then aims to create Mulberry as an

[26] 我們要調查的, 不是你的情緒, 不是你的感覺, 不是你的動機。我在重複一遍: 我們要調查的, 是你的行為。行為是任何人都看得見的。

illegitimate and immoral body for migration—a demand for Mulberry to trap herself in a criminalized identity.

Peach's queering of Mulberry's furtive femininity into a life of fugitive sexuality is a refusal to be the INS's desired type of woman by turning juridical power into a joke. This process begins in the prologue as Peach and the INS man again disagree over what constitutes proper conduct when he insists on addressing her as Mulberry. Peach eventually stops answering his questions and strips her top off, to which the INS man tries to command her to put her clothes back on before mandating her to "stop joking around. I am here on behalf of the Immigration and Naturalization Services of the United States Department of Justice to investigate Mulberry" (8).[27] While Peach promises to give the INS man all her material on Mulberry on the condition that he stop referring to her as such, Peach concludes their negotiations by speaking to him in Chinese while sprawled over the floor. Furious, the INS man storms out. Sexual humiliation, linguistic failure, and civil disobedience coalesce in this scene the INS man fails to control Peach's impish sexual mockery the way he intimidated Mulberry through threats of deportation. Just as Mulberry stops serving as the main character when the INS man threatened to deport her as discussed in chapter one, the INS man also disappears from the chronological narrative after the prologue. With Peach's letters, the INS man is no longer Mulberry's hunter but becomes the impotent object of Peach's taunting.

This power relation between Peach and the INS man was not always so as one of Nieh's undated draft outlines in her archival files at the UI Special Collections envisions a much more straightforward novel, with the working title *The Pink of the Peach*.[28] Nieh (n.d.) writes, "the

[27] 別開玩笑。我是代表美國司法部移民局來調查桑紅的。

[28] Intriguingly, the draft is in English, while the novel was not published in English until 1980, four years after the first Chinese edition in 1976. While there are no other drafts in Nieh's archive, the various news clippings

novel deals with the split personality of divided China. Rendered from a roving 'I' point of view, the heroine relates her personal story under the assumption that it is really about somebody else—a dead woman." In this version, Nieh explicitly describes the book as a national allegory about the PRC-ROC split through the life and death of—crucially—a singular woman who "has been split into two personalities: the woman as dominant personality calls herself Peach; her other half she refers to as Green [Mulberry] whom she says is dead." While Mulberry is the abjected excess of "her other half," Peach is to be the heroic future of split China.

The existence of such an individualistic outline and its subsequent revision and disfigurement into a decidedly more chaotic novel is in itself an example of a migrant "personal story" imagined otherwise as the novel recalls a palimpsest with Peach mocking Nieh's prior imaginations of the novel. The most drastic difference is that this draft intended to print Mulberry's journals before Peach's letters, further emphasizing a transformation where Mulberry transforms into Peach as "the heroine relates her own personal story" after overcoming her inferior self. By having Peach's letters as epistolary signposts to reading Mulberry's adventures, the published novel queers the transformation from Mulberry to Peach and presents a much more complex story to interpret. The eventual English title offers a clue to what changed between revisions as *The Pink of the Peach* became *Mulberry and Peach: Two Women of China*. The subtitle amends Nieh's initial plan to have a confessional "personal story" to instead offer a more unstable and provocative narrative that exceeds the boundaries of a single heroine or national allegory. It is not that Peach emerges out "of" Pink, another way to translate Mulberry's Chinese name, but that they are one "and" another as "two women of China," reflecting a much more

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on Nieh dating before 1976 that contain the title *The Pink of the Peach* suggest that this was not a draft for the translation but a draft of the novel.

complex set of geopolitical and identitarian relations than the draft outline suggests. While this draft exemplifies a rather conventional liberal bildungsroman, the published novel revises and reconfigures this earlier self as its own discarded past.

Queer Theory for the Two Chinas

Reading *Mulberry and Peach* as a queer commentary on migration also delineates, as Petrus Liu's (2015) notion of Chinese queer Marxism suggests, "what kinds of historical processes empower individuals of certain sexualities to decide who should be tolerated and accepted in the first place" (31). Liu's study of Chinese queer Marxism takes, just as Nieh's novel, the division of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) as its historical backdrop to critique the sexual regimes advanced by the contest between Cold War Marxism and liberalism. For Liu, the queer cultural production from this split participates in a global debate and formation of queer theory instead of just offering localized examples of a liberatory queerness. The theory generated by fiction is thus a way to understand social formations that generated cultural production.

While *Mulberry and Peach* is not particularly Marxist, the novel's invocation of queer life and aesthetics offers a way to reread the historical context of the novel's production—namely Nieh's migrations from mainland China to Taiwan then to the US—for their geopolitical contingencies rather than for the liberal individualist account of Nieh's heroic escape from communism. In the context of the two Chinas, queerness is not simply a recourse to the depiction and conditions of alternative sexuality, but an investigation into the ideological and geopolitical foundations of liberal pluralism that champion China as an exemplarily queer other. Liu argues that China is a crucial time and space of intervention for queer theory due to the widespread

dehistoricization and exoticization of China by the French thinkers such as Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, and Julia Kristeva during the high Maoist era of the 1960s and 1970s who have become key theoretical pillars of queer theory (20-24).[29] Conventionally, correctives to understanding China as an "outside" to Euro-American modernity urge for a tolerance and integration of diverse sexual formations into a composite queerness circumscribed once more by liberalism. Alternatively, an inquiry into the theorizations of queerness produced out of the Cold War's two Chinas can allow an analysis of how global geopolitics are predicated on the desire to spread liberalism to structure sexual subject formation. Liu then exhorts the production of "an alternative imagination of human creativity, fulfillment, and freedom" that does not employ a reductive binary (33).

The engagement of queer theory with a novel steeped in the historical break of the 1949 creation of two Chinas is not to incorporate Chinese cultural workings of queerness into a queer identity but to interrogate the ways that the Cold War geopolitics affect and condition sexual governance in a transnational context and what this history has to contribute to queer critique. While Liu's framing of Chinese queer theory revolves around the unfurling and fragmentation of the nation-state, his Marxist understanding of queerness offers a way to critique the liberal sanitization of migration narratives with non-normative understandings of citizenship acquisition and desire. In particular, Liu reads queer subjectivity through Marx's critique of abstract labor that describes the capitalist reproduction and imposition of discrete identities that can be universally evaluated based on their productive capacity. The subjectivity of the worker comes to

[29] See especially Kristeva's 1976 *About Chinese Women* and Barthes' 2012 *Travels in China* that depict their visit to the PRC during the Cultural Revolution as both found it disappointingly unexotic. Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan were also of course interlocutors and collaborators in the same circles and institutions of this era of poststructuralist theory. See Spivak (1981) for critique of French Feminism and deconstruction's problematic and outsized influence on feminist thought.

be measured through abstract categories such as wage and labor time as individuals are appraised and documented based on their fulfillment and performance of various metrics of utility. Abstract labor then makes social distributions that mechanize and dehumanize the body as expressions of difference become expelled as deviations from normative abstract conduct.

For Liu, queerness is a contradictory subjectivity that emerges through abstract labor's constriction of what constitutes legitimate subjectivity, a process that simultaneously produces the excess of supposedly unnecessary subjectivity. Effectively, Liu suggests that abstract labor requires queerness, the necessary excess, to operate. Where abstract labor is the imposition of universal equivalence and exchangeability to produce the universal individuality and atomization necessary for capitalist social roles and divisions of labor, queer subjectivity is also the result of the imposition of identity. Queerness then designates a relation to the normative power of individualization and atomization that defies preexisting assignations of identity. In particular, Iyko Day (2016) has drawn upon Liu's reading to argue that the "alien capital" of Chinese migrant labor has been aligned with a queering of abstract labor by posing a significant challenge to the normative capitalist citizen laborer. Alien capital forms the exploited excess labor force outside citizenry that ruptures the liberal individualism of the US nation by serving its economic reproduction while also reproducing outside its heteronormative institutions and social formations. Migrant labor then lives beyond normative capitalist time as the excess and surplus life excluded by abstract labor. In terms of migration, Liu's idea of Chinese queer Marxism situates archival rationality as a key agent of the liberal border's production of identities. Migration and naturalization are crucial sites of abstract labor production as migrants must present themselves as an identifiable subjectivity to submit themselves for the ideal identity of the citizen or the resident.

In Nieh's novel, Mulberry aspires to permanent residency and is thus easily dominated by the INS man while Peach refuses to be assigned any kind of relation to migration whatsoever and thus evades and toys with the INS man as she queers the naturalization process. As *Mulberry and Peach* resembles a loosely auto-fictional account of its author's personal migration, the novel itself operates as more than just a fictional text. The most evident reading practice is autobiographical fiction as the novel's events correlate with Nieh's personal life and migration, thus inviting commentary on how her experiences inform her writing. This reading holds the assumption that the personal underwrites the poetics—a liberal understanding of literary production as the transcription of interiority. Yet, this literary autobiographical interpretation would collaborate with the border's evaluation of migrants based on their potential as abstract labor through potential contribution to America, which in Nieh's case is her creative writing.

Alternatively, the novel can be read as an archival object that does not pass the evidentiary rigor of historical scholarship yet poses theoretical problems for the historical context of the novel's production. Where Nieh's storied career seems tailored to the conditions of the ideal abstract laborer of American liberalism, her novel offers a queered timeline of liberal conformity and settlement. Together, they form a dialectic in the performance and undoing of abstract labor and subjectivity in the US. An inquiry into the archival logics at play would not preface the question of the individual's interiority but rather the sociohistorical conditions that permitted the novel's content: why and how Nieh's creative writing ability allowed and led her to migrate then write this novel. It is then the novel's critique of history and geopolitics that would inform an inquiry into the author's sociohistorical position, rather than using the author's individuality to determine the novel.

The archive in which *Mulberry and Peach* exists is the archive of the University of Iowa's creative writing programs as Nieh herself was a student of the Iowa Writers' Workshop—the cause of her migration to the US—and then the co-founder and co-director of the International Writing program—what granted her citizenship. While the novel does not address either program, Nieh's entanglement in the creative writing apparatus at Iowa as student, ambassador, and administrator indelibly situates her novel in these archives. As a Chinese text written while Nieh worked for an Anglophone American institution, *Mulberry and Peach* is a deviant object in the archive—an object that queers the institutional logics of how the histories of either program have been written. Before engaging the structures and relations that produced Nieh's career and work, an evaluation of queer archival methods and imperatives is necessary.

Queer Archives and the Normalization of the Futurity

A key aim of queer archival theory is to undo the teleology and determinism of official historical archives that normalize the objects of an archive into a linear narrative by excluding disruptive contents. Normative archiving can be understood as process where the content—objects and relations held in an archive—must be utilitarian—the authentication of history and knowledge. Whereas this idealistic official archive hopes to craft objective and universal history, the queer archive accepts the authentication function as a delusional desire, then juxtaposes the normative narrative with the archive's exclusions. Queering archives embraces the chaotic entanglements they house and renders visible the various possible realities and authorities to exhume the hidden logics that uphold the truth of normative archival histories.

This idea of a queer archive was first intimated in the article "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts" where José Muñoz (1996) argues that queering an archive

involves a study of the traces, feelings, residues, and hints held within that do not qualify as scholarly evidence. Focusing on affective intensities and suggestions—the "gossip"—allows an alternative understanding of how the archive constructs history. This queered archive challenges hegemonic histories based in regimes of concrete evidence to follow the possibilities held in instances of failure and ambiguity in the archive's detritus. To queer an archive then means to investigate the possibilities imagined by the absences and illegibilities produced in contents that gesture outwards from a linear archival history.

Building upon Muñoz's call, Ann Cvetkovich's (2003) concept of "the archive of feelings" calls for the curation of inchoate feelings to find objects that do not service histories of resolution and progress.[30] Cvetkovich argues that favoring the object over its conditions of emergence represses and delegitimizes the feelings that permit historical possibility in the first place. In particular, she builds upon Lisa Lowe (1996) to theorize the possibility of an archive of migrant feeling that can countenance the traumas of citizenship and dislocation that are outside the aspirational history of nation-state belonging. Rather than reaffirming discrete nationalisms and identities, such an archive would foreground inquietudes toward settlement, naturalization, and home to find the disruptive objects able to issue a critique of geopolitics and mobility.

The possible worlds of feelings that are both delegitimized by and constitutive of history underpin the imagination of what Judith (Jack) Halberstam (2005) calls "queer time and place." Halberstam emphasizes the difference between queerness as flexibility—a fanciful belief, akin to border-crossing, in easy transit between gendered and sexual categories that reifies the logics of these categories—and queerness as ambiguity that refuses stable identification with the promise

[30] Resonating with Petrus Liu's argument that queer theory and Marxist theory are often quite similar, Cvetkovich and Muñoz are both drawing upon Frankfurt school theorists such as Bloch, Adorno, and Benjamin as well as well as cultural Marxists such as Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall.

of liberation, progress, and futurity in normative identities. Driving this world-making potential of alternative histories is a "ludic temporality" of variation, satire, and rebellion that prods the artificiality of normative life by refusing the liberal fantasy of inclusive and expanding social membership, exemplified by the reproductive family. The playfulness of queer time and space then drives an archival impulse to follow the feelings and possibilities in difference to reject paradigms of belonging that transcend and eradicate difference.

Similarly, Lee Edelman (2004) troubles the construction of history and development based on a signification practice that aims to produce a hegemonic or normative regime as he rejects futurity altogether as the time of a dominating heterosexism. In his account, feelings—the ambiguities that destabilize fixed normative meanings—are the excluded surplus of history. This surplus designates the ways of being of those outside reproductive futurisms: those living in excess of a notion of futurity predicated on childbirth. While the homosexual is his exemplary figure of surplus, Edelman distances queerness from homosexuality, as "queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one" (17), provoking a rupture in the time of abstract labor towards a time of surplus and excess. By disturbance, Edelman offers a queer reworking of the death drive as a drive towards "no future" that is doubly negative. First the normativity of reproductive futurism negates and delegitimizes the lives of surplus subjectivities. The second negation then refuses normative life delimited by reproductive futurism. He thus directs queer theory toward an anti-relational stance that refuses any construction of identity or collectivity based in sexual commonality, lest it slips into aspirations for reproductive futurity. While Cvetkovich and Halberstam seek to preserve for the future what hegemonic archives erase, Edelman's understanding of queerness entirely cedes futurity to normativity sociality in order to mobilize a resistance that challenges the logics suppressing and excluding surplus.

Mediating Edelman's rejection of future and the preservation drive of queer archival practices, Muñoz (2009) theorizes in *Cruising Utopia* that the future does not need to be imagined as a project of reproductive futurism but instead as a project of imagining alternative worlds intimated by ephemera, feelings, and gestures. Where reproductive futurism depends on a guaranteed but limited idea of the future, Muñoz locates queerness as the utopic futurity of a beckoning time and place "not yet here" that can only be felt and suggested. His notion of queerness posits hope that the surplus and excess of reproductive futurism can offer alternative imaginaries in the face of "no future." This adds a third negation to Edelman's negation of futurity by refusing "the stultifying temporal logic of a broken-down present" that concedes all time to the inevitability of heterosexual capitalist production through abstract labor (12). While the heterosexist present of "straight time" limits the future by logics of teleology, progress, and individualism, utopic futurity resides in the suggestiveness of broken-down and emergent moments found within the present. Instead of the idea of a definite future and destiny, queer utopia reimagines the future as the possible afterlives of various impulses, stimuli, and senses that wink to an alternative set of social relations. Utopic futurity at once defies normative histories per Edelman, while also imagines alternative worlds without the fixity of the archive of feelings. This archival practice is thus both polemical and imaginative, revolving around the ludic hope of ephemera.

In response to Halberstam and Cvetkovich, Sara Edenheim (2013) follows Muñoz and Edelman to critique an understanding of the archive as an exclusive collection instead of a relation-making process and mode of inquiry. The issue with queer archives is that they share the normative drive of historical archives to immortalize what is necessarily mortal—echoing Edelman's argument that embracing a futurity marked by exclusivity and identity leads to the

destruction of surplus. She claims that just as the historical archive "straightens" history through exclusion, the archive of feeling forecloses the possibilities of queer life's ephemerality by enshrining an "authentic" queer collection. For Edenheim, to queer archives is not to create collections exclusive to feelings since feelings already exist in historical archives. Instead, queering archives accepts archives as perfectly futile and thus demonstrates the queerness of normalizing the belief that history can be narrated or curated in the first place which opens the archive to the inclusion of unruly objects defying historical commonsense.

Taking the possibilities of queering archives to migrant contexts, Martin Manalansan (2014) offers an approach to queer archives based on the chaos of "mess." As an alternative to the rigidity and orderliness of the documentary immigration regime, an archive of "mess" looks to the disorganized and disjointed feelings and materials that gestures to alternative forms of world-making connecting bodies, desires, things, and narratives beyond discrete notions of place and history. Manalansan suggests that the queering of identitarian archives such as migrant documentation is a way to derail and reroute structures of deportation and prosecution based on parameters of rationality, tidiness, and propriety. Mess then embraces and remediates archival detritus into an acknowledgement and hosting of life outside normative citizenship.

Combining these diverse theories into an aesthetic account of how diasporas are seen and conceived, Gayatri Gopinath's (2018) understanding of queer diasporic aesthetics offers a paradigm for understanding how queer cultural production places both itself and normative archival history within a palimpsest of possibilities. As an alternative to notions of diaspora and history premised on categories of bloodlines, nationalities, and ethnicities, queer diaspora foregrounds difference, an awareness of the difficulties of identification, and a yearning against the affective pull of origins. Queer diasporic aesthetics are thus predicated on the felt relations

and affinities between disparate and incommensurate texts, methods, theories, geographies, and histories. The result is an imagination of futures elsewhere and otherwise, that are impeded and made invisible by a univocal and magisterial understanding of history. Not simply devices of representation, queer diasporic aesthetics exhort the reassembly and reorientation of geographies, histories, and social formations that disrupt the centrality of areas and nation-states over the regional, banal, personal, and fleeting.

Together, these theorists offer a way to conceptualize a queer archival practice driven by a refusal of identity-production and signification similar to how the relational *jianghu* of chapter one allows an illiberal alternative to freedom. While the relational *jianghu* posits an alternative freedom to fantastical border-crossing, a queer reading of *Mulberry and Peach* and the archival history of Nieh Hualing's migration to the US offers a theorization of freedom premised in Peach's metaphoric murder of Mulberry and refusal of the identities foisted upon her. Investigating Nieh's archive for intimations of furtiveness, play, and refusal opens up the history of her migration, so easily foisted into the heroic "straight time" of liberal cultural exchange and Cold War geopolitics, to a scandalous and erratic history of gendered and racialized migrant freedom experienced otherwise to liberal exceptionalism.

The Cold War Normalization of Freedom

During the Cold War, freedom operated as a normalizing force to delimit the ideal forms of citizenship, migration, geopolitical relations, and cultural production against two main strands of illiberal deviance: communism and queerness. Setting the tone for such liberal extremism, post-WWII McCarthyism sought to purify the government and masses from such threats joined queerness and communism as enemies through the entanglement of the anti-gay Lavender Scare

and the anti-communist Red Scare (Dean 2001; Johnson 2004). While the end of McCarthyism in the mid-1950s often marks a maturation of purportedly reasonable anti-communism, anti-queerness persisted in large part due to a longstanding belief in the inherent queerness and deviance of Asia. Normalizing the population against deviance, often coded as psychological defects, was not only a matter of national security but also a civilizing mission to protect so-called Western civilization from the purported decadence of the Orient (Shibusawa 2012). The logic of such liberal operations follows in the lineage of Edward Said's (1978) critique of European and American notions of the "oriental" world and its civilizations as sexually depraved and inferior. Importantly, Said argues that orientalist othering has less to say about the mystified orient but, as a sociocultural analytic, more usefully surfaces the social, cultural, and political imperatives of the othering actor. The entanglement of Cold War anti-queerness and anti-communism thus intimates that US freedom, a fragile and chimeric concept, needs to be justified through an initial act of identifying the unfree deviance to be straightened into normative American liberalism.

Just as immigration policy used the liberal heterosexual as a racialization device to shape the ideal normative migrant, the National Security Council's 1949 report on US plans in Asia (NSC 48) and 1950 outline of Cold War objectives (NSC 68) ensconced the spread and defense of such a liberal freedom to post-WWII organize military, cultural, and economic foreign policy.[31] From the US perspective, NSC 48 and 68 are key tactics of Cold War Containment that

[31] The manifesto of the Truman Doctrine, NSC 68 "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security" advocated for psychological, atomic, and military war to contain communism and spread freedom throughout the world. NSC 48 "Position of the United States with Respect to Asia" establishes America's central objective in Asia as the covert funding, guidance, and surveillance of non-aligned Asian countries to ensure that they would be friendly with the United States and form a bloc against the PRC and the USSR. This meant manipulating anti-imperialist conflicts in ways favorable to US anti-communism and minimize retribution on imperialist Marshal Plan countries. NSC 48 also explicitly calls for the establishment of "an information program, both foreign and domestic [to] publish United States policies and programs vis-à-vis Asia designed to gain maximum support both at

explains itself as a defense against an amorphous and insidious communist (and queer) threat—a necessary defense against an "invisible enemy." For the targets, Containment is a project of normative straightening that coopts diverse social formations into the American bipolar world-system of freedom against communism. In NSC 68, freedom meant the protection of "us" from "antipathetic ideas" of communism, totalitarianism, and imperialism. Unfreedom refers to the collapse of identity through the rise of mindless bodies without individuality, the rule of an omnipotent government, and the disintegration of nationalities into a communist "evil empire." These are elements that NSC 68 understands to be present within the US, thus prompting the campaign against deviant "antipathetic ideas" in need of purging and decrying. As Scott Selisker (2016) has argued, these memetic terms of "evil empire" and "their antipathetic ideas" inspired droves of pulp films, books, and TV or radio shows to depict threats to American freedom as inevitably Asian and queer threats to autonomy and individuality. [32] From the injunctions of NSC 68, freedom first required the identification of the spread of anti-Americanism—unfreedom and hateful jealousy toward American power—to be defeated by the intensification of global Americanism—the freedoms of private property, individualism, limited government, and democracy.

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home and abroad." Such a program ambiguously describes both the United States Information Service and the Central Intelligence Agency.

[32] This negative formulation of freedom operated as an American world-making force dividing countries between those needing negation—unaligned and socialist countries—and those who embrace freedom—those incorporated by the Marshall Plan or housing American military. Anti-Americanism is central to this development as Franklin Roosevelt's 1941 Four Freedoms in response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor illustrate the paradigmatic tenets of American liberalism: two positive freedoms—of speech and worship—and two negatives—from want and from fear. The obverse of the Four Freedoms constitutes the basic logic of anti-Americanism as embodied by totalitarianism and communism. Anti-Americanism then has very little to do with what supposed enemies of America believe. Instead anti-Americanism is a belief that alternative social formations to liberalism are assaults on Americans and their values. Anti-Americanism is thus an exceptionally affective phenomenon that allows the American individual a simultaneous identify with national injury and disidentify from the unfree other as a matter of calamitous global consequence. This Manichean project was not just limited to policing Americans stateside but also extended abroad to ensure countries near totalitarian states and their people would become friends of American and not fall under the lure of anti-Americanism.

To normalize and control the Asian front, NSC 48 set America's central objectives as the covert funding, guidance, and surveillance of non-aligned Asian countries to ensure that they would be friendly with the United States and form a bloc against the PRC and the Soviet Union. With both NSC 48 and 68 emphasizing an Asian plot to hijack decolonial movements to form a Communist Empire, the US sought to manipulate anti-imperialist conflicts to support anti-communism and minimize retribution on imperialist Marshall Plan countries such as France and England to enlarge and strengthen the liberal bloc. The plan for Asia was then to extract non-aligned countries from the deviance of communism into the straight time of American protection. To achieve this, NSC 48 emphasized for the first time in US history the need to establish "an information program, both foreign and domestic [to] publish United States policies and programs vis-à-vis Asia designed to gain maximum support both at home and abroad." This came to be called public diplomacy.

Canonically defined as government communications with foreign publics (Tuch 1990), public diplomacy enlists actors and agencies from public and private organizations to spread positive accounts of American culture, history, and politics to influential foreigners. These friends of America were then tasked with normalizing an incorrect understanding of America as the actual evil empire and instead see communism as the real enemy of decolonization. The objective is to cultivate the 'soft power' of financially, materially, and symbolically beneficial relationships with other countries and people who learn to tolerate the 'hard power' of military interventions (Nye 1990).[33] To fight Soviet, anticolonial, and leftist critiques of American

[33] Nye has also argued for a developmentalist approach to public diplomacy as a mature, far-sighted, and "smart" way to cultivate soft power, unlike propaganda and its crude, arrogant, and near-sighted ways that struggle to produce soft power (Nye, 2008). Though Nye critiques the Bush administration's warmongering, he blames their failure to pursue soft power more than the premises of foreign intervention. Further, Nye's differentiation of public diplomacy and propaganda on developmentalist terms irresponsibly maintains Cold War weaponizations of propaganda as evidence of unfreedom, hostility, and racial alterity.

racism, capitalism, and empire, the State Department created two public diplomacy agencies by reorganizing its wartime counterpropaganda offices to form the Central Intelligence Agency in 1947 and the United States Information Agency (known abroad as Services and henceforth USIS) in 1953 (Cull 2008).[34] Key to this new Cold War information mission, philanthropic foundations blurred the difference between governmental and private operations as former and businessmen and statesmen converged at the Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Ford Foundations to build and finance institutions and networks for the collaboration on and exchange of academia, policy, and culture (Parmar 2012).[35] Atop obfuscated colonial and racial geographies, public diplomacy networks the world into friends fighting for freedom and unfree enemies needing to be exterminated (Kwon 2010; Melamed 2011).[36]

In Nieh Hualing's migration to the US, the public diplomacy branch of creative writing exchange programs is a nexus where the normative freedom of immigration policy dovetailed with the geopolitical gospel of freedom. Fearing that popular Soviet and European criticisms of American philistinism would lead the Marshall Plan countries to side with communism, the public diplomacy apparatus sought to align the American cultural production with the discourse of diplomatic freedom to consolidate a US-led Free World (Saunders 2000; Wilford 2008). In the

[34] While the CIA gathered intelligence on areas of interest to US security, USIS spread positive information about America and built strategic friendships abroad to further policy interests and establish long-term networks of cultural, academic, economic, and diplomatic exchange

[35] Parmar notes that while these foundations collaborate with and share similar interests with state organizations, there are no actual directives given to the recipients of their benevolence. Instead, the work of philanthropic capitalism (and public diplomacy more generally) is to create the parameters and infrastructures through which acceptable and reputable opinions can be expressed and circulated. More often than not, these are based in liberal humanist principles of saving destitute people in former colonies, eradicating poverty through structural adjustment, and Eurocentric knowledge production. This is more telling of who has access to and is targeted by the resources of philanthropic foundations than actual missives of these foundations themselves.

[36] See Prashad (2008) for how decolonial peoples and countries built Third World cultural exchanges that sought to make a similar project through in opposition into liberal empire. See Frazier (2016) for an account of how Black Power and US civil rights leaders found solidarity through Maoist internationalism.

1950s, the USIS and CIA front organizations such as Congress for Cultural Freedom and Radio Free Europe spread American music, drama, and literature in Marshall Plan countries and the Soviet bloc. These organizations provided didactic exposés expounding upon the capitalist affordances of freedom, creativity, and individual genius that elevated American Modernism over the stultifying socialist realism produced under an unfree state's dictates (Barnhisel 2012).[37] In the 1960s, this centrifugal approach to public diplomacy declined as President Dwight Eisenhower's People-to-People Initiative and the 1961 Fulbright-Hayes Act sought instead to breed intimacy among citizens of different nations in the Free World by gathering them in America through vocational and academic training programs.

In the 1960s, the PRC's growing power, the aftermath of the Korean War, and a new war in Vietnam made Asia the most urgent realm for cultivating Americanism and freedom. Christina Klein (2003; 2017) has argued that the containment of communist and illiberal Asian countries and people required the inclusion of their good counterparts. Sympathetic domestic cultural depictions of Asians invited Americans to see past racism and support US militarization as the protection of their friends and allies' freedom (Klein 2003). Public diplomacy abroad funded Asians to celebrate their national cultures as part of a multi-ethnic Free World if they actively disavowed communism and embraced American liberalism (Klein 2017). Further, the State Department mandated that public diplomacy initiatives needed to seem organic and "take on an Asian coloration" to avoid the suspicion of decolonial groups who saw the US as imperialist and racist opportunists (CIA 1951).[38] This contrived authenticity attests to the use of freedom as a

[37] Central to this project is the creation of "Cold War modernism" as public diplomacy bureaucrats with the help of internationalist minded artists reconceptualized the Modernist movement's experimental high-brow aesthetics into a massified cultural celebration of American freedom, creativity, and individual genius.

[38] This is especially the case in Klein's (2017) study of the CIA-fronted Asian Foundation that explicitly sought to save struggling organizations. Friendly and wealthy American benefactors were intended to appear as guides rather than as dictators of cultural production as NSC spells out the need for these operations to appear as

strategy of US geopolitical interests in national subject formation abroad such as the need to normalize a distinction between a "good" and "bad" Asian by producing tropes to adjudicate the assimilability and tolerability of certain Asians. The educated Asians and their beliefs in cosmopolitan multiculturalism are friends, while the rest are culturally peculiar, anonymous, and unwanted bodies perverted by communism.

Creative Writing and the Distribution of Freedom

A key site where public diplomacy reshaped American sensibilities and social conditioning was the university where more and more previously excluded groups gained admission after WWII. Mark McGurl (2009) has argued that, as the classics seemed elitist and the sciences forebode apocalypse after WWII, creative writing emerged as the ideal academic discipline for celebratory public diplomacy. Revering the freedom of imagination, the creative writing workshop became the academic war machine primed to channel and contain the rebellion of a new influx of veterans, working class, migrants, women, and queers through literary production. Literature was an ideal crucible in which sexual, racial, classed, and national identities could be smelted into an ideal American self, packaged and then sent abroad through poems, short stories, and novels. With the patronage of the State Department, philanthropies, and industrialists, the University of Iowa formed a liberal "empire" of creative writing public diplomacy with their international powerhouses: the Iowa Writer's Workshop and International Writing Program (Bennett 2015).

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organic Asian friendship. Funded by the State Department and the CIA, Operation DTPILLAR shows the key role of the Asia Foundation in the spread of friendly relations between Asian countries and America. It began as the Committee for Free Asia before rebranding as the Asia Foundation to dispel and conceal relations with government operations and appear as a humanitarian and philanthropic endeavor. The history of this group is outlined in the DTPILLAR found in the references section under Central Intelligence Agency. 1951.

At the helm was Paul Engle who went from Iowan cowboy to the dictatorial impresario of post-WWII American literature by way of a Rhodes scholarship and Yale Younger Poets Prize (Dowling 2019). In the early 1950s, Engle's fame led him to Democrat power broker W. Averell Harriman, a zealous believer that the arts could assure Cold War freedom's dominion.[39] Under Harriman's tutelage, Engle learned the public diplomacy rhetoric of freedom, creativity, and anti-communism to fundraise the IWW to global acclaim. By decade's end, Engle turned funding from the USIS, the Asia Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation to bring various Filipino, Taiwanese, South Korean, and Japanese writers to Iowa who would "go back to their native lands with their view of the United States greatly enhanced because they have found a place for their talent in the University of Iowa, in the heart of the Midwest" (Engle 1959).[40]

Hearing of a rumored Soviet university for international students, Engle requested Rockefeller money in 1960 for a reconnaissance tour in Asia and Europe as he hoped to build his own international program. He sought "to convince the young writers of the world, now so heavily favorable to left wing attitudes, that we [the US] honor the mind in its freedom, and that certain conceptions of this country as uncultured and as hostile to the artist are quaint and unreal" (Engle 1960). Publicized by the UI's newswire (1961) as a trip to learn Asian literature, Engle's

[39] See Twing (1998) for detailed account of Harriman and cultural diplomacy. Harriman was part of the culturalist-informationalist debates of the 1950s. Embodying the informationalist perspective, Eisenhower's secretary of state John Foster Dulles believed in a powerful and proactive American military industrial project that build and kept building the military, with minimal focus on soft power. Harriman championed soft power and believed that cultural understanding was a central concern of American national security. This was to show that art could thrive under capitalism especially after America popular culture had been lampooned into absolute ridicule by the work of prominent public intellectuals such as the Frankfurt School. Further, widespread knowledge that the Soviet Union actively sought to assimilate artistic production as a branch of the communist state meant that centrist and conservative actors in Washington believed that any state intervention into the arts meant communism. Ultimately, the culturalists won as rapidly dwindling approval from decolonial and European states in the 1950s saw informationalism lose ground as Congress and Senate realized that the USSR was invested in building friendships premised on their anti-US orientation.

[40] All citations from Engle are found from the Paul Engle Papers, MSC0514 at the University of Iowa Special Collections Iowa City, IA.

"Asia Trip" used literature as a pretense to "gain real insight into the sort of people who should come, and into the problems involved in their coming" (Engle 1960). This people-to-people project prefaced migrants' diplomatic value over their writing ability with the goal of placing "around the world some very articulate people who have much goodwill for us and our ways."[41] Through these writer-diplomats, Engle performed cultural normalization to straighten out "quaint and unreal" feelings among publics abroad. Tellingly, the mission was only vaguely about literature, and more focused on acquiring "insight into the sort of people:" the ideal subjectivities for American society based on their living conditions, social structures, and general behavior.[42]

Engle's military-diplomatic nexus, especially through the USIS, can be understood as a cultural operationalization of what Rey Chow (2006) has called the "age of the world target" where war "became redefined as a matter of the logistics of perception, with seeing as its foremost function, its foremost means of preemptive combat" (31). While military intervention meant an increased need for surveillance and rationalization technologies, cultural warfare, as the US State Department envisioned, meant a similar campaign of governance through the USIS that would preemptively inseminate feelings of mistrust and enmity toward leftists. Engle's Asia Trip sought to increase the UI's visibility in Asia as a benevolent force watching out for talent to train. When these talented individuals would return, the joint UI-USIS regime of visibility would

[41] McGurl, Bennett, and Dowling (2019) express skepticism that any actual teaching occurred in Iowa at all. They concur that so-called MFA fiction coheres as a genre more because students were pressured and effectively coerced to write to please their influential instructors who would introduce them to publishers. As a program built on the prestige of its artist-instructors, Iowa depended in large part on a patrilineal structure of influence and recognition to maintain its reputation. This can be traced, as Bennett shows, to Engle's manipulation of an RF grant in the 1950s to hire famous writers to teach, instead of becoming writers-in-residence as the Rockefeller Foundation intended.

[42] Engle's journal entries frequently discuss the various luxury foods, drinks, and clothing he was able to enjoy as well as scrutinizing the quotidian rhythms of the people he observed from afar, while making connections between their clothing, food, and climate with their politics. See the documents in subdivision "Asia, 1961,"in Box 4, Folder, "Travels," MSC0514.

gain sentinels tasked with both controlling literary production and scouting for new assets. In addition to his legacy a literary impresario, Engle's archive is replete with language indicating that his battlefield was not in the Iowan classroom, but in the thoughts and feelings of people abroad who could be swayed by his displays of generosity and dogma of creative freedom—echoing the oft-used Vietnam War-era phrase "battle for hearts and minds."

In 1962, Engle made a lifechanging political ally: Richard McCarthy, the Iowan head of USIS Taiwan and a UI literature alumnus. Before establishing USIS Taiwan in 1958, McCarthy worked foreign services in Beijing and USIS in Hong Kong to spread American literature and identify friendly locals (McCarthy 1988). He first contacted Engle after receiving the IWW's 1961 anthology *Midland* that had been sent to all USIS outposts to solicit funds, students, and books (McCarthy 1962a).[43] Pandering to the USIS goal of dispelling philistine capitalism, Engle's preface to *Midland* celebrated Iowa as a "home" for freedom, creativity, and imagination where artists harmoniously co-existed with farmers, workers, politicians, and capitalists (Engle 1961).[44] McCarthy enthusiastically saw this as a way to build a Chinese literary scene aligned with the American Free World to counter the PRC: "we don't want to inundate the Iowa campus with young Chinese writers [but] some of them, I honestly believe, have something to say to their own people and perhaps to us" (McCarthy 1962b).[45] These archival exchanges so rarely discuss literature, instead almost exclusively treating writers as saviors who would remedy the

[43] Subsequent citations from McCarthy are all from the Engle Papers.

[44] Engle (1961) writes, "home [that] is the one place where the creative energy finds that, once it has come there, they are glad to take it in. The benefit to the whole United States of giving these articulate people from the far islands and continents of the earth a conviction that this country cherishes their talent (as their own countries often do not) is beyond measuring. For those seeking a true image of America, it is lucky that they come not to a seacoast city but to an interior town in the midst of the fat land that feeds the nation. Here they have a direct look at the daily life of the U.S.A. in its most typical manner" (xxviii).

[45] McCarthy was also responsible for brokering the passages of several prominent Taiwanese writers and academics to Engle including Pai Hsien-yung, Yu Kwang-chung, Wai-lim Yip, and Ching-Hsien Wang.

deviance of their people, soldiers to be recruited in the cultural Cold War. McCarthy effectively suggested that the UI become the much-needed literary counterpart to the Aid Refugee Chinese Intellectuals project discussed in chapter one. Lamenting that the USIS failed to convince major writers to defect from the PRC, McCarthy stressed that "it is frequently more important to bring one writer to the US for exposure to us than to bring a dozen young scientists, educational administrator, or government officials" (McCarthy 1962c, 1).[46] With McCarthy and the USIS onboard, Engle's plan mutated into an import and inculcation of Chinese writers to be the medics of a world contaminated by communism.

Nieh Hualing and Disruptive Archival Futures

The prized asset of the McCarthy-Engle project was Nieh Hualing. Shortly after teaming up with Engle, McCarthy (1962c) notified him of "a leading woman writer" teaching the first ROC creative writing class whom the USIS planned to send stateside "on a specialist grant this fall to observe how writing is taught" (4). While McCarthy conveys a cursory relationship, the USIS had been employing her to translate and distribute American literature for a few years—a post he first gave Eileen Chang in Hong Kong before getting her US citizenship.[47] He also knew Nieh through former her employer *Free China* 自由中國半月刊 (1949-1961), an ROC state-sponsored journal led by pro-US intellectuals (with American support) dedicated to fomenting an anti-communist charge to retake the mainland for liberal democracy.[48] Not only was *Free China*

[46] McCarthy repeatedly informed Engle that writers were being wasted in Taiwan as they have no formal instruction or exposure to literature since mainland literature was illegal and most writers of repute stayed in the PRC. He considered Engle the ideal guru to guide them due to his experience hosting various Asian writers such as Richard Kim and NVM Gonzalez.

[47] Nieh recounts this in a 1979 interview (Witt, 1979). McCarthy gave the same job to Eileen Chang a decade earlier in Hong Kong as part of a communications initiative that "weaponized" literature to fight communism (So, 2013).

supported by the ROC state but was also funded by the Asia Foundation during its 1950s peak as a CIA front organization.[49] The establishment of a USIS outpost in 1958 itself was to replace *Free China* as the ROC began cracking down on dissenting writers (Wang 2015). With local liberal institutions crumbling in Taiwan, McCarthy picked Nieh as the lifeline for the rebirth of Chinese literature in the US through USIS and UI.

After purportedly falling in love with Engle in 1963 through McCarthy's matchmaking, Nieh went to Iowa and became his disciple in 1964. Yet, Engle and Nieh's co-written account of their encounter conveys otherwise. While Engle falls in love at first sight, Nieh stoically rebukes him due to her obligations to a dying mother, young children, and husband (Nieh 2011). As Engle pursues her from soirée to soirée, Nieh persistently says, "不可能" (impossible). Her droning refusal expresses a demurring anxiety as she managed a crumbling family and fear of the ROC—a situation Engle believes he will magically fix. While the Chinese version of the story ends with Nieh telling Engle that she will definitely not visit, "my answer is still, impossible" (289),[50] the English translation ends, "Hualing came to the Iowa Writers Workshop in 1964."

The reality was not so debonair as Nieh's student visa was denied in August 1964 and she wrote to Engle who enlisted McCarthy to investigate. As McCarthy (1964a) informs Engle, the

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[48] Just as with Nieh's work for USIS, her time at *Free China* is either ignored or noted to support her freedom fighting hagiography. Founded by celebrated liberal intellectual Hu Shi in 1949 and funded by the Nationalist government, *Free China* was the preeminent anti-communist publication in the ROC that wrote polemics, translated literature, and offered general news. Hu's association with the journal, as well as the US-educated background of many editors and contributors, lent *Free China* a very strong hint of being a US public diplomacy publication without direct US intervention. Nieh would later call her time at this magazine "intellectually…very open-minded" due to the constant exposure to Chinese liberal intellectuals in America (Nieh and Nazareth, 1981). For an extensive study of *Free China*'s sojourner ideology see Yang, 2012). For more critical accounts of *Free China* that highlight its overzealous worship of American liberalism see Mei, 1963; Koyama, 2003.

[49] See Klein (2017) and Shen (2017) for discussion of the Asia Foundation on the issue of influence in Asian cultural groups. Yi-Hung Liu's doctoral dissertation drew my attention to this connection as she details the amount of oversight the Asia Foundation had over *Free China*. From Hu Shih's influence to the over-the-top adoration for the US, *Free China* exemplifies a typical magazine of US Cold War cultural diplomatic operations.

[50] 我的回答仍然是: 不可能.

problem was that Wang Cheng-Lu, Nieh's long-time husband and father of her two children, had overstayed his student visa which marked Nieh as a similar threat to overstay according to McCarthy's informant in the INS. Once the chief editorial writer for *Free China*, Wang fled the ROC in the late 1950s to do research at the University of Chicago as a refugee intellectual. While he found work for a classified U.S. government operation in 1963, Wang quit and stayed jobless, fed up, as McCarthy writes, "because he was resentful at some of the methods his employers use to 'control' their people." Even with USIS advocacy and some fame, Nieh struggled to overcome the patriarchal suspicion of the INS toward Chinese women. As Nieh's migration brokers, McCarthy, Engle, and Wang's correspondence arbitrates Nieh's utility as a wife, worker, and woman to parse her suitability to American life and get her stateside. Brainstorming for Engle, McCarthy imputes a need to either repair or dissolve this marriage as Nieh's request hinged on the good behavior of her estranged husband as McCarthy (1964a) notes "a distinct impression that she's pretty much fed up with her martial [sic] situation at this point—but a visa officer can't lift the lid and look into people's minds."[51]

Nieh's struggles to migrate recall Leti Volpp's (2017) discussion of how US citizenship and residency for women follow coverture, a logic of patriarchal property rights, such that the INS historically conferred status to married women in relation to the husband's political and class position—rules not applied to white women. The documentary regime guarding citizenship and legal migration preserves the possessive right of those within its boundaries of signification,

[51] In an archived letter to Engle, Nieh (1964) pleaded to him that "[Wang] wants to be with me somewhere and have a good job while the one thing I want is to be in the States." She reemphasizes her intention to only sojourn as she pleads to Engle that "why couldn't they give me the visa when I do leave my children here as a pawn! [emphasis in original] Their excuse is that I will send for them. How could I as an exchange visitor if they don't give them the visas!" Nieh's use of 'pawn' seems negative, ostensibly as she translates directly from the Chinese 押 that can refer to both pawnshop and pledge as she emphasizes to Engle that she would sacrifice her motherhood for the opportunity to be in Iowa.

while ensuring the dependence of those outside. The management of women of color is crucial to state power over populations as these women establish the boundaries for who belongs to the nation by simultaneously being marital property and the stewards of the nation's future through childbirth. Controlling female subjectivity as a property relation then assimilates aspirations for migration into an exceptionalist vision of US normative citizenship predicated on the homogenization and subordination of racial, sexual, gendered, and classed differences into American freedom.

A month after pleading for help, Nieh received her visa after McCarthy (1964b) ominously pulled some strings to convince Wang to resume studies in Chicago, a mere 200 miles to Iowa City. The intrusion of Wang, a figure who appears nowhere else by name in this archive or Nieh's other writings for that matter, offers the revelation that Nieh migrated through spousal reunification. Wang would serve no bureaucratic use and their children would not be able to accompany her move were Nieh brought on a specialist or student visa as commonly thought. In fact, Engle methodically pursued such visas for many students such as NVM Gonzalez while pursuing alimony escapes and divorce for others such as Kim Yong Ik. Not only a savvy talent scout, Engle was also an experienced conjugal broker at a time when family reunification was the only option most Asians had for stateside migration. Family reunification has of course been the predominant conduit for migration since the Exclusion Era, yet contingent on the prospective migrants' racial, sexual, and classed likeness to the American ideal of the male breadwinner family (Lee 2013). Diplomatically, refugee reunification also glorified America's intimate humanitarian support for freedom fighting against family-shattering totalitarianism and communism in Asia (Hsu 2015). Though the more important refugee, Nieh still depended on her husband for mobility as the freedom she saw in Engle and Iowa came at the cost of maintaining

on a dying marriage due to the possessive operations of domesticity and female subjectivity standard to US migration.

With Nieh in America, Wang (1964) thanked Engle with an assessment of her moral and disciplinary use as wife and worker before concluding with profuse thanks: "without your influence, our reunion in the States would have been impossible…her being [at the IWW] might be a turning point in her literary career—from a writer of national level to a writer of international level."[52] For the pitiably aloof Wang, Nieh is a prized wife who normalized his deviant bachelor life and allowed him to meet someone of Engle's repute. The hope for "international level" is the only mention of her literary abilities as Wang spends the rest of the saccharine letter glorifying Engle's prestige more than whatever merit Nieh may possess.

In 1965, Nieh separated from Wang for Engle as they founded the IWP in 1967.[53]

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[52] Apart from appearances in the Engle Papers, Wang's name has almost been entirely purged from accounts of Nieh's life outside some brief mention of a first husband before Engle. Moreover, his presence in her life is often mistaken as a marriage limited to Taiwan (see Bo 2018; So 2017). The fact that they were separated is of course crucial to understanding how she got to the US and reading the crude depictions of deplorable Taiwanese male intellectuals in the US in her novel.

[53] Engle essentially petitioned the English Department to hire Nieh as a lecturer and then tenure track professor due to her ability as an Asian to understand the plight of other Asians. In a letter to his colleague Fred Will, Engle (1966a) wrote that famed sinologist CT Hsia, who would become Nieh's son-in-law, gave him the highest regard for Nieh in her literary career. Engle notes that it would be best to hire her in the Chinese Department, yet they do not have funds to take her on, so a joint appointment with the Program would be ideal. Engle further emphasizes that "no one today in Iowa City knows the anxieties and needs of the foreign writer as well as she, and no one can as shrewdly discriminate among worthy people and the rest." Nieh is to be his lieutenant for dealing with foreign writers as she appears to have a universal understanding of what it means to be foreign as well as some innate ability to tell talent, which Engle encodes as worthiness for additional program funding to be parceled as her salary. After Will is on his side, Engle (1966b) petitions the Dean to hire her as "sifting such applications [for the IWP], and caring for the successful applicants, is a job which should be in the hands of an Oriental. This, of course, is where I think Miss Nieh comes in. Will suggests that Nieh is not only an expert in Chinese literature, but an Orientalist at large as he writes 'Miss Nieh, with her wide knowledge both of the Orient and of literature, and with her—now firmly acquired—good knowledge of English and of life on our campus, would be a fine addition to the staff of the International Translation Program [the working name of the IWP].'" Nieh also became Engle's new liaison with the Asia Foundation, which paves the way for him to petition English Department chair John Gerber to hire her as a lecturer (Gerber 1966).

Sent to Vietnam in 1967, McCarthy (1966) delights at the union: “she has talent as a writer, if I’m qualified to judge, but even more talent as a woman. She has formed a very strong attachment for you; I hope that you can provide her with some of the gaiety you mention in your letter.” In 1971, this gaiety brought about their marriage after Engle’s first wife died, which permitted Nieh to naturalize as an American citizen. With McCarthy enmeshed in an increasingly irredeemable war, Nieh took over his role as the solicitor of Asian talent for the IWP’s project of hosting writers from anti-American countries for a retreat in Iowa to learn, appreciate, and spread freedom. Transitioning from IWW to IWP, Engle’s initial depiction of Iowa as a “home” matured into a multicultural conjugal setting as he and Nieh became the inseparable gatekeepers of literary prestige in the Cold War liberal world literature circuit.

As much as the IWP is known for its illustrious alumni, it is also known for the Engles and the literary “writing colony” they homesteaded in Iowa as their 1970 brochure proudly proclaims (McGuire 1970). Their conjugal drive to nurture a sense of freedom among foreign writers became “the stuff of myth” as described by a feature piece in *People Weekly*, a magazine more associated with Hollywood than literary public diplomacy (Witt 1979). The IWP’s legendary origin features Nieh serendipitously conceiving of the idea after bureaucratic disputes forced Engle out of the IWW. Consoling Engle with “a cold martini” and “Chinese-marinated steaks” while they boated at a wooded reservoir, Nieh proposed that Engle should turn his talent-scouting abilities outwards to the world of unfree writers (Engle and Nieh 1987). This is not just a miraculous realization but a dream that Engle harbored since the 1960s with his Asia Trip. Beyond tabloids and folklore, the Engles’ star-crossed love story also extends to the theoretical heart of the IWP project: to bridge the world through translation. In the IWP’s manifesto on translation, they note that:

> It has been said that translations are like wives: the beautiful are unfaithful, and the faithful are ugly. A more exact rendering would be: faithfulness to each separate word found in a dictionary is to be unfaithful to the imaginative sense and feeling of the original. The range of English must honor the range of Chinese. (Engle and Nieh, n.d.: 5)
>
> If countries more and more read each other's most intense utterances, they might know their likenesses […] Co-translation may become co-living, on which our survival depends. (9)

In light of how the Engles created the IWP, the language of conjugality, domesticity, and geopolitics is not merely decorative but revealing as it highlights the geopolitical importance of translation. As ever, Engle's tendency is to use literature as a metaphoric screen for a more pressing quest to produce the right kind of person for the right kind of American life. How the "range" of languages can be wrangled into "co-living" once more feeds into the target of public diplomacy: the normalization of the world's cultures through freedom, here embodied in the power of American English to faithfully act as the world's literary lingua franca and emancipate underappreciated languages from their national borders.

Accordingly, the IWP's yearly newsletters assemble a narrative of the Engles acquiring writer after writer to translate their national literature into English anthologies to construct the IWP into, as their website proclaims, "a United Nations of Writers." Engle summarizes his appetite to congregate languages into English through the aphorism that, "today it's a single world…we must do everything possible to bring us together" (*Sioux City Journal* 1979).

His hope for such a singular world attests to what Emily Apter (2013) has called the "oneworldedness" of Cold War paranoia. With omnipresent fears of communist infiltration, an American military and cultural regime of documentation and systematization emerged to bring together all cultures into a singular rubric of legibility. Apter critiques the kind of planetary utopia envisioned by Engle as an enforced normalization of disorder—the fantasy of a single world literary order where all people are "co-living" in "co-translation." Aspirations of global

translation and transnationalism are then euphemisms for a constant state of disorder that paves the way for the hegemony of the one dictating and normalizing the rules of exchange and connection. Engle's utopic proclamations of compiling all the literature of the world through the IWP is thus a call to absorb his guests into the patronage networks that fund his vision of a futuristic Free World secured against communism and deviance through US guidance.

Yet, the disorder that Engle seeks to contain can also be understood as the possibilities of Manalansan's (2014) notion of mess or Muñoz's (1996) notion of ephemera. While the scholarly consensus is that Nieh passionately shared Engle's belief that literary translation could transcend all divisions,[54] her writing—especially considering her feelings of despair at being used and pawned for various forms of diplomatic, institutional, and personal gain—suggests something more divisive. Indeed, the first depiction of Mulberry's house is an exemplary mess. Inviting the INS man to sit with her, "she pushes aside her stacks of clothes, paper boxes, beer cans, newspapers, paint, and cards to sit on the ground as she taps her floor. 'Please sit!'" (Nieh 1976, 2).[55] This refutation and belittling of the documentary desires of the INS, synecdochizing the US war machine, exhorts reader to reject a hermeneutic of policing and ordering to sit and follow Peach as she imagines a life lived otherwise in all its odd messes and entanglements. The novel itself, as a ludic gathering of discarded journals, flirtatious letters, and deceptive maps is an archive of chaotic mess and ephemera, disrupting the normative history of Nieh's life and work.

[54] Wilbers (1980), McGurl (2009), and Bennett (2015) present her as a dutiful disciple in Engle's IWP. Liu (2017) and Bo (2018) present her as the one who came up with the IWP. So (2017) considers it a joint operation. Engle and Nieh maintain that she was the one who came up with the idea (1987). All thee scholars maintain that Nieh and Engle shared a strongly consonant agenda despite the different origin stories.

[55] 桃紅推開地板上堆著的衣服、紙盒子、啤酒罐、報紙、顏料、紙片, 坐在地板上, 拍拍身邊的地板。『請坐!』

While Peach outright mocks and scorns the INS man, Nieh is ever grateful for her inclusion in America even when she protests. The only glimmer of dissent in any of her archival correspondence, Nieh (1977a) writes the following when the UI thrust the IWP directorship on her with a paltry raise after Engle is forced to retire: "I really don't care how much money I will receive (this is my incurable Asian nature), but I do care whether I am treated with equality as an Asian woman, the double minority." Following a coy orientalist joke, Nieh's off-hand invocation of race and gender reveals a flash of anger toward her bureaucratic objectification throughout the years as she held her silence. While Nieh stayed faithful to the IWP's project until retiring in 1988, the alternative world imagined by the glint of her indignantly underlined "Asian woman" unfurls in the future imagined by *Mulberry and Peach* beyond the abstracted limits of this double minority.

Reproductive Futurism and the Child of Migration

Largely ignored by critics, the unborn child of the fourth journal in *Mulberry and Peach* offers Nieh's commentary on the question of alternative futures and the possibilities of revolt as an "Asian woman." Taking the unborn child as a question of identity formation, Serena Fusco (2012) argues that "the fetus [is] the center of a number of investments" for characters seeking to fill a gap in their lives (12). Similarly, Tina Chen (2006) notes that the female body "operates as a venue for Mulberry and Peach to stage acts of impersonation that claim for each woman an identity that isn't recognized by the state" (96). When the abortion has been discussed, it is largely grounded in a liberal moralistic narrative of Peach's rebellious "life of sexual promiscuity, becoming pregnant and considering an abortion" (Chiu 2003, 30). What these critics overlook is the yet-to-be identity controlled within the female body distinct from what it

means for a question of individuality or nationality. Peach's body is a vessel not just of Chinese revolt but also for the America to come. Beyond the contestation between nations and identities, the female body poses a more insidious question: how social reproduction, political subjectivity, and the limits of possible futures are entangled. Peach's rebuke, the freedom she seizes, in running away pregnant is not simply the right to choose as she becomes a liberal radical feminist. Her decision to simultaneously refuse abortion and settlement more radically takes hostage the apparatuses of reproductive futurism and citizenship that paralyze Mulberry through the choice between abortion and gestation.

In Lee Edelman's (2004) critique of heterosexist society's fetishization of the unborn child, abortion has a distinctively queer stance as a "stand against reproduction, against futurity, and so against life" (106). Yet, Edelman's understanding of queerness veers into patriarchy as he puts forth the homosexual man with no reproductive interests as the exemplary queer disruptor. Challenging this stance, Jennifer Doyle (2009) submits the pregnant woman caught in abortion debates that preface the child as a similarly disruptive queer force that threatens the idea of futurity held in social reproduction. The menace is the societal claim to the futurity embodied by the fetus at the expense of the woman to be discarded as "the future's abjected past" (Doyle, 32). Again, the female body draws the limits of liberal society as it is both what needs to be transcended, while also possessing the vitality of the future to come.

The introduction of Peach stages such an ambiguity as she emerges out of the pregnant Mulberry. Peach's birth is of course provoked by the INS man's questioning of her violation of heterosexist monogamy, yet one of Peach's first remarks after erupting from Mulberry's blackout is about the gestating child as she notes that

> You are dead! Mulberry! I live. I've always lived. Only now, I have independence! You don't know me. I certainly know you. We are totally inimical. We live together in the

> shared body (how unfortunate!). Even if we do the same thing, we do not think alike, as with the child in our womb, you want to keep the child, because you want to atone for your guilt; I want to keep the child, because I want to keep a new life. (289-91)[56]

Peach's understanding of the child as the preservation of life might lean toward a liberal feminist assertion of her right to choose, yet her constant repetition of life and death offer a decidedly queer nature to the life that she chooses to preserve. It would have been more liberal to abort the child and live as an autonomous and emancipated individual. While Mulberry's understanding of preserving life consigns herself to the "abjected past" that Doyle (2009) describes, Peach's preservation of life is, as the novel unfurls and she destroys the life Mulberry inhabits, the preservation and production of new life as possibility and not as the reproduction of national citizenry. The "new life" that Peach preserves is also her own, ironically born into the text as a result of the fetus's conception. A pregnant Peach's disruption to normative society is then the production of possible life outside the nation-state, the hypocritical Chinese migrant world, and reproductive futurism.

The vacillation over abortion then entangles the various claims made to the child, all with their allegorical resonances. The child's father is the adulterer who plagues Mulberry's conscious and her residency application: Jiang Yibo, the playboy Chinese refugee professor tired of his overbearing white wife. As the main voice for abortion, he tells Mulberry, after she proposes they start a family, that "I'm too used to my freedom. I also need to preserve my '**dignity**' with my young friends, you know" (Nieh 1976, 263, emphasis in original).[57] Notably, the novel prints "dignity" in bold English, a jarring disruption to a text read right-to-left and vertically in

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[56] 你死了! 桑青! 我就活了。我一直活著的。只是現在我有個獨立的生活。你不認識我。我可認識你。我和你完全不同。我們只是藉住在一個身子裡（多麼不幸福啊!) 我们常常是作对的。即令我們作同樣的事, 我們的想法是不同的, 譬如肚子裡的孩子, 你要保留孩子, 因為你要贖罪; 我要保留孩子, 因為因為我要保留一個新生命。

[57] 我是閒雲野鶴的過關了。我在青年朋友中還要有 **dignity**, 你知道。

traditional Chinese. Beyond conveying the polyvocality of migrant speech, Jiang's evocation of "dignity" establishes a hierarchy where his love of "freedom," conveyed through the mellifluous idiom "閒雲野鶴" literally meaning the luxurious bliss of wild cranes, necessitates and engenders the refinement of the English word "dignity." This transcendence then grants him freedom in and out of the sordid world of paperless migrants such as Mulberry, who he only sees as a mistress as the professor's erudition grants him the ability to turn Chinese leisure into the liberty of American socializing. Jiang's obsession with abstractions of freedom and dignity further intimates the vacuous self-aggrandizement of many of the literati class who fled Taiwan through American cultural diplomatic channels. Despite Jiang's offer to cover her fees to protect his reputation, Mulberry believes that in the end "keeping this child is the only way to atone for my guilt" (266).[58] The unborn child binds them as a promise of new life for Mulberry and a threat to Jiang's status such that abortion is the technology needed to maintain the normativity, not of their relationship, but of Jiang's repute as a good refugee assimilated to America. The abortion would also physically destroy the most scandalous evidence of their adultery, preserving to some extent Mulberry's hopes for residency.

Yet, Mulberry does not listen to him and instead goes to another lover, Deng, who like Jiang is a refugee intellectual, though in training as he works toward a PhD. Much younger than Mulberry, Deng proposes first that they give the child to his older sister Danhong who is looking to cure her ennui. In Deng, Mulberry sees a radical youth she does not wish to pollute as she tells Danhong when she proposes that they marry: "I am misfortune [祸水], whoever encounters me is doomed" (299).[59] The use of "祸水," literally disaster water, is striking as she alludes both to

[58] 保留孩子是我唯一贖罪的機會。

[59] 我這個女人你是禍水誰沾上我就倒霉。

the underworld of the *jianghu* and to the first journal decades earlier when she is stranded on a boat that cannot pass through the turbulence of the Three Gorges. In the boat, an aptly named "exiled student" (流亡學生) rapes Mulberry as she realizes that she has left behind her own childhood after losing her virginity. The student, Jiang, and Deng constellate a patriarchal revolutionary heterosexism that leaves Mulberry no space or time to imagine life for herself. Their violent claims to Mulberry's body through rape, abortion, and adoption expropriate her ability to envision a future beyond their dictates. This despondent burden that Mulberry bears then culminates in her own admission of social death as she tries to save Deng from her fate.

After Peach takes over Mulberry's psyche and ends the prospect of abortion or adoption, Mulberry briefly regains consciousness as Deng proposes to her. Mulberry recounts that he says,

> Sister Mulberry, I want to marry you, we can return to the mainland [PRC] together, we can serve the nation together, we can bring up the child together, the child must grow up in his own land […] I respond to him: Deng you are a young man you cannot marry a dead woman do not ever see me again. (323)[60]

Mulberry's admission to her own death intends to save Deng's hopes for the future. Read against the romantic grain of Deng's national savior fantasy, Mulberry ends the ethnonationalist reproductive futurism that the lineage of the student, Jiang, and Deng attempt to normalize. The breakdown of punctuation further connotes, with the uncharacteristic "do not ever see me again," that it is Peach who extricates Mulberry's body from the ethnonationalist fantasies of Deng by psychically killing her. The rejection of Deng's youthful patriotism further refuses a future for the child as a servant of pre-conceived patrimony, especially with Deng's suggestion that a child conceived in America has his own land in China and not in the US. Resisting the temptation to

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[60] 桑青姐, 我要娶你, 我們一起回大陸, 我們一起為國家工作, 我們一起扶養孩子, 孩子必須在自己的土地上張起來 […] 我說: 小鄧你還年輕你不能娶一個死了的女人你不要再見我了。

understand Mulberry as a fallen woman then affords an alternative understanding of how the future will proceed for both the unborn child and Mulberry herself, worn out and wearied by a lifetime in the *jianghu*, yet still only in her late thirties. The life assumed by Peach, not in some schizophrenic escape, but in defiance of citizenship, nationality, and reproductive futurism, opens up the novel to an imagination of a future "Asian woman" living otherwise.

Freedom, as Nieh's fiction conceptualizes through its queering of the life she found herself living, can be understood as the possibility of imagining life lived differently. While her persona for the publicity magazines and the public diplomacy sponsors emitted a radiant literary spouse, a queering of this archive offers an alternative migrant imaginary that questions the lives laid out by categories of citizen, nationality, and ethnicity. As a question of escape, migration not only points away from a place or a regime but, when apprehended as in Nieh's life, from circumscribed visions of the future. What *Mulberry and Peach* speaks back to the normative histories of migrants fleeing oppression and seeking freedom is that escape is only as meaningful as the ability to constantly reimagine what futures may come and what lives can be lived.

CONCLUSION: THE FREEDOMS AFTER LIBERAL HUMANISM

This thesis has argued that Nieh Hualing's *Mulberry and Peach* is a chaotic archival object that stitches together the genealogy of Chinese migration to the US, the PRC-ROC split, and the histories of public diplomacy and creative writing to produce a critique of liberal freedom. Where dominant histories of the Cold War and of Sino-US encounters monopolize freedom as the escape from communism, the alternative lives fictionalized by *Mulberry and Peach* argue that freedom can only have radical and liberatory potential in the possibility of imagining futures beyond the stale binary of communism or liberalism. Further, the psychic breaks and interpersonal chaos at the heart of *Mulberry and Peach* intimate that a notion of freedom after liberalism requires the destruction of identity altogether, beginning with the refusal of citizenship, ethnicity, and gender towards the deliverance of the 'alien.'

As the story of Peach concludes with such a sweepingly destructive end, there is a suggestion that freedom is a search and struggle to be pursued more than a state to be experienced and maintained. The novel concludes with such a reconception of freedom with its epilogue that retells the familiar myth of 精衛填海 "Jingwei bird filling up the sea," where a princess becomes a bird fated to fill the sea with sticks and pebbles after she drowns while swimming. In Nieh's retelling, named "帝女雀填海," Jingwei is renamed 帝女雀 Princess Bird, who refuses to die after her boat capsizes. While the conventional account served as a cosmological myth of how ancient Chinese rivers came to be in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, Nieh offers a more allegorical story by personifying the Princess Bird's recalcitrant defiance of the haughty sea god.

Though this epilogue is conventionally read as a parable for perseverance through exile and the hope of mediating the differences produced by the divide of two Chinas, the story also

allegorizes a search for freedom through the aesthetics of the relational *jianghu*. Rebuking the sea god's scoffs, Princess Bird tells him that "even if the world ends, I will even you out [填平]."[61] This wordplay with 填平, evening or balancing out, in tandem with the sunken boat are telltale allusions to the *jianghu* world of dissident waterways and justice that posit a world outside the authority of a corrupted power. Yet, the alternative is not an underworld society predicated on a search for justice. Instead, the alternative world imagined by Princess Bird is a set of actions, perhaps futile, that intend to imagine the sea as something else, changing it from a space of death. Fittingly, the titular idiom of 精衛填海 also often appears in modified form as the idiom 填海造地—filling up the sea to create the earth. Princess Bird does not merely seek retributive justice but rather the creation of a different world altogether.

Concluding the book with the pithy adage that "to this day, Princess Bird is still there, flying back and forth" (328),[62] Nieh does not leave the reader with solace or a sense of resolution, but leaves the reader unmoored from both the narrative of her novel and from its world. Princess Bird becomes a timeless and placeless figure of disorder as she does not end the epilogue in a definite time or a definite place, or even continuing her avowed mission. Instead, Nieh leaves her in flight, open to interpretation through the indexical indeterminacy of "this day," "there," "back and forth." She is moving away from time, unfastened from place, and devoted to the singular act of escape from the world as it is to a world of contingency and ambiguity that has not yet arrived.

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[61] 一直到世界末日我也要把你大海填平。

[62] 直到今天, 帝女雀還在哪兒來回飛著。

This fictionalized flight does not just resist notions of fixity, determinacy, and condemnation. What Princess Bird and *Mulberry and Peach* as a whole exhort is an illiberal aesthetics of freedom premised upon departure and the possibility of imagining futures outside not only liberalism, as discussed throughout this thesis, but also from humanism as intimated by the leitmotif of alienage and egress from the world. Forming the foundations of what it means to be a citizen, liberal freedom also underwrites the notions of the human enshrined by the governing institutions of the nation-state. What the illegal alien, the abjected refugee, and the queer migrant share is a disruptive reminder of the imperial violence undergirding and perpetuating the conditions of liberal humanist subjectivity. As a novel of flight and departure, *Mulberry and Peach* gestures to the need for a "comparative global humanities after Man" (Lowe and Manjapra 2019, 23), long simmering among scholars of racial capitalism, critical ethnic studies, and decolonial humanities, that employs the disruptive aesthetic and political imperatives of relationality to look beyond the lives and worlds delimited by liberal humanism.

In the afterlife of this project, the alien reverberates as the exceptional illiberal aesthetic to think of freedoms beyond liberal humanism. Indeed, Nieh took particular care to leave this possibility open and outside the text as Peach's life after the border, after Mulberry, and after subjectivity is purposely unwritten and only vaguely allegorized by Princess Bird. To this end, what might an aesthetics of alienage resemble? Perhaps such an illiberal aesthetic may provide a new way of entangling racial, imperial, and sexual formations through a politics of relation and surrealism that does not seek to dominate or to domesticate, but to trace the encounters between different worlds in disorder that may lead to theorizations of other freedoms.

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