

“SUM O ME ACCENTS:” CATHY PARK HONG’S DIASPORA OF CONVERGENCE

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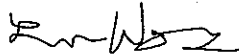
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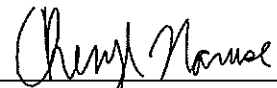
WITH HONORS IN ENGLISH

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This thesis examines the conceptualization of diaspora developed throughout Cathy Park Hong's book of poetry *Dance Dance Revolution*. Hong's model, dubbed a "diaspora of convergence," rethinks and reverses the common imagery associated with diaspora which depicts migrating peoples as scattering seeds. Through diasporic convergence, Hong turns her readers' attention instead to the culmination of historical events, languages, and cultures which make up diasporic subjectivities. Chapter One posits that Hong centers the importance of coalition in diaspora and thus critiques masculinist scattering-based narratives. She presents diasporic convergence through feminist coalition as a method of unity but not an imperative to resist the state's oppressive expectations of normativity. Chapter Two examines convergences in the form of hybridization and creolization which, while often conceived of as inherently liberatory forces, are presented throughout *Dance Dance Revolution* as commodities and instruments of self-preservation. Hong thus points to the fact that diasporic convergence is not always conducive to creativity and resistance. Chapter Three argues that Hong develops setting as an allegory for globalization, and, in doing so, also traces the converging processes by which globalization harnesses and reinforces national divisions to oppress laborers and benefit the wealthy. She thus critiques both the conditions and common metaphors of globalization through attention to processes of mixing which are central to diasporic convergence. This thesis ultimately argues that *Dance Dance Revolution* promotes an understanding of diaspora which is more nuanced than common depictions of diasporic subjects as both scattered and inherently revolutionary.

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Introduction

In the first poem of Cathy Park Hong's *Dance Dance Revolution*,¹ her main character, the Guide, describes the nature of her migration in terms of "ceding." She speaks in Desert Creole, an "amalgam of some three hundred languages" (Hong 19), which include Korean, Spanish, and Shakespearean English:

O tempora, O mores! I usta move
 around like InnuIt lookim for sea pelt...now
 I'mma double migrant. Ceded from Koryo, ceded from
 'Merikka, ceded y ceded until now I seizem
 dis sizable Mouthpiece role... (Hong 26, ellipses in original)

She describes herself as a "double migrant," having "ceded from" both Korea and the United States, spending years wandering the globe like a mythical selkie searching for her pelt so she can shape-shift from human to seal. Selkies are always women, and often, when one cannot return to her seal form, it is because a man has stolen her pelt to compel her to marry him. The Guide's drifting around the world is thus marked by her own lack of agency and her vulnerability to forces of the patriarchy. The verb she uses to describe this wandering is "cede," a compelling choice given its usual denotation of "giving up." The Guide gave up two countries, leaving them behind her until relocating in the Desert, her current home. "Cede" is also, however, a homophone for "seed," which illustrates the opposite: the Guide seeded herself, or put down roots, in Korea and the U.S., leaving pieces of herself behind as she migrated. In the double-meaning of "cede," the Guide juxtaposes two versions of diaspora, one in which she yielded her home country and

¹ Hereinafter referred to as DDR.

another in which she left pieces of herself there. The translation of this stanza into standard English thus reads:

Oh the times, oh the customs! I used to move around like an Inuit looking for a sea pelt...now I'm a double migrant. I ceded Korea, ceded America, left and left until I seized this prominent mouthpiece role.²

The Guide's description of diaspora is stabilized by her description of herself as a "double migrant." Though she has previously called two countries home and then resettled in a third, the Guide has not adopted any of these national identities. Rather, the Guide *is* a migrant in the present tense, an identity which is double in that she has left two countries but also in that she was travelling and unsettled then and that instability stays with her now. She thus appears to juxtapose her phase of movement with her subsequent phase of being a "double migrant," when in reality, the latter is simply an extension of the former. She wandered the globe in her youth and now she continues to migrate, having adopted this movement into her identity.

From the double meaning of "cede," Hong stages the controversy over how diaspora is conceptualized in cultural and literary studies from the outset of DDR. One of these debates concerns the act of "seeding," which has been pointed to by some as a masculinist term used to describe diasporic subjects as spreading like seeds across the globe, diffusing from their homeland. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur claim that, "etymologically derived from the Greek term *diasperien*, from *dia-*, 'across' and *-sperien*, 'to sow or scatter seeds,'" diaspora "suggests a dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and a relocation in one or more nation-states,

² From here on out, poem translations will appear in the footnotes. Brackets denote that I have added content for clarification. Parenthesis contain alternative readings of certain words.

territories, or countries” (1). Stefan Helmreich takes issue with this image, denouncing the term “diaspora” and the spreading-of-seeds it describes as “radically gender-specific,” pointing out the etymological connection between “sperm,” “seed,” and “spora” (qtd. Gilroy 209). Paul Gilroy describes Helmreich’s “rather over-blown alarm” as “misanthropic,” pointing out that spores carry with them the ability to reproduce asexually, a distinctly non-masculine generative process. Helmreich’s argument, according to Gilroy, is based on a shallow etymological analysis which overlooks the complexity that diaspora accommodates. Throughout his denunciation of Helmreich, however, Gilroy also imagines diaspora as a “reluctant scattering,” picturing a diasporic “relational network” existing in the wake of the “forced dispersal” which initiates migration (Gilroy 207). For Gilroy, then, scattering is the act which occurs when a diaspora is sparked by forced migration. After the scattering that Braziel and Mannur describe, people relocate and build relationships across cultural groups and nations that their experience with migration allow. Throughout this thesis, I examine this supposed division between an act of scattering and a subsequent network-building.

The diaspora that Hong illustrates, I argue, does not contain these two discretely categorizable time periods of diffusing and relocating, and thus avoids the ejaculatory connotations of seed-scattering as a completed act. The Guide explains that she has had two distinct moments of ceding in her life, but does not explain her diasporic experience chronologically: she begins by describing her period of wandering, then her period of leaving Korea and the U.S., and then her relocation, all of which combine to make her a “double migrant.” She thus does not consider “seeding” to be an act of diffusion. Rather, her migration has led to the culmination of wandering and settlement in her identity.

Hong's illustration of diaspora, then, is far more congruent with Stuart Hall's explanation of cultural identities in the Caribbean diaspora, which "come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation...they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture, and power" (Hall 236). Throughout *Dance Dance Revolution*, the Guide's language and stories of her past embody this play, as is clear from the stanza above, which includes a dramatic lament ("O tempora, O mores!") alongside casual mockery of an American southern accent with her pronunciation of "Merrikka." As she recounts her past throughout DDR, the Guide pulls her diasporic identity into the present so that historical moments converge with the current moment. Her engagement with diaspora is thus ongoing and has more to do with a culmination of experiences and histories than a diffusion of peoples and identity. This diffusion does not account for traits like "doubleness," which highlight a culmination of experiences and traits. Where diaspora as scattering presents migration as occurring in two separate and binaristically opposed periods of time and thus simplistically presents diasporic identity as divided and spread thin, diaspora as culmination opens the door to richer readings of diasporic subjects. Through the Guide's life as a double migrant, Hong thus develops a model for diaspora which opens the door to understanding diasporic subjectivity through convergence rather than reducing it to diffusion.

Ceding y Ceding

While the diffusion of seeds which float across the world is a peaceful image, the culmination which occurs in Hong's model of diaspora accounts for the fact that the

Guide leaves Korea in the wake of the bloody Kwangju uprising and her creolized language marks her life of forced migration. The Guide's hybrid identity, however, is often read by diaspora and postcolonial scholars as evidence of the revolutionary power which diaspora has afforded her and is occasionally analyzed with a romanticized optimism which, I argue, is ultimately incongruent with Hong's project. The central debate over Hong's depiction of diaspora concerns her use of creole language, which scholars alternately discuss as a creative means of revolution against nationalist hierarchies, a driver of unity between failed revolutionaries, a commodity, and an allegory for Asian-American experiences.

While scholars are right to point out Desert Creole as a creative and innovative method of exploring the hybridities within diasporic identity, I take issue with celebratory depictions of Hong's language because they do not account for her engagement with the trauma of forced migration. Ruth Williams, though she does not fall prey to wholly romanticizing the Guide as a heroic revolutionary character, argues that Hong's depiction of diaspora presents new possibilities for revolution and expression through fragmentation. Williams, rightfully pointing out that Hong's "innovative reimagining of the relationship among language, ethnic identity, and migration has not yet been explored by scholars of diasporic literature," examines the language, power structures and coalitions within the Desert to argue that Hong "recasts revolution for a global era" (646). She analyzes Desert Creole in terms of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization, a theoretical framework which has been widely applied to DDR since Williams' publication.³ Through examining the revolutionary potential of creolized

³ Given Hong's mirroring of Deleuze and Guattari's analogy of "the Desert" as a nomadic space in which hierarchies might be overturned through the creation of a subversive "minor language,"

language and “adopting a ‘becoming-minor’ perspective” toward one’s language, Williams argues that Hong reconceives linguistic fluency in order to present speakers of creolized language as holding a unique “revolutionary power” over those who posit the superiority of official national languages (Williams 654). Timothy Yu, too, finds revolutionary potential in Hong’s use of creolized language, claiming that Hong “uses linguistic hybridization as a metaphor for Asian American experience” (834). According to Yu, language is “the terrain of Asian American identity” in *DDR* and, through *Desert Creole*, Hong skillfully illustrates the complex place of Korean history in Korean-American identities. I do not disagree that Hong’s version of diaspora is concerned with the revolutionary and points to where the convergences within diaspora make revolution possible, as I explore further in Chapter 1. It is crucial, however, to note that Hong presents creolization and hybridity not only as means of creativity and coalition between diasporic subjects, but as markers of forced migration which pull traumatic histories into the present.

As Williams mentions, part of Hong’s engagement with creolization and hybridity allows her reader to use diaspora as a method of rethinking nationalist hierarchies, though I disagree that this is the sole and inherent function of her language. For Williams, this rethinking occurs in the coalitions and relationships formed through hybridity in *DDR*:

New Town natives and citizens of the Desert form a diasporic style of coalition where ethnic identity is not the basis of politics; rather, shared aims are the glue that unites disparate forces. (Williams 658)

the critical focus on Deleuzian analyses of Hong’s work is understandable, and is more than likely an intentional allusion by Hong.

Williams thus asserts that Hong presents “a vision of coalition” in which “categories are never fixed” and hybridity is celebrated (Williams 659). Hong thus argues, according to Williams, that unity is best forged through hybridization and the blurring of cultural boundaries rather than nationalist us vs. them rhetoric. Dougal McNeill, too, reads Hong’s diaspora as challenging expectations of citizenship and nationality. When read through a leftist lens, Hong challenges models of pluralism and identity which are subject to appropriation by nationalist rhetoric and capitalism. McNeill argues that Hong allows for the destabilization of language and thus the productive destabilization of a Korean-American identity, ultimately “deconstructing more complacent liberal models of citizenship” (McNeill 80). Williams and McNeill thus rightfully point out that, through hybridization and coalition across differences, Hong challenges common imperialist expectations of citizenship, namely that members of a nation speak the same language and conform to whiteness. In Chapter 1, I argue a similar point that Hong engages with women of color feminist theory to present a model for coalition through difference. These coalitions are tied to her depiction of diaspora, which centers the act of converging, whether that convergence occurs between cultures, peoples, histories, or facets of identity. Departing from Williams and McNeill, however, I believe that Hong rejects the notion that coalition is inherently conducive to revolution and resistance. A recurring argument throughout my thesis is that, rather than depicting the Guide as a pure and powerful revolutionary through her engagement with hybridity, creolization, and coalition, Hong eschews the romanticization of the diasporic subject. She presents the convergences within diasporic identity as both roadmaps for resistance and markers of violence, imperialist histories, and helplessness. She does not romanticize revolution in

the same way that celebratory readings of hybridity are wont to. In presenting the diasporic as both liberating and constricting, Hong refuses to enforce the double standards which push those with non-normative and hybrid identities to the forefront of revolution.

Dance Dance Revolution

Dance Dance Revolution tells the story of the Historian and the Guide on their tour through the fictional realm of the Desert. The Guide and the Historian's father, Sah, were (fictional) lovers and co-revolutionaries during the (real) Kwangju uprising, but Sah has never been up front about his past and dies without passing stories of his personal history to his daughter. Without realizing that she is Sah's daughter, the Guide leads the Historian through the Desert. The Historian travels to the Desert to visit the Guide and gain a deeper understanding of her own family history. Throughout the tour, the Historian records the Guide on cassette tapes, and the Guide's monologues make up DDR's poetry. As she is a tour guide, the Guide spends a significant amount of time describing the Desert and the Desert's hotels to the Historian, and these descriptions are interspersed with stories from her life as a revolutionary in Korea and a migrant to the Desert.⁴ The poems are split into eight sections, all but one of which ends with an excerpt from the Historian, who writes in serious prose which starkly contrasts the Guide's playful language. In the last poem, the Guide learns that the Historian is Sah's daughter, cementing their bond, a coalition which I take up in Chapter 1.

⁴ To differentiate between the Guide and guides and the Desert and desert, Hong simply capitalizes the first letter of the proper nouns. When I refer to "guides," I mean the Guide's colleagues, who also lead tours. When I refer to the Desert, I mean the distinct quasi-city-state region which Hong builds, which is set in a lower-case-d desert.

Desert Creole shapes the Guide's development as a witty and humorous character, but it also marks the Guide's proximity to U.S. imperialism in her coming-of-age during the Korean War. She often appears lighthearted in her wordplay, but the Guide learns new languages largely because she witnesses her father nearly die at the hands of U.S. soldiers in Korea. He does not know how to plead for his life in English, and is only saved because he knows the soldiers' translator. The Guide's relationship with Desert Creole is thus fraught, a subject I take up in Chapter 2, and the Guide eventually uses Desert Creole as a means of conning the Desert's wealthy visitors as she leads them on tours. During her time as a guide, she also begins accepting bribes from the Desert guards - a police force which attempts to quell the constant threat of uprising from New Town - in exchange for information about the rebels. She thus transforms from revolutionary to "yes-man," and her relationship to language makes a similar shift as she uses it to enforce the Desert's strict, oppressive hierarchies.

While DDR is certainly concerned with specific moments in Korean history and the Guide's role in the Kwangju uprising, it is set entirely in the Desert. Geographically, it consists of three main regions: the hotels (the interior), the outskirts, and New Town, which lies on the border of the Desert and is connected to it by a bridge. The hotel region is Las-Vegas-esque, packed with luxurious hotels which each represent a renowned city. The Bangkok Hotel is down the street from the Paris Hotel which is near to the St. Petersburg Hotel, where the Guide is employed. She has become the Desert's #1 guide throughout her career and leads visitors on tours of the restaurants, sex saunas, "strobe lit" lobbies (25), gardens, hunting grounds, fountains, karaoke lounges, and high-tech bathrooms. In New Town and the outskirts, however, this luxury is absent. Though the

eponymous Dance Dance Revolution occurs about thirty years before the book is set, it continues through sporadic landmine attacks by disenchanted guides and New Town exiles. The Historian describes these attacks as “canny acts of sabotage engineered by exiled natives who crave for time to stand still” (Hong 21). Now dwindling to a small group of scrappy rebels, the Dance Dance Revolution was originally “an act of propulsion, of anguished, woodcut masses marching in cohesion,” supposedly against their exploitation in service of the Desert’s wealthy tourists, though this is never explicitly stated. In Chapter 3, I take up the Desert as it metaphorizes globalization, examining the luxurious hotels where the tourists rest and the dark underbelly where laborers work and rebels plan their attacks as an embodiment of the forces of global capitalism. Throughout this thesis, I examine Hong’s conceptualization of diaspora which she builds in part through the imagery associated with the Desert as a setting, but otherwise through the Guide as a subject with complicated relationships to creolization, hybridity, history, and the Desert economy. Just as the forces of globalization converge in the Desert, all of these elements in the Guide’s identity converge to make her a complicated and compelling character who epitomizes Hong’s model of diaspora as convergence.

Diasporic Convergence

In this thesis, I argue that DDR presents a model of diaspora which I dub Hong’s “diaspora of convergence.” *Convergence* highlights the act of *adding* that occurs when cultures hybridize and languages creolize through migration, turning our attention away from the scattering as taken up by Gilroy, Helmreich, and Braziel and Mannur and thus

away from conceptualizing diaspora as always a nostalgic longing for the past and the homeland. Identities forged through convergence, however, are not severed from the homeland, but rather the homeland is pulled into the present through memories and reconceptualizations of the past; in other words, there is no “wake of” diaspora in Hong’s project. The diaspora of convergence has a presentist orientation in which nothing is stably temporal, and Hong does not evenly split and categorize her characters’ timelines. Histories and memories from the homeland are not considered part of a discrete pre-diasporic identity in Hong’s diaspora of convergence. Neither are they simply laid over or buried under identities developed in a new locale or a location arrived at after movement or migration. Memories and histories associated with pre-diasporic or pre-movement stability should instead be considered ongoing, as language and culture hybridizes and diasporic subjects reconsider past experiences, mother tongues, and family histories. In that sense, convergence might be considered in the same realm as conjunction, connoting both adding together and simultaneity in which identity is fluid, but not diffuse. Diasporic identity is fluid in that it accumulates facets and memories, not in that it simply shifts or spreads as a diasporic subject moves locations.

Hybridity and creolization are crucial aspects of diasporic convergence, as they are two means by which this identity accumulation occurs. As a language creolizes, it does not leave the mother tongue behind, but adds other languages and grammatical conventions to it. The same can be said for hybridized cultures, which do not leave certain histories behind as they accumulate new norms, traditions, and values. Rather, they accumulate new histories which allow for the rethinking of those which live on only in memory. Diasporic convergence, then, is not simply an abbreviation of “more than the

sum of its parts.” Diasporic convergence centers hybridized identities which both exceed the sum of their parts and pull their parts into the present, allowing for the constant reconceptualization of both the sum and the excess.

The diaspora of convergence, then, is a continuous process in which coalition is built not only between people with significant differences in their identities and experiences but across time. Throughout my examination of Hong’s work, I draw significantly from Crystal Baik, who also examines coalitions forged through difference as a continuous process, though she focuses in particular on the continuity of U.S. imperialism in Korea. In analyzing an archive of performances, video installations, and more, Baik considers how reencounters with the Korean War allow us to question the archetypal understandings of the war, namely the United States’ role in it as a liberatory protagonist. With this “reparative creativity,” Baik hopes to look beyond trauma-based examinations of the conflict, allowing her to treat the war as an ongoing act of imperialist militarism and ultimately promote accountability for the violence and thus healing for the victims. Baik looks at cultural forms with an understanding that they are unfinished and shifting, and “direct their audiences toward a cascading of divergent memories and interpretations” which are pluralistic (9). This type of reencounter allows for “alternative iterations” of experience with the Korean War as an extension of the American Cold War project (Baik 10), and mirrors Hong’s diasporic convergence in its presentist orientation. Baik is deeply engaged with histories of U.S. imperialism in Korea, but considers them ongoing, continually acting in the present. Similarly, Hong orients her reader toward the ways in which diaspora is ongoing, avoiding the romanticization of the past and revealing

its violences while exploring the ways in which diasporic subjects constantly reconceptualize and cope with those violences through hybridity and coalition.

In Baik's conceptualization of reencounters, she draws from Grace Kyungwon Hong's women of color feminist theory to present a model for resisting perpetual U.S. imperialism. *DDR*, whose main characters are two women of color, one of whom is queer and the other an anti-capitalist revolutionary, challenges normative expectations of nationality which posit the superiority of white, heterosexual, non-hybrid citizens. Similarly, engaging with the diasporic allows Baik and Grace Kyungwon Hong to problematize the status of the nation-state in the Korean War and the "heteronormative logics" that come with it (24). Women of color and queer people do not fit a state mold of citizenship which privileges heterosexuality, nuclear families, and whiteness. Women of color are thus excessive subjects: they exceed the logics of the nation-state in the sense that they do not abide by the hierarchy of citizenship. Their position as excessive subjects, Baik argues, presents paths toward coalition and resistance against the nation-state, particularly *coalitions forged through difference* as theorized by Grace Kyungwon Hong. Coalitions across categories of gender, sexuality, and race are not necessarily reasons for celebration and are not an attempt to homogenize all marginalized people into one heroic group. These coalitions do create potential for resistance against authoritarian, assimilation-based expectations for citizenship and provide networks of support across marginalized groups. Hong's diaspora of convergence centers these coalitions as they are forged across generations, sexualities, and time. What makes this conceptualization of diaspora particularly useful is that, like Baik's reencounters, it accounts for the fact that the conditions which force migration - in particular, American

imperialism in Korea - continue to shape diasporic subjects and their communities long after they have physically relocated.

In exploring the concept of convergence, Tina Chen and Eric Hayot connect the term to globalization as I do in Chapter 3, particularly as it manifests in Asia and how it connects Asia to the globe. In the first issue of their journal *Verge: Studies in Global Asia*, they explain:

We must recognize that the world built out of the putative European ‘divergence’ from Asia can be characterized equally well by a series of subsequent convergences, a mixing together of ideas, people, and things... ‘Globalization’ is, in fact, one name for this converging impulse... (Chen and Hayot vii)

To further understand the place of globalization and diaspora in Asian and Asian American studies, Chen and Hayot believe it is necessary to trace “the pattern of convergences and divergences that make human culture” (vii-viii) and thus “invite work that showcases the intersection between Asia and the globe” (xi). In other words, they examine convergence as a site where academic collaboration is possible, utilizing their recurring section, titled “Convergence,” as a setting for such coalition just as Hong develops the Desert as a setting through which we can examine the converging forces of globalization as illustrated by the hotels and their underbelly. In this section, “we curate a rotating series of rubrics, deliberately playful and provocative, that emphasize collaborative intellectual engagement and exchange” (Chen and Hayot xii). These collaborations manifest in various forms, for example “A&Q,” which manifests as interviews or dialogues based on various questions; “Codex,” which allows for collaborative literary discussions; and “Field trip,” which contains “reports from various

subfields of the disciplines” (Chen and Hayot xii). To Chen and Hayot, then, convergence centers acts of collaboration and thus allows for the development of coalitions much like I have described. The authors also examine convergence as it contains the forces of globalization just as I do in Chapter 3, where I argue that Hong illustrates images of convergence to problematize the metaphorization of global capitalism. She rejects simplistic models of globalization, examining its processes as they converge rather than presenting global markets in binaristic terms such as “center” and “periphery.”

Conceptualizing globalization in terms of mixing and convergence refutes simplistic models of global capitalism as center versus periphery, and thus allows for a more complex understanding of the forces at play in the global economy. I take up Lisa Lowe’s analysis of the “metaphoricity of globalization” in Chapter 3 to examine the ways in which we attempt to familiarize these forces but ultimately allow them agentic power in doing so. Lowe points to “the rhetorical proliferation of figures” which we use to represent globalization in a wide range of fields, figures which “attest to the desire to render what is not yet fathomed as objectively known” (42, italics in original). Rather than putting forth “static” representations of the processes of global capitalism, Lowe argues that the exploration of the metaphoricity of globalization through allegory is a more fruitful pursuit. In illustrating the Desert as a setting in which diasporic populations converge and are digested through the economic forces which control them, Hong builds such an allegory, critiquing more common bodily metaphors such as the “invisible hand of the market” as paving the way for market forces to become despots. Hong uses allegory to break down the relationship between rhetoric and globalization while simultaneously tracing the connections between global markets and nationality. In doing

so, she lays bare the deeper understanding of global processes which is possible through literature. Just as we use metaphors to familiarize complex concepts in daily life, she develops an allegory which ultimately reveals how globalization harnesses divisions in nationality and class to perpetuate itself and marginalize diasporic laborers. Hong thus implicitly asserts that allegorization has rich potential as a tool for gaining insights into the material world.

The Chapters to Come

Diasporic convergence is a force of conjunction rather than disjunction, and thus evades simplistic renderings of diasporic identity and the economic forces which they are subject to. Examining hybridity and creolization as they exist within convergence allows Hong to problematize binaries which are popularly associated with these topics, in particular those which posit hybridized identities and creolized languages as heroic alternatives to despotic impositions of purity. Instead, Hong deploys the diaspora of convergence as a method of rethinking the romanticization of diasporic subjects who, as a result of their engagement with hybridity, are often expected to bear the burdens of revolution. It is a particularly useful concept for these reasons: it accommodates the continuous impact of diaspora and the conditions which force migration, its conjunctive nature allows for the breakdown of binaries associated with hybridity, and it allows us to understand globalization in terms of mixing rather than in simple, binaristic terms. Throughout this thesis, I will examine Hong's depictions of coalitions forged through difference, creolized language and hybridity, and the metaphoricity of globalization and how these concepts relate to her diaspora of convergence.

In Chapter One, I argue that the Guide eschews a conventional revolutionary arc through her rejection of a revolutionary/complicit citizen binary which puts a double standard on women of color, expecting them to bear the labor of revolution. Hong thus rejects the “ideal type” revolutionary as described by Baik and Grace Kyungwon Hong, centering the importance of coalition through diasporic relations and problematizing the expectation that women of color perpetually refuse and resist. In doing so, Hong also critiques narratives of diaspora based on dispersal and scattering, examining diasporic convergence through coalition as a method for unity but not an imperative to fight. I present diasporic convergence in this chapter as a distinctly feminist concept, as it repudiates the masculinist scattering-of-seeds diaspora.

In Chapter Two, I examine Hong’s depiction of hybridization and creolization as diasporic convergences which are easily commoditizable and thus not necessarily revolutionary. The Guide engages with creolized language as a tool of self-expression, a commodity, and an instrument of self-preservation, and Hong thus problematizes the reading of creolization as an inherently liberatory force. Creolization and hybridity, I argue, are markers of oppression and violence just as often as they allow for unity across diasporic groups. Drawing from Lisa Lowe’s examination of hybridity in Asian American cultural discourse, I further argue that Hong ultimately writes against celebratory readings of hybridity and creolization, instead depicting these diasporic convergences as playing alternately isolating and useful roles in the diasporic subjects’ lives. The revolutionary potential of hybridization and creolization is dampened when these forces are deployed for economic gain or as a tool of self-preservation.

In chapter three, I take up the issue of setting in DDR, which I argue Hong constructs as an embodiment of global economic forces. She constructs the Desert as a human body which traces the processes and flows of globalization and, in doing so, she critiques bodily metaphors of globalization such as the “invisible hand.” I claim that these metaphors demonstrate that the forces of global capitalism are independent despots incapable of being challenged by the lower class and thus give markets a sense of agency. I again draw from Lowe, citing her work on the metaphoricity of globalization to argue that Hong doubly critiques the conditions of the global economy and the metaphors used to familiarize it. Throughout this critique, Hong depicts globalization as an appropriative force which harnesses histories of resistance and the power of national divisions to the benefit of wealthy elites. Convergence abounds within globalization both in terms of the overlapping mixture of processes which occur within it and the imagery which Hong uses to depict these processes, which churn throughout DDR as if in a stomach.

Ultimately, throughout this thesis, I explore DDR as a model of diaspora which allows unique insight into the role of gender, creolization and hybridity, and globalization in diaspora. Literature allows us to tease out these nuances and subjectivities, particularly within concepts like diaspora which necessitate the examination of the individual - the influences on their identity, their methods of building relationships and coalitions, and the coping methods they develop in the wake of trauma - in order to understand larger, complicated processes of migration and relationality. As David Chariandy explains, we cannot ignore that

the postcolonial diasporas have always indicated ‘something else’...and that it is precisely this ‘something else,’ which perhaps cannot *but* be articulated

‘figuratively’ or ‘metaphorically,’ which has helped change the lives not only of self-consciously dislocated peoples, but also all who have found themselves thinking of ‘another place, not here.’” (Chariandy, italics mine)

Literature allows us to imagine the full reach of diaspora through articulating its vast implications which, perhaps, are incomprehensible without allegorization. Given the depth of Hong’s language throughout DDR, her text is a particularly apt space through which we can imagine diaspora. DDR refutes simplicity not only in its conceptualization of diaspora but also in that it is a challenging text, requiring an active and attentive reading process. The rewards of this process are manifold, as the layers of Hong’s language and the care in her conceptualization of the Guide allow us to delve into the nuances of human relationships and resistances, gaining insight into the material world through her deft aestheticization of - and refusal to romanticize - human subjectivity.

Chapter One:

“Labor o Revolution:”

Coalition as a Method of Resistance

On the same day that the 1960 April Revolution forces Syngman Rhee to step down as President of South Korea, the Guide is born, emerging into a room empty but for her mother:

...breat’ she pansori’s breath...lika fire

breatha accordion, dum spiro, spero...y

pop me out...(me yellor fadder

hid home, hidim from froth o birth’s labor

y labor o revolution)...I’se boomerang

out, slip shod onto blood tile floor...

a squalim bile newborn...(Hong 42, ellipses in original)⁵

The Guide’s father cowers at home as she is born, hiding both from her entrance into the world and from the unrest in the streets. Her mother is left to bear the Guide without the father or any medical personnel present, the latter of whom are out celebrating Rhee’s ousting. In spite of being abandoned so, the Guide erupts bloodily, like a revolution. And so begins her life in the care of women. Her father, in other words, refuses to reap what he sows, willing to sire a child but unwilling to grapple with the more gruesome aspects

⁵ She breathed her Pansori breath, like a fire-breathing accordion, inhaling and exhaling, and she popped me out (my yellow father hid home, hiding from the froth of birth’s labor and the labor of revolution). I boomeranged out, slipped carelessly onto the bloody tile floor, a squalid, squealing, angry newborn.

of childbirth. In comparing the “froth o birth’s labor” to the “labor o revolution,” Hong casts upheaval and change-making as a job which is rarely taken up by (cisgender) men, who hide and protect themselves rather than partner with revolutionary women.

Throughout her adolescence, the Guide becomes increasingly political, eventually becoming the mouthpiece of the Kwangju uprising. Her father, in keeping with tradition, continues to hide from and sabotage the Guide’s “labor o revolution.”

Men, particularly fathers, are largely absent throughout DDR. They exist as family members or lovers but always leave or are left by the Historian and the Guide. The women of DDR, on the other hand, constantly find each other, taking up partnerships of mentorship, support, and connection like that of the Guide and her mother in the hospital. Thus, Hong reimagines the masculinist “scattering” often assumed implicit in diaspora as a feminist convergence, situating the diaspora of convergence as a distinctly feminist concept. In this chapter, I explore how Cathy Park Hong situates the Guide and Historian as a coalition consistent with those emerging from the women of color feminist tradition. I begin with a discussion of Crystal Baik and Grace Kyungwon Hong’s analysis of coalitions forged through difference and women of color feminist rejections of the “ideal type” under nationalist logic. I posit that the Guide constantly resists being situated as a pure and just revolutionary, instead oscillating between working against nationalist norms and collaborating with those who impose them. These two roles, revolutionary and complicit citizen, make up a “yes-man” versus “naysayer” binary which the Guide ultimately challenges, working between “yes” and “no” to alternately resist and support normative expectations of citizenship. This binary, the Guide finds, only works in service of men like her father, who are willing to shirk their moral values and become yes-men in

order to personally benefit from the oppression of others, namely the women who orchestrate the revolution as naysayers. She eschews a conventional revolutionary arc in her eventual conversion to “yes-manhood” and, in doing so, posits the “yes” versus “no” binary itself as a masculinist construction which puts the onus on women of color to bear the suffering of revolution. While the Guide does not rediscover her revolutionary role in DDR, she does form a coalition with the Historian, who shares parallel experiences with the Guide in terms of developing her sense of self through friendships and mentorships with other women. She thus exchanges the masculinist yes/no binary for a feminist coalition, an act of diasporic convergence in that she refuses binary thinking and diffusion, choosing instead to embrace both the yesman and naysayer while combining forces with another woman. In the end, the Guide and Historian enact a reunion which, in transcending nationalist constructions of gendered expectations and family bloodlines, illustrates a diaspora characterized by convergence rather than dispersal. As such, Hong ultimately critiques dispersal and scattering narratives while simultaneously questioning the double standards which place the burden of revolution on women of color by assuming they embody ideal revolutionaries. Where gendered and raced expectations for citizenship and illustrations of diasporic people as scattered and disconnected constrict the potential for unity and revolution, Hong asserts, non-normative familial bonds, coalitions, and the collapse of binaries allow for connections that exceed and subvert imperial and national logic.

The Naysayer, the Yes-Man, and the Woman In Between

The Guide - a Korean citizen born during the April revolution, a leftist insurgent in the Kwangju uprising, and a woman of color who migrates across the globe - constantly interacts with the legacy of U.S. military presences in Korea and, in her conversations with the Historian, illustrates how revolution is gendered and raced in a “post”-Cold War society. Crystal Baik provides a useful entry point into the Guide’s depiction of rebellion through her examination of the continuing violence of U.S. imperialism and the Korean War. She theorizes “reencounters” with the Korean War, examining depictions of memory which contradict the U.S.’s nationalist narrative that military intervention in Korea was an act of liberation and thus “discompose the Cold War façade of American benevolence” (Baik 6). She takes issue with the situation of contemporary global politics as post-Cold War, or after a discrete period of U.S. Cold War-era militarism:

Emerging instead as an assemblage of epistemes, nationalistic feelings, and geopolitical relations of power, the Cold War is a shape-shifting system of governance and knowledge production that situates the United States as the noble defender of global capitalist freedom, democracy and autonomy...The United States, in fact, indiscriminately perpetrates racial, sexual, and gender violence against Koreans under the guise of benevolence and protection. Manifestations appear when one knows where to look -- for example...in the all-too-common incidences such as the 1992 murder of the military sex worker Yun Kumi by an American soldier. (Baik 11)

In establishing the Cold War as a system of relations and ideologies which romanticize the U.S. empire, Baik lays bare the violence of U.S. American military intervention which, far from saving Koreans, has repeatedly put them in the dangerous path of the military industrial complex. This vulnerability increases at intersections of race and gender - U.S. militarism was particularly dangerous for Korean women, for example, who were sexually exploited and sometimes killed by American soldiers who, in claiming to liberate Korea, further institutionalized the abusive military sex economy built by Japanese colonizers (Baik 20).

Throughout her analysis of the Cold War as geopolitical episteme and continuous instigator of violence, Baik uses women of color feminism and queer diasporic methodologies to delineate the coalitions and resulting epistemological openings which work to oppose U.S. historical narratives. Gendered expectations of the nation-state include heterosexuality, establishment of a nuclear family, and reliance on patriarchs, and are often racialized in a way which promotes whiteness as normative. These expectations are imposed to promote assimilation and homogeneity, but inevitably produce “diasporic excesses” characterized by resistance to state violence and state-oriented justice. In other words, as the nation-state constantly reinforces normative standards for citizenship, it “ironically produce[s] non-normative formations” and identities which allow for rebellion against the very imposition of normativity. Cold War ideology, Baik posits, cannot account for the existence and resistance of subjects who sit at the nexus of racial, sexual, and gender identities - “interlocking vectors” with “mutually constitutive” functions - and thus exceed imperialist and nationalist logic (Baik 25). The state’s enforced exclusion of non-normative identities from accepted forms of citizenry paradoxically facilitates

coalitions between those who are excluded and thus reveals avenues of resistance against the social and institutional constraints of the nation-state.

Baik draws from Grace Kyungwon Hong's women of color feminist scholarship to examine the revolutionary status of women of color and queer people as they exist in opposition to state norms, rejecting the notion that they thus represent ideal and pure revolutionaries. In *The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization*, Kyungwon Hong defines the importance of "difference" in women of color feminism and queer of color critique, difference which is

not a multiculturalist celebration, not an excuse for presuming a commonality among all racialized peoples, but a clear-eyed appraisal of the dividing line between valued and devalued, which can cut within, as well as across, racial groupings. (G. K. Hong 11)

In her analysis of coalitions forged through difference, Kyungwon Hong analyzes an essay by Cherríe Moraga, calling attention to how Moraga's goal "is not to establish 'women of color'...as yet another idealized identity, an ideal type that replaces the ideal type of either the nation-state (citizen) or minority nationalism" (G. K. Hong 11, *Gender and Sexual Politics*). She thus pushes her reader beyond simplistic conceptualizations of women of color and queer people as strong revolutionaries who harness their non-normativity to seek justice from the state. Instead, she focuses on the coalitions which are possible through women of color feminism and which "make singular identifications impossible [and] displace[] a U.S. nationalist subject formation based on homogeneity, equivalence and identification" (G. K. Hong xvi). Kyungwon Hong draws from Lisa Lowe's examination of the "ideal type," a distinction which Western

nation-states use to homogenize groups along racial lines and distinguish them as parallel to but less valuable than white citizens. Categorizing a woman of color as wholly an agent of change or revolutionary is a singular identification which abides by this constrictive nation-state logic and reinscribes hierarchical designations of normativity and non-normativity. Alternatively, coalitions forged through difference and across racial, sexual, and gender categorizations create potential for unified resistance while also allowing for networks of support across marginalized groups. These coalitions are a crucial aspect of diasporic convergence, as they reject masculinist scattering by enacting its reversal: a feminist unification.

Hong writes the Guide as an imperfect heroine as described by Baik and Kyungwon Hong, refusing to situate her as an ideal citizen or pure revolutionary and thus presenting her as a character who works beyond the singularizing logic of the nation-state. The Guide begins as a brave and stubborn leader, leaving her father's house after he sabotages her factory workers' strike by selling information to the police. The Guide is forlorn: "I'se shame me fadder, I'se shame mefelf, so I's lefttim en sanguish fog...I ses I go, he non look a'me, /he ses hokay, yes, go" (Hong 55, ellipses mine).⁶ While the Guide's father is never depicted as a particularly commanding figure, the Guide leaving him behind amounts to a rejection of the patriarchal power he represents and that which he upholds in the Rhee regime. Not only is the Guide's father the patriarch of her family, but he is a "yesman," taking bribes from a dictatorial government which is willing to sacrifice workers - particularly women factory workers - to protect himself and make money. He is thus an instrument of Syngman Rhee's government, just as his father

⁶ I was ashamed of my father and I was ashamed of myself, so I left him in a fog of anguish...I said I'm going. He didn't look at me; he said okay, yes, go.

was an instrument of imperialism when he tipped off Japanese occupiers (Hong 45). The Guide comprises one generation of a long “Lineage of Yes-Men,” as one of Hong’s poems is titled, and these yes-men constantly undermine and undo the “labor o revolution” that the Guide is involved in.⁷ In this scene, she works directly in opposition to them, wholly rejecting the patriarchy and performing straightforward resistance.

The Guide’s rejection of her father, however, does not simply constitute a rejection of patriarchal Korean capitalist nationalism. His values also come to symbolize the racial and sexual intersections of U.S. imperialism in Korea, and thus when the Guide leaves his home she also rejects Cold War ideology which romanticizes the U.S. and depicts American militarism as protection. The Guide’s father is not just a sell-out in the sense that he accepts bribes in exchange for information. Before the Guide was born, he sold women’s sex work to U.S. American soldiers stationed in Korea, taking part in what Baik describes as the military sex economy left behind by Japanese colonization. The Guide explains that, throughout the U.S. military occupation of Korea, her father remained ideologically neutral, though “Some populii tink GIs heroes wit dim strafing ‘Pinko chink’ /but eh! Those Jees like regula pirates, search for booty y pillage.... /He took Jees to war widows tho widows too dry woeing tears /for Eros” (43).⁸ The father’s opportunism does not result from his position for or against American invasion of Korea, but from the insistence that American GIs, too, are looters and opportunists and that he

⁷ She also comes of age in an era when “pressures to industrialize actually reinvigorated traditional conceptions of womanhood” in Korea, as explained by Jini Watson in her examination of New Asian City women and their relationships to interiority and architecture in the midst of oppressive capitalist reforms (Watson 143).

⁸ Some of the population thinks that the American GIs were heroes, even with their strafing [and their invectives like] “Pinko chink,” but hey! Those GIs are like regular pirates, searching for booty and pillage...He [my father] took GIs to war widows, though the widows were too dry from crying to have sex.

can derive profit from this fact. He thus indulges their sexual desires in spite of their racist insults and disregard for Korean civilians. The women he pimps out to the GIs, however, do not appear to be engaging in sex work consensually. They have cried and mourned to such an extent that they are unable to self-lubricate in anticipation of having sex with the GIs. Throughout the poem, Hong leaves it ambiguous whether or not these women are sex workers or victims of trafficking, though their lack of physical anticipation of the GIs - sparked in part by the murder of their husbands in a war which the GIs exacerbated - suggests that they do not consent to having sex with the soldiers. Hong thus illustrates the fact that sexual violence has always been a tool of imperialism.⁹ Violence by the U.S. military, as this passage illustrates, contains several layers of tragedy for those who suffered mourning and loss alongside sexual violence. These few lines illustrate how the Guide's father both upholds his own patriarchal power and larger systems of gendered imperialism under which a supposed "fight for freedom" only allows for the freedom of white, American men to be sexually brutal and unrestrained.

In fighting against the legacy of her yes-man lineage, then, the Guide also resists oppressive patriarchal rule which makes racialized and gendered groups particularly vulnerable to violence. Her father, who had himself "yessed y yessed, nodded /till no lift him fes up"¹⁰ encourages her to do so, imploring "*you say no, no, no, you say only no*" on his deathbed (Hong 43, italics in original). He thus constructs a binary of "yes" versus "no," in which "yes" is complicity with patriarchal regimes and "no" is revolutionary action against nationalist and imperialist oppression. Being a "yes-man" is distinctly

⁹ This is particularly true of U.S. imperialism in Asian countries, as exemplified by Yun Kumi's murder which Baik mentions as an example of sexual and gender violence by the U.S. "under the guise of benevolence and protection" (11).

¹⁰ [The Guide's father] yessed and yessed, nodded until he could not lift his face up.

masculine in the sense that “man” comprises half of the word, but also as yes-manhood maintains patriarchal power: the power of U.S. military and ideological domination of Korea, the power of a dictatorial politician like Rhee, the power of a man over the women whose bodies he sells, and the power of a father to control his daughter’s actions (as in the Guide’s foiled strike). The yes-man/naysayer binary thus benefits these patriarchs, who are willing to embrace yes-manhood to commit violent acts against naysayers for their own personal gain of power and pleasure. In aligning with “no,” the Guide refuses to uphold these systems and leads the Kwangju uprising one year after her father’s death to overthrow Chun Du-Hwan, a strongman leader in the same anticommunist, patriarchal tradition as Rhee.

The Guide’s saying “no,” however, is only a brief moment of rebellion over the course of her life. Her years as a “naysayer” revolutionary come to an end when she pledges to stop her constant refusal and thus rejects her father’s yes/no binary. After she becomes a top tour guide in the Hotels, a position she acquired after migrating from Korea to the U.S. and from the U.S. to the Desert, the Guide begins to sell information to the Desert guards about demonstrations and rebellion by the indigenous New Town population. The Guide fails to justify her role in sabotaging the Desert revolution, lamenting to the Historian that she needs the side gig to fund her retirement: “D’wan stare at me, I usta be jingo-purist mefelf! /A fist-a-cuff naysaya! Now I’m nut’ing but a yeller /cawin’ castrati, wire-tappim for pennies” (Hong 99).¹¹ In calling herself a “yeller cawin’ castrati,” the Guide invokes the racist invectives her father faced as a henchman for American soldiers and her grandfather as a sympathizer with Japanese colonists. The

¹¹ Don’t stare at me, I used to be a jingoist-esque purist myself! A fist-a-cuff naysayer! Now, I’m nothing but a yellow cawing castrato, wire-tapping for pennies.

Guide uses the word “yellow” doubly, to align herself with her yes-man lineage using a racial slur weaponized against her forebears and to describe the way she sells both salacious descriptions as a tour guide and sordid insider information about the rebellion, reminiscent of a yellow journalist. Her self-deprecation is also gendered, as is evident through the Guide’s depiction of herself as a castrato¹² who shrilly caws secrets from the rebellion. She thus describes her new embrace of yes-manhood as a position of castration, or lack of manhood. While the Guide has not literally been castrated, she makes a connection between her moral failings and cowardice - a lack of having the balls to stand up to authority, so to speak - and her lack of physical traits which are commonly associated with masculinity. Both sides of the yes-man/naysayer binary are thus male-oriented, one side representing a castrated man and the other a man with a penis. Remember, too, that the binary itself was first proposed by her father, a man whom the Guide rebelled against as a symbol of masculinism himself and who reaps the benefits of aligning himself with yes-mahood.

While the Guide is self-deprecating in her explanation for becoming a yes-man, it appears that her ideological reversal is largely repudiation of the masculinist nature of the yes/no binary. Her shift toward becoming a yes-man occurs while she is interned in a labor camp as punishment for her role in the Kwangju uprising, where the Guide’s former teacher, too, is imprisoned. The Guide, frustrated with her teacher for the suffering she has faced as a leftist revolutionary, reneges on her pledge to say “no:” “I turn on her /dere, ses I’ve learn nut’ting but pain, nomo pain, if I escape /Dis dreadnaught, only pleasure from n’won...” (Hong 111, ellipses in original). In recounting this story to the

¹² A vocalist who is castrated before reaching puberty to maintain their high voice and its childlike timbre.

Historian, the Guide mourns the endless deaths she witnessed and all the bodies of friends she held, “skewered to dead wit rod...but no mo, none” (112, ellipses in original). She describes being stuck in the camp as living in a “dreadnaught,” an intentional misspelling of the ironclad battleship armed with powerful guns. After switching the “o” to an “a,” this beastly machinery becomes an impenetrable nothingness, an dystopian realm filled with “naught” but feelings of hopelessness and dread. As the Guide vents her frustration to her teacher in the labor camp, she uses the word “no” several times: she wants “nomo pain” and cannot stand to see her loved ones killed, “no mo, none” (Hong 111-12). This story of her moral abdication - far more sincere than the original, self-deprecating explanation - reveals that the Guide has spent her post-Kwangju life avoiding the “pain o labor” and “labor o revolution” associated with being a naysayer.

Just as the Guide’s father hid from her mother’s labor pains and the pain of revolution, the Guide hopes to escape the world in which the weight of an uprising rests on her shoulders. The Guide bears the responsibility for the uprising, and not only watched her followers die on the streets of Kwangju but also in the labor camp, where they were punished and killed while farming ginseng, a famous aphrodisiac, “de herb dat maki men testes /balloon...” (Hong 111, ellipses in original).¹³ While the Guide has spent her life bearing the revolution, her father spent his taking advantage of the chaos of war to enrich himself, profiting from sex economies similar to those in which the Guide is forced to take part in. While the Guide toils in a labor camp, the men outside of those confines buy the ginseng she farms to enhance their sex lives. Realizing this dynamic in which she constantly suffers - alongside her teacher and mother - while the men around

¹³ The herb that makes men’s testicles balloon.

her reap rewards from that suffering, the Guide begins refusing to say no and pledges to seek out only pleasure for the rest of her life.

The Guide thus posits the yes-man/naysayer binary as inherently dangerous to those who are not men and, throughout her life, challenges the idea that women must bear the pain of revolution through their alignment with refusal. While the Guide's surrender of her duties and venture into yes-manhood is in part a capitulation to the patriarchal forces she previously defied, it is also a rejection of the double standards which place women of color at the forefront of revolutionary movements - in other words, a rejection of "ideal type" nation-state logic. The existence of an "ideal" revolutionary posits that those who undertake acts of resistance must be pure, as one is either an "ideal" revolutionary or not one at all. In Kyungwon Hong's criticism of this dichotomous construction, she warns against simply reinscribing the "idealized identity" by positing people of color as such. "Ideal" types are measured by traits which are valuable to and normative within the state and thus obscure any revolutionary work done outside of national paradigms. Rather than abide by this logic in which only perfect and normative resistances are valuable, Kyungwon Hong encourages efforts "to undermine the logic of the ideal type entirely." The Guide accomplishes this project, at least in part, by eschewing a perfect revolutionary arc. Even as the Guide decides to become a "yes-man," her language is rife with "no." While she is firmly situated as a naysayer during the Kwangju uprising and a yes-man in the Desert, the Guide often works between the two. In illustrating the Guide's disavowal of the yes/no binary as a rejection of masculinist constructions, Hong expounds on the women of color feminist critique of idealized identities, presenting the rejection of this logic as a revolutionary act in and of itself in its

subversion of the ideal *revolutionary* type. In forming a bond with the Historian, the Guide rejects nation-state logic and gendered expectations to carry out the “labor o revolution” even further, forming a coalition which exceeds blood ties and patriarchy to find fulfillment not in opposition to the state or in line with it, but simply apart from institutionalized constraints. She thus paves the way for subversion which does not necessitate a firm and public refusal. This mode of revolution opens opportunities for resistance which is not sparked by perfect and charismatic leaders who must do much of the heavy lifting of subversion. It encourages a revolution in which no one bears the expectation of perfect resistance, but in which marginalized groups might coalesce to support each other in their rejection of nationalist ideals.

Coalition, Convergence, and the Rejection of Dispersal

Throughout DDR, the Guide and Historian’s narratives often run parallel to each other as the Historian recounts her adolescence through excerpts from her memoir which close seven of DDR’s sections. An essential point of similarity in their lives is each woman’s relationship with a woman mentor who provided leadership and support throughout their political awakening and self-discovery. In the Guide’s case, this coalition exists between her and the teacher who introduces her to Marxist ideology. At one point, the teacher takes her on a “fieldtrip to windowless house,” a “Western-style” structure where the windows have been filled in with concrete and where anti-regime leftists are said to be tortured. The two women creep up to the house, the Guide “So bored I’s e fallim sleep” when “Finalmente, door/ creaks opens.../ y rush o rusty wadder flood out de

door” (Hong 57, ellipses in original).¹⁴ Her teacher gasps as they watch “A mon hosing blood out de door,” confirmed in her suspicion that policemen secret their hostages away to the windowless house and torture them.¹⁵ But they are eventually disabused of this theory, learning that “windowless house/ be butcha’s house, not polis boi pato’s house./ Dim slaughtering pigs...” (Hong 57, ellipses in original).¹⁶ Theirs is no perfect project of espionage. The Guide and her teacher’s mission ends with an ironic realization that policemen are not murdering their comrades in the windowless house, but that pigs are being killed in its Western-style confines. This moment of humorous disillusionment is undercut by the end of the poem, when the Guide explains to the Historian that the real police camp was in the forest on Namsan. On the mountain, “de trees rattling not from wind/ but cries o mercy” (Hong 57).¹⁷ This realization, especially in light of the fact that the Guide and her teacher are eventually interned and forced to work at an internment camp similar to that in the forest, casts a shadow over their fairy-tale-esque exploits.

The Guide and her teacher’s investigation, though it does not reveal the dark reality of the torture camps, lays bare the lack of hierarchy in their revolutionary partnership. Earlier in their relationship, the Guide’s teacher instructs her on how to avoid spreading Western propaganda and, along with housing the Guide, provides her with leftist materials that have been translated into Korean. Here, however, the political education is mutual, with the Guide and her teacher both attempting to track the movements of the ruling regime and navigating the fraught terrain of rebellion along the

¹⁴ So bored I’m falling asleep. Finally, the door creaks open and a rush of rusty water floods out of the door.

¹⁵ A man hosing blood out of the door...

¹⁶ Later, we find out that the windowless house is the butcher’s house, not the policeman’s house. They’re slaughtering pigs...

¹⁷ The trees were rattling not from the wind/ but from cries of mercy.

way. Neither of them embodies an ideal revolutionary which the other must emulate. Rather, they support each other in subverting capitalist and patriarchal systems, both by fighting the cruel regime of capitalist reform under Chun Du-Hwan and by rejecting horizontal leadership structures and “ideal type” logic which characterize capitalist regimes.

This scene of exploration and partnership parallels the mentorship which the Historian receives after leaving her father for international boarding school. Directly following the “Windowless House” poem and thus parallel to the Guide’s anecdote in both subject and layout, the Historian describes the private piano instructor from her adolescence, a middle-aged British woman with an apartment full of Brancusi sculpture imitations. The instructor leads her in an exercise, and “[t]o help my fingers curve over the keys, she had my hand piggyback her own hand while she played a simple scale. I rested my hand delicately around her pale, practical hands” (Hong 58). She teaches the Historian a rhyme to keep time, and together they sing:

Peter, Peter Pumpkin Eater, had a wife and couldn't keep her, he put her in a pumpkin shell, and there he kept her very well... She insisted that I sing the rhyme with her and I sang along in a voice that was just shy of puberty. I felt like the blind being led like this and I was momentarily aroused. (Hong 58)

This passage is particularly intimate, full of delicate sense imagery like cross-generational hands resting on one another and voices intermingling. The tenderness of their interaction and the Historian’s resulting arousal is striking in part because this is a scene between two women. In its depiction of a woman mentoring a woman, this interaction is similar to the Guide and her teacher travelling to the windowless house. The

piano teacher leads the Historian as if she is blind, just as the Guide and her teacher cannot see into the windowless house and are blind to its true nature. While this hierarchy reinscribes a binary of teacher/student which the Guide's partnership evades, what arouses the Historian is evidently the feeling that an older woman, an expert at piano playing, is leading her, a young beginner. As such, this hierarchy tests the logic of the "ideal type" by transforming it into a scene of queer discovery, thus positing the Historian as an international student and queer woman of color who spurns national boundaries and the constraints of citizenship by both crossing them physically (through her enrollment in various international schools) and challenging their heteronormative, hierarchical expectations. For the Guide and the Historian, partnership with other women is crucial to the development of their selfhood. Their self-discovery occurs outside of the confines of patriarchy and heteronormativity: the Guide is taught to rebel against the state, an institution which commonly symbolizes manhood and upholds patriarchy, and the Historian is aroused by another woman in a position of leadership.

As the Guide recounts her stories to the Historian, a third partnership arises between them. The Guide leads the Historian through her stories and the Hotels, and the Historian brings the Guide a piece of her adolescence through her resemblance of the Guide's ex-lover. Ruth Williams describes this partnership as part of Hong's providing "a model for coalition that recasts revolution for a global era" (Williams 646). Williams examines Hong's creation of a deterritorialized dialect, using Gilles and Deleuze's concept of "minor language" to posit that the Desert contains a society organized around hybridization rather than nation or ethnicity. As such, Williams argues, Hong illustrates the revolutionary potential in finding unity through a celebration of difference and

“unfixedness” (Williams 659). Williams goes on to say that such unfixedness is a more realistic reflection of nationality in a globalized world and that “in making visible the connections that exist between the United States and Korea in DDR,” Hong encourages her U.S. American readers to acknowledge the proximity of U.S. and Korea, particularly in a world with global networks of identities and communications (Williams 662). The Guide and Historian’s relationship, in particular, allows them both to “come to better understand the nature of their individual relationship to a larger collective history,” ultimately reigniting the Guide’s revolutionary spark and “suggest[ing] the benefits of cross-generational relationships, in which young do not merely learn from the old, but mutually benefit from the past-present connections they can forge together” (Williams 665). While I examine Hong’s use of creolized language more thoroughly in Chapter 2, I find Williams’ analysis useful here in that it touches on the revolutionary potential of coalitions forged through difference, as explained by women of color feminist theorists cited earlier. The Historian and the Guide form a coalition forged through the difference of generation which ultimately allows them to reimagine and gain insight into their own personal histories as they intersect and parallel each other.

I diverge slightly from Williams in arguing that the Guide and Historian’s coalition is revolutionary not only because it ultimately forces the Guide to reconsider her complicity in the Desert regime’s oppression, but also because it pushes the reader to imagine a revolution which is not oriented around patriarchal nationalism or masculinist binaries. Williams mentions this briefly, explaining how “Hong echoes the real-life heroism of the women of Kwangju” and that the Guide’s leadership of the uprising “stands out as a reversal of narratives that normally cast history as happening on a

male-dominated stage” (Williams 662). I agree with Williams in the sense that Hong presents a version of history and rebellion which centers women of color and queer identities, but I do not see Hong’s project as reversing nationalist histories by exchanging male protagonists for females. Instead, I argue that the coalition between the Guide and Historian - along with the partnerships they form in their early lives - presents a version of unity which *repudiates* and, in Baikian terms, *exceeds* patriarchal nationalist logic and offers an alternative illustration of diasporic coalition which rebukes masculinist, ejaculatory conceptualizations of diaspora. This coalition is a crucial aspect of Hong’s diaspora of convergence in that it achieves both the collapsing in of binaristic thinking and the reversal of masculinist diasporic scattering through feminist coalition. The Guide and the Historian reconceptualize their histories in their relationship with each other through story-telling, not exhibiting longing for a homeland or even distinguishing the past from the present, but pulling their histories into a convergent relationship with the present. Their partnership thus exemplifies how diasporic convergence is conducive to coalition between people and the unification of history with the present.

Hong’s reimagination of diaspora as feminist coalition and convergence is especially lucid in the final poems of DDR during which the Guide and Historian enact a family reunion devoid of direct blood ties. As mentioned in the introduction, the word “diaspora” itself evokes an image of seeds scattering — families spreading out across the globe, friends separated by national borders — something which Stefan Helmreich points out in denouncing the term as “radically gender-specific” (qtd. Gilroy 209). He highlights the etymological connection between “sperm,” “seed,” and “spora,” thus painting migration as an ejaculatory scattering-of-seeds necessitated by injury and helplessness

(qtd. Gilroy 209). While Paul Gilroy takes issue with Helmreich's criticism of diaspora as an analytical concept and considers it based on "rather over-blown alarm" derived from a semantic argument, Helmreich is right to point out that focusing on dispersal rather than coalition is a masculinist oversight. James Clifford argues a similar point, claiming that there is a tendency within "theoretical accounts of diasporas" to "normaliz[e] male experiences" (Clifford 313). Expounding on Janet Wolff's analysis of gender and migration, he explains:

When diasporic experience is viewed in terms of displacement rather than placement, traveling rather than dwelling, and disarticulation rather than rearticulation, then the experiences of men will tend to predominate. (Clifford 313)

Understandably, Gilroy takes issue with the reduction of diaspora and the diasporic to its etymology, which illustrates a scattering ("dia") of seeds ("spora") but offers an analytical framework which is much richer. Clifford and Helmreich, however, rightfully claim that using diaspora to focus on the act of scattering privileges masculine experiences of diaspora. They provide a useful complement to Kyungwon Hong and Baik, who situate the examination of coalitions forged through difference within women of color feminist and queer methodologies and thus similarly cast scattering and dispersal as masculinist conceptualizations of diaspora. Baik, in particular, posits women of color feminist methodologies as an alternative to the image of diaspora as dispersal, arguing that "the diasporic as a feminist mode of analysis" contrasts "more traditional meanings associated with diaspora, such as the expulsion of a homogeneous ethnic people from an

ancestral homeland” (Baik 24). She thus juxtaposes feminist conceptualizations of diaspora with traditional displacement-oriented depictions of diasporic populations.

In maintaining her focus on the relationship between two women of color navigating patriarchal, nationalist expectations and diasporic identities, Hong, too, envisions the diasporic as conducive to coalitions and convergence. The pair enacts a family reunion in the final chapters, up until which the Guide does not know that the Historian is her ex-lover’s daughter. In response to this realization, she meditates on the many facets of her identity which have been laid bare in her friendship with the Historian:

I’s sum of all I’s rued, sum o me accents
 y twill mine worn, travels mine tilled, deaths mine endured,
 Sah I’s left y Sah you’ve brung beck,
 ‘e’s allatime dead to me, ‘e’s yours yours. (Hong 119)¹⁸

The Guide explains that the Historian was led “to dis mine pocked river, sum me might/ so I’s be righted,” finally asking the Historian: “If de world is our disco ball,/ might I have dim dance” (Hong 119).¹⁹ In this pivotal moment, it becomes clear that the act of convergence is at the core of the book’s climax and is Hong’s central concern in telling a story of diaspora. The Guide’s lover is left behind, brought back, and dead all at once, pointing to a sudden culmination of history and highlighting the absurd, miraculous bond that the Guide and Historian share which was catalyzed by the Kwangju uprising far before the Historian was born. The attention shifts away from Sah when the Guide cedes

¹⁸ I’m the sum of all I’ve rued, the sum of my accents/ and twill I’ve worn, travels I’ve undergone, deaths I’ve endured/ Sah that I left and Sah you’ve brought back./ He’s entirely dead to me, he’s yours, yours.

¹⁹ [Led] to this river pocked with landmines. Sum me so I’m righted...If the world is our disco ball, may I have this dance.

her possession of him as her lover, passing his memory back to the Historian who has reincarnated him with her own genes. In allowing him to die in her memories, the Guide invites the Historian to inhabit the space he left behind, drawing her into a friendship based on love, support, and togetherness, explaining that the Historian has “sum[med]” her and thus “right[ed]” her. Whether or not the guide returns to revolution and leaves complicity behind is secondary. The importance of her coalition with the Historian is the partnership itself and the act of being summed, or added to another. The Guide is righted by building this small network of support outside of the confines of the nuclear family, in the wake of a heterosexual relationship, with a queer woman of color who has experienced migration and diaspora in a way which parallels hers but differs greatly in terms of its voluntary nature and generational divide. They are thus no longer confined by nationalist, binary logic which would define them against “ideal types.” The Guide did not give birth to the Historian and, together, they bear no responsibility to right the wrongs of a ruling regime and undergo the labor of revolution. Instead, the world is their disco ball as the odd couple transcends the “pain o labor” to dance together in the globe’s shattered refractions of light.

The Guide exceeds categorization by nation-state logic in several intersecting ways. She is a leftist woman of color who galvanized Korean rebels to fight a regime which is a vestige of U.S. imperialism, but she is not an ideal revolutionary in any sense given her eventual sabotage of the Dance Dance Revolution. In her friendship with the Historian, she finds a coalition which provides her meaning and fulfillment in the wake of her revolutionary career and, while she does not necessarily disavow her counter-revolutionary actions, her unification with the Historian is non-categorizable

under patriarchal expectations of citizenship. Thus, with this partnership, Hong presents diaspora as conducive to coalitions and connection between those with non-normative identities, ultimately depicting a quasi-family reunion which not only subverts the masculinist conception of diaspora as dispersal, but excludes men altogether. In rejecting the binary which attempts to categorize subjects which exceed imperialist “ideal type” logic into yes-men and naysayers, Hong provides a model of coalition which is not solely fruitful in its potential for instigating revolution, but in its potential for alleviating the pain of gendered expectations. Under heteronormative, patriarchal logic, labor and suffering are distinctly feminine and the burden of change-making is foisted upon those who cannot live without change. For the Guide and the Historian, resistance lies not in pain but in moments of storytelling, intimacy, and relief.

While this coalition points to ways in which diasporic convergences produce roadmaps of subversion, diasporic convergences are not inherently revolutionary. In the next chapter, I explore the limits of subversion and creativity as they exist within a diaspora of convergence.

Chapter 2

Borders, Bridges, and Jars:

The Lack of Liberation Within Creolization and Hybridity

Bazaars, auctions, and dance halls thrive just next to the bridge which connects New Town - a city of exiled laborers - to the rest of the Desert. The Guide and Historian walk through these streets in a section entitled “Resuming the Desert Tour: Toward the Outskirts, Toward the Bridge,” and, among other things, witness a wedding where the guests “toast to bountiful gene pool, /to intramarry, couple breedim beige population!” (Hong 92).²⁰ These two lines repeat at the end of the poem’s three stanzas, each of which illustrate several couples who marry across ethnic, racial, and religious divisions and are a distinct celebration of hybridization as enacted not necessarily through holy matrimony but through the couple’s future children: the forthcoming “beige population.” The celebration of hybridization has little to do with those who display unity across social categories. Instead, the toast glorifies the gene pool which married couples produce, or the “miscegenatin’ amour dim seem to reek” (Hong 92).²¹ In the final stanza, the speaker - likely the Guide, given the strong presence of Desert dialect, though the poems in this section are less conversational than the rest - repeats a hybridized Latin phrase: “bine fort, ruby-lined pachyderms who trundle here proud, /bine fort, madders who nag fo proposal enactment” (Hong 92).²² The literal translation of “bine” from Latin to English is “go,” or “(you) GO!” as it is in the imperative tense (*Latin Dictionary and Grammar Aid*). “Fort” means simply “forth,” the two words together meaning “go forth,” an

²⁰ Toast to a bountiful gene pool, to intermarriage, to couples breeding a beige population!

²¹ The miscegenating love with which [the couple] seems to reek.

²² Go forth, ruby-lined pachyderms who trundle here proudly! Go forth, mothers who nag for the enactment of a proposal!

optimistic, forward-looking encouragement of those getting married - in other words, go forth and conquer! “Bine” can also be read as the second half of “combine,” referring to two (or double, from “bīnī”) people coming together (“Combine, v.,” etymology). Thus, “bine forth,” means “go forth” as well as “combine forth,” both of which present an common imperative: the couple must enter into the future, combining their genes, procreating, and producing a generation which evidences the hybridization of race, culture, religion, and language.

These forward-looking illustrations of intermarriage thus challenge the reader’s understanding of hybridization as a necessarily liberating force. In celebratory readings of hybridization, “productive” is often used to describe hybridity and points to the solidarity and potential for self-expression that might be gained from blurring linguistic and racial borders. In this poem, “Toasts in the Grove of Proposals,” however, hybridization is celebrated for its potential to produce a strong gene pool, a celebration which foists expectations that biracial couples give birth to children and create nuclear families. These toasts are emblematic of the ways in which hybridity and creolized language are instrumentalized throughout DDR. While linguistic creolization and hybridity allow for the Guide’s development as a witty and exciting character, the realities of her economic positionality lead to her using these facets of her identity as commodities. Creolization and hybridity thus constrict and isolate the Guide just as often as they liberate her. In this chapter, I argue that Hong asks her reader to simultaneously consider the painful implications of hybridity and its expressive potential. I start by discussing the origins of Desert Creole, discussing how Hong presents this language as both a means of creative expression and a marker of tragic exile from the Desert. Through associating the New

Town bridge with the Odyssean tale of Penelope's weaving, Hong uses the bridge as a symbol for both the creative production and deathlike destruction which she associates with the act of hybridizing and creolizing. I go on to examine the Guide's use of language as a means of self-preservation and profiting from the Desert's strict hierarchy which exploits laborers at the expense of wealthy tourists. Throughout DDR, Hong uses the image of jars and buckets to depict the isolation that guides face in their use of Desert Creole, which both affords them self-sustainability and relegates them to an isolating, individualistic lifestyle. Throughout her imagery of bridges and jars, Hong ultimately writes against celebratory readings of hybridity and creolization, both of which mark the convergence of imperialist histories, forced migration, and expressive creativity in diasporic subjectivity. Lisa Lowe makes a similar argument regarding hybridity within Asian American cultural discourse, as this hybridity evidences U.S. imperialism and racism just as it allows for resistance against these forces. I draw from Lowe to reveal how Hong posits that the potential for self-expression and creativity through diasporic convergence depends on one's economic positionality and the realities of oppressive political conditions.

Life and Death on the Bridge

DDR often centers the Guide's monologues to the Historian as they tour, but these exchanges pause during "Intermission: Portrait of the Desert" in which the history of New Town depicts its border with the Desert as fluid. Formatted like an encyclopedic entry (though it is one of the few poems *not* entitled "Almanac" in the section), the "New Town" poem describes the population, borders, religion, and landmarks of New Town

enigmatically. The “Law” section, for instance, contains only one line: “Is the sin of choice” (Hong 81). Under “Language,” the reader is allowed a more straightforward examination of New Town’s history:

First began warping when the first ship docked and they hybridized a word for money so that group 1 would understand group 2. But in New Town, there is not a trace of trade here. They can follow their words back to the first tribe. (Hong 80)

The identity of the narrator in this section remains unclear. The lack of dialect points to the likelihood that the Guide is not speaking here, so perhaps the Historian is providing her audience with a background of New Town in uncharacteristically poetic and evasive terms. There is some dissonance in these descriptions of New Town, though; supposedly, the region is insular and lacks any economic connection to the outside world. The speaker states earlier in the poem that the New Town population “Grows each time Desert officials exile natives to New Town: a guide, a hotel maid, a street vendor who sells off-season fruit, an engineer of bombs” (Hong 80). As for the border between New Town and the rest of the Desert, it “moves a quarter of an inch east everyday,” and New Town rebels often cross it disguised as guides to lead tourists to their deaths. New Town, then, is not as insular as it appears, and the border between New Town and the hotel region is permeable and nebulous. Exiled workers are forced to cross over and often cross back while the border itself moves around those who stay.

The fluid quality of the New Town border is tied directly to the hybridization of Desert Creole, which appears to morph in relation to the bridge which connects New Town to the Desert. In another refutation of New Town’s supposed insularity, the third

poem of four which are entitled “Almanac” in the “Portrait of the Desert” section depicts exiled people traversing the bridge constantly:

Like Penelope weaving unweaving
 they’ve crossed recrossed
 over the steel corseted bridge

to unfractured idiom. Ah! No longer
 the tongue anahems with another
 man’s slangy ahems,

dander dregs of their mynah bird’s
 trill sloughs into river’s trough.

A monologue distilled shrilled

exiled, they cross the ratcheting bridge. (Hong 76)

Like Penelope tricking the suitors who await news of their husband’s death, the indigenous New Town residents tread back and forth across the bridge between their city and the Hotels. The path takes them to “unfractured idiom,” where the “slangy ahems” of daily colloquial speech do not butt up against each other. There is no “ana”-ahem which, as the prefix implies, conflicts with or pushes someone else’s speech. Instead, the piercing traces of that distinction which divorces “slangy” language from the pure mother tongue fall away like a pest’s caws²³ are drowned out by a river’s hush. As the exiled speakers re-enter the land they were forced to evacuate and then loop back again, their “monologue” is exiled as well, shifting into a language which contains more than a

²³ The Common Myna bird is an invasive species which is loud, annoying, and can mimic human speech (<http://www.tsusinvasives.org/home/database/acridotheres-tristis>).

singular, “mono-” source. The “distilled” and “shrilled” mother tongue thus falls away as New Town inhabitants travel back and forth along the bridge. What is left is an impure, hybridized language which is less combative and more pleasant to the ear.

The reworking of the Desert dialect through New Town migration and exile, however, is not a pleasant process. Throughout DDR, the development of creolized language is connected not only to the cruelty of exile but also to manufacturing and economic need, just as hybridity is associated with production in the celebration of a “beige population.” In the cyclical crossing and recrossing of the bridge, the movement of exiled New Town inhabitants mirrors that of the racing greyhounds on a track which is proximate enough to the bridge that the New Town residents hear underperforming dogs being put down:

how they frisk their heads around
when they hear the shots, but see,
those shots are not for them.

A lot nearby, a man whose job
it is to put to rest greyhound dogs
too slow for the track. (Hong 77)

The spacing in the final stanza mirrors that of the first, which opens the poem with an invocation of Penelope and *The Odyssey*:

Succumb he says the dog succumbs.
Cradle its deer-like head whisper a prayer
into the dog ear’s felt and aim.

Only the first and last stanzas of the third “Almanac” poem contain multiple lines in which white space interrupts the string of words. These stanzas thus parallel each other in their blankness and sporadic lack of language. They also serve as bookends which, containing between them detailed descriptions of the bridge and those who cross it, allude to the story of Odysseus’ trek to Troy and back. Upon his return, Odysseus sees his loyal dog Argos, a dog previously famous for his hunting prowess (as are greyhounds) but who has become weak and infested with fleas in Odysseus’ absence. After glancing at Odysseus after the twenty years of his absence, Argos dies, succumbing like the greyhounds next to the bridge. Argos and Penelope thus take on parallel roles in Odysseus’ absence, both subjected to a torturous purgatory as they await his return for two decades. Penelope incessantly weaves and unweaves Laertes’ burial shroud, cyclically producing and un-producing the symbol of his death. Her proximity to death thus oscillates similarly to Argos’. He nearly dies with his master’s disappearance, is resurrected at the moment of their brief reunion, and dies again in the wake of this reunion’s realization.

Hong’s allusion to this period of liminality in which Odysseus’ loved ones live through the in-between of his absence and wander the margins of death contains the stanzas which explain New Town’s development of dialect through traversal. Those who cross the bridge are, after all, exiles in the midst of a failing attempt to wrest back their homeland. They cross and recross continuously, weaving and unweaving the threads of their language as it suits them but nonetheless stuck in this endless loop of re-creation. The citizens of New Town thus oscillate between vitality and death similarly to Argos and Penelope. Through associating the bridge with this myth, Hong illustrates how

traversal and liminality lead to both artistic and linguistic production and periodic destruction. Life and death, exile and relocation, and the mother tongue and creolized language converge on the bridge.

Lisa Lowe is also concerned with the convergence of these dyads within hybridity, which, as she points out, is both a marker of oppression and method of subverting both nativism and assimilation. In promoting political formations between Asian Americans which account for and incorporate difference and do not rely on “the construction of sameness,” she explores group identity discourses within Asian American studies, focusing on the possibilities within “settling for neither nativism nor assimilation” (145). Drawing from Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*, she explains how both of these concepts “enunciate the old order” (143). Rejecting the construction of the nativism and assimilationism dyad means “conceiving of the making and practice of Asian-American culture as contested and unsettled, as taking place in the movement between sites and in the strategic occupation of heterogeneous and conflicting positions” (150). The traversing and liminal quality of the New Town exiles mirrors this movement, as their language is never entirely settled. They do not settle in New Town, where supposedly “they can follow their words back to the first tribe,” and they do not rest in the Desert, where their resistance to the pressure to assimilate led to their exile. Thus, at least in part, the bridge as a symbol for creolization allows New Town residents to creatively subvert the nativist/assimilationist binary and lie unstably between location and relocation.

Of course, this embrace of in-between-ness and the creativity of subversion through creolization does not necessitate the romanticization of the conditions from which hybridity emerges. According to Lowe,

the materialist concept of hybridity conveys that the histories of forced labor migrations, racial segregation, economic displacement, and internment are left in the material traces of ‘hybrid’ cultural identities...Hybridization is not the ‘free’ oscillation between or among chosen identities. It is the uneven process through which immigrant communities encounter the violences of the US state, and the capital imperatives served by the United States and by the Asian states from which they come, and the process through which they survive those violences by living, inventing, and reproducing different cultural alternatives. (Lowe 151, ellipses added)

Lowe’s astute and incisive analysis lays out the articulation and rearticulation of hybridities as they arise from forced migration and incarceration and offer the possibility for reclamation and resistance. It is not up to a diasporic subject whether or not hybridity touches their identity, and is thus a marker of oppression just as it is a roadmap for opposition to nationalist cultural hegemony. Ultimately, Desert Creole is developed through a liminality which both arises from the violence of assimilation and is a method of working through and surviving such violence.

To some extent, this reading of Desert Creole as both a marker of oppression and a survival method contrasts common readings of Hong’s dialect as largely conducive to creativity and self-expression. Ruth Williams reads Desert Creole as a “potent challenge to our conceptions of fluency” which flips the hierarchy in which creolized language and

dialect is subordinated to formal and supposedly pure versions of language (Williams 648). She makes a similar argument to Lowe in connecting Hong's language to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "deterritorialized language," which "exposes the many intersections of linguistic and ethnic difference that create this narrative" and thus resists the development of an "official language that coheres 'us' around a central, dominant identity" (Williams 651). Williams argues that "by inverting our usual devaluation of creolized or non-dominant languages, Hong suggests in a globalized era there is something to be gained...in 'becoming-minor'" (Williams 652). For the most part, I agree with Williams, who deftly traces how asserting that creolized language is equally valuable to official languages is a subversive act. As such, Williams, too, sees creolization as a subversion of the nativist/assimilationist binary, and even engages briefly with Lowe's problematization of this binary to argue that the Desert population is organized by heterogeneity rather than conformity to nativist or assimilationist expectations.

I diverge from Williams, however, in her overestimation of creolization's revolutionary potential. She claims that "the people of the Desert see the flux and flow of their language, less as a negative consequence of diaspora, and more as an opportunity for a playful linguistic enterprise premised on subversive rearticulations" (Williams 654). While this playfulness is certainly evident in the Guide's speech, it is almost completely absent from the New Town residents on the bridge, which is identified with death and destruction just as often as it is with subversion and playfulness. Though this playfulness is more evident in the Guide's language, she, too, utilizes Desert Creole not only to subvert Desert hierarchies, but to protect herself and earn a living. This instrumental use

of language ultimately leads her to feel isolated rather than connected to a heterogeneous, resistant community.

Mine vocation your vacation!

In the Guide's words, she speaks "sum Han-guk y Finnish, good bit o Latin /y Spanish...sum toto Desert Creole en evachanging dipdong /'pendable on mine mood...ibid..." (Hong 25, ellipses in original).²⁴ The Guide's Desert Creole is made up of everything from Korean to Spanish and more, sometimes includes Old English and has an English grammatical structure. Desert accents, however, can change depending on who she has interacted with in a particular day. With the Guide's description of Desert Creole, the reader learns that her use of language can also depend on her mood. Desert Creole is thus certainly connected to her self-expression, as language always is.

It is crucial to remember, however, that the Guide's language-mixing began as a result of powerlessness which can be avoided only by learning how to communicate in English, a dominant and imperial language. While she describes her childhood, the Guide explains how her father was held at gunpoint by American troops and narrowly escaped because he recognized the translator, who talked them out of shooting him:

*You can be the best talker but no point if you can't
speak the other man's tongue. You can't chisel, con, please,
seduce, beg for your life, you can't do anything, because you
know not their language. So learn them all. (Hong 46)*

²⁴ Some Korean and Finnish, a good bit of Latin and Spanish...the sum total is Desert Creole, an ever-changing diphthong which depends on my mood.

For the Guide and her father, then, knowing multiple languages is a way to plead for their lives and make a living. The Guide clearly took his advice to heart, as she learned not only English but all of the myriad languages that construct Desert Creole. While Dougal McNeill argues that “Hong’s Guide keeps her language tricky, clotted, unclear, the better to refuse relegation to the status of another commodity” (McNeill 81), Williams points to the Guide’s embrace of Desert Creole as her use of “language as a commodity, the ability to speak fluently as a means of survival” (Williams 659). I agree with Williams and would add that the Guide’s use of English within Desert Creole points to creolization as a marker of the impact that U.S. imperialism has had on her life. As mentioned earlier, Lowe flags hybridity as the “uneven process through which immigrant communities encounter the violences of the US state.” This process certainly plays out in the Guide’s life as she encounters the imperialism described in Chapter 1 and is forced to adopt creolization and hybridization as a result of violence. Diasporic convergences such as creolization and hybridization, then, reveal histories of oppression, pulling them in to present identities.

The Guide’s use of language as a commodity plays out in her professional life as well, in which she uses Desert Creole to con, please, and seduce her tourists. The Guide explicitly admits that her language shapes this experience and that she makes a living by ensuring the continued satisfaction of her elite clients at the expense of her fellow guides. In her words:

Mine vocation your vacation!

...I train mine talk box to talk yep-puh, as you

‘Merrikkens say “purdy,” no goods only phrases,

betta de phrase, “purdier” de experience. (Hong 25, ellipses in original)²⁵

Here, the Guide compares herself to a religious leader by describing her job as a “vocation,” implying ironically that it is her spiritual calling. One might picture her as a millionaire Evangelist preacher waxing poetic to a devout audience, compelling them to repent and donate with her irresistible descriptions of the afterlife. Later, she remembers leading tours while the Desert was in the midst of a civil conflict, lamenting how difficult it was to “flower-arrange words so sand-piss /ash sounds like *Melodious plot of/beecheen green*” (Hong 33, italics in original).²⁶ To keep her clients interested in their surroundings, the Guide is willing to lie about the sights before their eyes, attempting to beautify the landscape through unique combinations of the various languages she has at her disposal. In this role, she is more of a salesman than a preacher - or, perhaps, draws a connection between the two. Her use of “the word” as a marketing ploy and manifestation of professional ambition undermines Desert Creole’s potential for revolution. Though Williams agrees that the Guide commoditizes language, she argues that the Guide does so “with a sense of play, a sly wink” (Williams 650). This is not an outrageous argument, but, considering that the Guide uses Desert Creole to her professional advantage while simultaneously undermining the New Town revolution as explained in Chapter 1, I argue that the Guide does more to entrench Desert hierarchies than subvert them in her use of language. The liberating extent of creolization, then, depends on one’s economic positionality.

While the Guide does little to challenge the Desert’s larger structures and hegemonies, she may, perhaps, be read as forging her own personal agency through her

²⁵ My vocation is your vacation! I train my talk box to talk - as you Americans say - “purdy.” No goods, only phrases. The better the phrase, the “purdier” the experience.

²⁶ Arrange words like flowers so “sand-piss ash” sounds like “*melodious plot of forest green.*”

willful commoditization of language. In Tina Chen's taxonomy of agency as it is conceptualized in Asian American cultural studies, she examines agency as it is defined against and in tandem with objects, pushing against the commonly accepted binarization of object and subject. She claims that "critics urge us not to accept the notion that subjectivity is the only means toward agency," urging us to examine the ways in which characters embed themselves within systems rather than take on a "subject" status in isolation (Chen 8). In examining agency as it is presented in neoliberal critique, Chen explains the ways in which Asian Americans might harness - although not outright change - the tenets of neoliberalism to convert market relations back into something more intimate. She describes how "[t]his pressurization is meaningful and can be read as both a capitulation to structure and a new mapping of the material domain from which to reimagine the positions and affiliations possible to Asian Americans" (Chen 7). The Guide certainly attempts to claim agency in the way Chen describes: she takes language - an incredibly intimate object which, for Desert guides, is tied indelibly to market relations - and utilizes it both as a plaything and a method of profit. In other words, she certainly enacts a "capitulation to structure," but in doing so, develops an ability to use market forces for her own gain. Arguably, she thus utilizes language to develop a sense of agency in an exploitative professional environment. She lives the tension between personhood and commoditized objecthood that Chen describes.

Ultimately, however, the Guide's entrenchment in the Desert hierarchy serves to isolate her, an isolation which Hong associates with all guides who use Desert Creole and appear to suffer as a result of the instrumentalization of creolization. The "Intermission" section's first poem, "Elegy," illustrates the arrival of immigrants to the Desert:

“Parachute in cloudless cielo und school o jellyfish, /émigrés land in dusty tureen, /and ladled a job” (71). The Desert, then, seems to have been populated at its inception with the floating in of peoples. They come as a unified group, a school of jellyfish, and stand in something of a metaphorical soup kitchen line, waiting together to be assigned work. This image of immigrant laborers converging arises again in the second *Almanac* poem, where they are embodied as guides and do not float in peacefully. The narration is sometimes in plural first person, making it ambiguous whether or not the Guide is narrating:

we guide guide

I am crammed with tongues crammed

with guides who ache for their own guides who mourn who lead

men from human rinds of discontent (Hong 75).

The poem ends with “all guides /all beautiful erroneous /unison” (Hong 75). Here, the reader gets a glimpse of the darker side of diasporic convergence. These guides, grouped together in the “we” form, are “crammed” with languages, and in being crammed with other guides’ languages, are also crammed with other guides. They feel the convergence of diasporic laborers painfully and use the hybridity of language only to guide tourists to superficial contentment rather than leading each other to fulfillment and a sense of connection. In the last few lines, the beauty - perhaps of the guides’ linguistic merging or of the hotels they show to tourists - joins with the erroneous notion that the guide’s shared language, or “unison,” alleviates their isolation. Again, Desert Creole, and creolization in general, is not always harmonious; it does not always serve to unify people, even if it provides a roadmap for this possibility. The isolation within Desert Creole is tied directly

to the guides' profession, and thus likely derives from the commoditization of Desert Creole that the Guide takes part in. Perhaps she gains some agency in her enforcement of the Desert hierarchy, but, ultimately, this comes at the cost of immense loneliness.

The isolation that the Guide faces throughout DDR is symbolized through repeated imagery of jars and buckets which appear to confine the Guide. Throughout her conversations with the Historian, the Guide repeatedly depicts herself as living within suffocating confines. In one striking instance, the Guide tells a story about going to the sea with Sah and describes putting various creatures in a bucket together. Trapped in this small pool, the water turns "ink rancid black" and the animals "floatim up...allim die, a dead sea smell /de rank spongim me home" (Hong 63, ellipses mine). Later, the Guide describes feeling trapped herself, "lika fish en wadder balloon, /fightim rubber confines, thrashim tail 'gainst stretchy walls... /little wadder y non oxygen" (Hong 96). This image returns in one of the last poems, in which the Guide illustrates how "whon a guide loses sense y drag tourists down eyeless tour" to kill them,

...we float like incubated bodies,
 cranial nerves pulse violet, fire tinsel out
 we poppy seed eyes, deep en brine solution,
 we blubba our slattern dreams. (Hong 117, ellipses in original)²⁷

Here, the Guide becomes a fish in her own bucket, floating to the top of saltwater mixture. Her fish eyes are tiny black poppy seeds popping out of her head as she loses consciousness and she sees the bright sparks which accompany oxygen deprivation. This suffocation is a result of several events which the Guide depicts as nonsensical, such as

²⁷ When a guide loses sense and drags tourists down to an eyeless tour, we float like incubated bodies, cranial nerves pulse violet (violently). Fire sparks in front of our poppy seed eyes. Deep in a brine solution, we blubber our slattern dreams.

tour guides leading tourists to their deaths, “birdcalls attract[ing] mosquitos,” and “lovelorn Balladeers incit[ing] Brueglia mobs” (Hong 117). The poem itself is named “Orphic Day,” referring to the Ancient Greek musician Orpheus who, according to myth, attempted to retrieve his wife from the underworld but failed by glancing back at her during their journey. The reason he gained the opportunity to try was because of his enchanting ability to play the lyre. Just as Orpheus used music as a mode of persuasion but was unable to revive his lover, the singers and bird callers that the guide describes attracted mosquitos and mobs with their ballads. This unsuccessful use of vocalizing, singing, and playing music evokes the Guide’s use of creolization as a commodity as she enchants her clients with her words but cannot achieve liberation through her language. On the contrary, she feels confined by creolization, and thus by the convergences within her identity.

In the end of DDR, of course, the Guide finds coalition and support in her relationship with the Historian, who appears to alleviate this sense of isolation. But ultimately, Hong posits that hybridity and creolization mark the convergence of historical trauma and the need for self-preservation within diasporic subjectivity. While creolization is not oppressive in and of itself, it also does not inhere creativity, particularly if it is deployed as an instrument within a strict economic hierarchy. Past injustices and pain cannot be amended by the potential for revolution or creativity. Rather, this potential for revolution is born from difficulty and is always tied to the material realities which force migration and diaspora. Even if these realities are no longer temporally present, history, subjectivity, creolization, and hybridization are always in play together. The bridge and the jar symbolize this convergence, as the former allows for creative subversion while

forcing proximity to destruction and violence, while the latter accumulates and mixes languages and cultural objects but also subjects them to confinement.

In describing various modes of agency, Tina Chen provides another apt image for the Guide's use of Desert Creole. Chen describes a piece of artwork by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha in which she placed strips of paper in small bowls on which two poems were written, poems "that resist the conventions of minority writing in their refusal to be read as a mode of straightforward resistance" (Chen 8). Chen examines this piece in terms of how it uses "objects that defy easy recognition" to "contest *a priori* assumptions about how race is fundamentally visualized" (Chen 8). If one were to visualize the Guide's language and her personal and professional employment of creolization, one might picture dictionary entries in Korean, Spanish, and English torn from their binding and placed in the "dome" - an image which is tied to that of jars and confinement in DDR - of her mind. She misrecognizes words through creative malapropism, a type of aural re-visualization, prompting the reader to consider the Guide's conscious proximity to objecthood and unrecognizability as working in tandem with both her entrenchment in power structures and her playfulness with language. In the next chapter, I will examine another apt image of diasporic convergence in which economic forces and the diasporic subjects who are subject to them are digested, mixed, and metabolized.

Chapter 3

The Invisible Esophagus of the Market:

Dance Dance Revolution's Setting as Capitalist Tyrant

In “Strolling through the Hotel,” the first section of *Dance Dance Revolution*, the Guide offers a description of the St. Petersburg Hotel and its surroundings as she guides the Historian through her workplace:

If you dream fo Paris, Paris Hotel right outside
atrium, beyond sand dunes, which form y disappear
like mekkinations o human digestion. Sand swirl

to otherworld land where blankets de weight o human
bodies tatter y pill. No tatting, no pilling here. Sand will
be en your eye, only sometimes.²⁸ (Hong 28)

In the Guide’s description of DDR’s setting, the reader finds themselves in what is likely a familiar daydream: they are on a trip to Paris, the capital of suave worldliness, touring a city at once global in its renown and stubbornly local in its purely Parisian traditions. Hong’s Paris Hotel, however, is not in Paris. It is a reproduction of all the seductive allure of the city, surrounded not by the French countryside but by “mekkinations” - churning, mechanical, scheming sand dunes - evocative of a dry and expansive digestive tract. To the Guide, the sand dunes are stomach walls, mixing and breaking down the bodies which cross the region’s shifting paths. The Desert digests beyond and in between the Hotels,

²⁸ If you dream for Paris, the Paris Hotel is right outside the atrium, beyond the sand dunes, which form and disappear like mechanisms (machines) of human digestion. Sand swirls to an otherworld land where it blankets the weight of human bodies, which tatter and pill. But there is no tatting or pilling here. Here, sand will only sometimes get in your eye.

where the unsettling dunes are nonetheless barely visible,²⁹ allowing them to cover a dark underbelly where human bodies decompose like fabric. These corpses “tatter” like old socks, their skins “pill” like wool scarves, and their bodies decompose into “tattling.”³⁰ The Guide’s image of shifting sands mutates even as she illustrates it. The Desert is an invisible stomach which surrounds the Hotels, always churning. It is also a blanket, shrouding the bodies which themselves have converted into woven textiles.

With these stanzas, Hong calls our attention to the bodily qualities of the Desert. Like a stomach, it consumes whoever enters it. Dunes hide these bodies from the view of elites who hope only to experience luxury within the Desert Hotels, an underbelly which decomposes people in its dunes like hands weave and unravel cloth. As a setting, then, the Desert can be read as a force of its own which encourages and facilitates the act of consumption. While weaving may connote a type of coming together which produces something stronger than each individual thread, consumption is a convergence which simultaneously mashes together disparate items and breaks them down. In its consumption, the Desert embodies global economic forces which, Hong warns, are more than dualistic cultural flows between a center and periphery. Instead, global markets operate alongside and through nationality and nation-statehood, promoting consumption through commoditizing national histories rather than fostering a cohesive global community. Fleshing out common, anthropomorphizing imagery like the market’s “invisible hand” and “tyranny,” Hong points to their inadequacies. While referential,

²⁹ “Sand will /be en your eye, only sometimes” can be read in two complementary ways. “[In] your eye” can simply mean visible, in which case the dunes are mostly out of sight from the vantage point of the Hotels - they are not always overwhelming the tourist’s vision. “Sand” can also be taken to mean grains of sand which occasionally settle in a tourist’s eye, causing irritation and discomfort. The dunes both hide an underbelly of unsavory history and are a facet of that unsavoriness. When they are in sight, they unsettle and annoy wealthy tourists.

³⁰ A type of knotted lace.

social scientific metaphors of globalization familiarize the processes and flows of globalization by making them human, they also point to the perceived unknowability of these forces, both through the fact that we must metaphorize them and by allowing them agency as near-human subjects whose intentions are as vague as any human other. Hong points out the despotism allowed to globalization by the bodily language we use to describe it and exonerate ourselves with. As she plays with the metaphoricity of globalization as described by Lisa Lowe, Hong harnesses the critical powers of allegory, ultimately problematizing both the conditions produced by globalization and the discourses which attempt to familiarize it. She doubly critiques the inequities inherent within the global economy, implicating both economic forces and the metaphorization of them by making these metaphors manifest in the allegorical space of the Desert. Her problematization of binaristic depictions of globalization is possible through diasporic convergence, as she breaks down these binaries through her images of the Desert as a setting where diasporic laborers, wealthy tourists, and global economic forces converge.

While highlighting the inadequacies of language and models which represent globalization as simplistic forces of cultural homogenization, Hong also offers an alternative conceptualization, tracing the nuances of globalization's interactions with nation-statehood and nationalist histories. Hong depicts modern globalization as a force which appropriates the histories of non-Western nations to subdue them and erases national boundaries only as it benefits wealthy elites. Counter-intuitively, she dissects and traces these processes through presenting a space in which they converge. As the Desert makes laborers and their revolutionary histories into threadbare corpses, Hong weaves a

comprehensive, unforgiving image of modern globalization and its relentless digestion of the disempowered.

Embodied Metaphors and Elite Consumption

Throughout constructing the Desert as representative of globalizing capitalism, Hong both draws from and critiques the metaphorization of globalization which is pervasive in the social sciences and common discourse. In her essay “Metaphors of Globalization,” Lisa Lowe notes that sociologists, economists, political scientists, historians, and anthropologists all attempt to “translate the unknowability of postmodern globalization” in incomplete and fragmentary ways. She highlights the “*metaphoricity* of globalization,” or “the rhetorical proliferation of figures that attest to the desire to render what is not yet fathomed as objectively known” (42, italics in original). Lowe is largely concerned with the ways in which globalization exceeds measurements like GDP and does not fit snugly into models of progressive modernization, but her examination of social scientific metaphorization also brings to mind common phrases associated with global capitalism: the tyranny of the market, the invisible hand of the market, and migratory pulling and pushing. In the multi-disciplinary discourse surrounding globalization, it is common to attempt to fit the complex flows of globalization into more conceptually manageable terms - or “bring[] out the thisness of that” (Lowe 41). Ultimately, the “rhetorical surplus” evidenced by the use of metaphor in the social sciences points to an attempt to “rationalize as comprehensible the incomprehensible” (Lowe 45). The goal to familiarize processes of globalization is not a problem in itself - on the contrary, it indicates that there is opportunity for methodological collaboration

between aesthetic and scientific disciplines, Lowe argues. But she also rightfully suggests that utilizing metaphors as purely “practical, referential symbol[s]” is a “static” project, while exploring the metaphoricity of globalization as allegory allows for a more productive, critical analysis of its processes and flows.

Hong opens the door to such a literary critique of referential bodily metaphors through her depiction of the Desert as capable of pulling and attracting, manifesting migratory “pull” metaphors as human-esque qualities alongside the Desert’s ability to digest. Before turning our attention to the underbelly as examined above, Hong leads us through what amounts to the mouth and tongue of the Desert, where indigenous residents, diasporic laborers, tourists, and their languages and cultures mingle. The Hotel region of the Desert consists of “state-of-the-art hotels modeled after the world’s greatest cities” and a population that is largely divided between tourists, tour guides, and indigenous inhabitants who have been exiled to New Town. In the foreword, the Historian describes the quasi-state in prose, explaining that its language is “an amalgam of some three hundred languages and dialects imported into this city” and that “[h]ere, new faces pour in and civilian accents morph so quickly that their accents betray who they talked to that day rather than their cultural roots” (Hong 19). Hong describes the Desert with language that focuses largely on the convergence of people in the Desert: people “pour in,” the language is an “amalgam,” and dialects are “imported.” Though *leaving* the motherland is a crucial aspect of diaspora as far as the etymology is concerned, it is noticeably absent in Hong’s descriptions of people who have migrated to the Desert and, along with it, gone are the factors which pushed diasporic populations to leave their countries of origin. Instead, there is subtle attention to the economic attraction of the Desert. The region

appears to pull people toward itself in droves, their languages - or “tongues” - imported like foreign products. “Amalgam[ation],” too, has distinct economic connotations, suggesting that the languages beguiled into moving to the Desert enacted a corporate merger upon arrival. Diasporic convergence is thus present in the Desert as a setting: rather than attend to the diffusion of people from a homeland, Hong turns her readers’ attention toward the accumulation of people and languages. As Tina Chen and Eric Hayot point out in describing globalization as a label for a “converging impulse,” global capitalism is marked by convergences of time, space, and populations (vii). Hong ties these convergences together in her allegorization of the Desert as economic conditions force the convergence of the diasporic labor force and the wealthy tourists they serve through pulling and attraction.

The Desert’s attraction is largely associated with consumption, particularly consumption of pure, uncensored luxury by elite tourists. This glamour partially lies in ease of access to global tourist hotspots described earlier - the pathways through the Desert connect the Parisian Hotel with the Bangkok Hotel and many others, which one might travel between on a whim. Inside the hotels, tourists have total sexual and culinary freedom, with “Merrikken dumplings” often “ejaculat[ing] *oooh y hot-diggity, /dis is de shee-it*” everywhere from the “cleanest latrines” to the “strobe-lit lobby” (Hong 25).³¹ The Guide pokes fun at tourists from the U.S. here in several ways, starting with her pronunciation of “American” which brings to mind a stereotypical southern accent often emphasized to mock U.S. Americans deemed uneducated. Pairing “Merrikken” with “dumplings” and adding ejaculation and “shee-it” on top of that, Hong calls attention to

³¹ [...with] American dumplings [often] saying “oooh” and “hot diggity, this is the shit” [everywhere from the] cleanest latrines [to the] strobe-lit lobby.

the fact that consumption (like eating dumplings and subsequently shitting them out) is the most attractive facet of the Hotels to elite tourists, who are epitomized by hungry, oblivious U.S. Americans. Blindly eating, digesting, defecating, and repeating this process are the building blocks of grandeur promised by the Desert's hotels.

Hong's mockery of wealthy tourists and consumption-based luxury culminates in a poem entirely dedicated to the St. Petersburg Hotel's toilets. The latrines are so high-tech that they take care of the whole defecation process, even "urging ye waste to dive/ into cleanest ammonio pond" (Hong 31).³² One need not clench a single muscle while nested on the seat, which plays Wagner, sprays perfume, and cleans up the aftermath. Tourists are thus free to transcend these base tasks and turn their attention to more valuable topics:

So comfy, gatus latrines maki ye wanna sit
 en its porcelite domus y read great lititure...
 Mind ova matta samsy, mind ova matta, even if ye ate
 bad Mulligatawny, ye mind's fog will curdle
 to clearest tought balloon.³³ (Hong 31, ellipses in original)

The Guide goes on to describe a comical caricature of the Thinker, in which a tourist on the toilet may "Reflect en *hows* y *whys*...O tink, fist proppim chin, bout Being"³⁴ (Hong 31, ellipses mine). Under normal circumstances, sitting on the toilet is an act of producing waste as the digestive tract finishes its duties, expelling the remnants of what was consumed. For the tourists, shitting itself is transformed back into an act of

³² Urging your waste to dive into the cleanest ammonia pond.

³³ So comfy, these latrines make you want to sit on their porcelain domes and read great literature... Mind over matter, Samsy, mind over matter. Even if you ate bad mulligatawny [soup], your mind's fog will curdle to a clear, taught (thought) balloon.

³⁴ Reflect on *hows* and *whys*...O think, fist propping up your chin, about Being.

consumption as it takes on an extra element of expensive glamour. The toilet is a high-tech porcelain dome, delicate and smooth like a teacup. Rather than a routine act of bodily waste-making, sitting on the toilet is modernized meditation and enlightenment, a transcendental act completely separated from the body's tasks. The enlightenment itself is cosmetic, achieved through elite economic status and expensive vacations.

The bathroom's attraction becomes most apparent in the last two stanzas, however, when the tourist returns to their body and the act of reflection becomes sexual. On the toilet, the tourist "may muse back evening befo...when ye had sensual tension wit tenderone lass" (Hong 31, ellipses mine).³⁵ This lust is no accident - it comes from the latrines, where the "Toilets so seductive, ye tush/ vacuumed to hole, stuck lika fire ant trapped/ innim own feast o glacedd peach pie" (Hong 32).³⁶ Here, "pull factors" become literal: the toilets suck tourists in with the hedonistic feast for the senses they offer. The tourist is drawn in, invited to alternate between Hollywood-esque, pampered enlightenment, during which they may transcend their body, and feelings of sexual attraction, which are intensely embodied. This alternation between disembodiment and corporeal pleasure pervades the Hotels even outside of the toilets. Throughout the Desert, tourists can expect to be alleviated of all bodily discomfort while fully experiencing every possible bodily pleasure. The constant availability of discomfortlessness is, clearly, bought: the act of consumption through which the Guide leads the Historian is carnal in itself and connected to economic consumption which takes on bodily qualities.

Body-oriented consumption in the St. Petersburg toilets also marks the existence of a

³⁵ [You] may muse back to the evening before...when you had sexual tension with a sweet, young [tender] lass.

³⁶ The toilets are so seductive, your tush is vacuumed to the hole, stuck like a fire ant trapped in his own feast of glacedd peach pie.

human-like force which controls DDR's setting: the Desert itself, just as it attracts migrant workers, pulls its clients into the toilet bowl, and its constantly churning digestion parallels theirs.

Beyond the Body: Globalization and Cooptation

The consumption within the Desert extends beyond consumers' bodies, too, as Hong comments on globalization's metaphoricity on a larger scale, allowing her to trace globalization's harnessing of nationality, history, and cultural flows. According to the Guide, each hotel is a "McCosm o any city" (Hong 25). She uses the word "McCosm" to say "microcosm," explaining how the hotels encapsulate the defining aspects of the cities they represent. Through the use of the "Mc" prefix, she also refers to the McDonald's franchise, which is perhaps the most widely recognized instigator of widespread, mass consumption with its global presence and notorious (now extinct) "supersize" option. McDonald's is commonly invoked as shorthand for the globalization of capitalism steered by the U.S., particularly to poke fun at those who see globalization as a driver of global unity. Global McDonaldization, as described by Ritzer and Stillman, pushes for "standardized products and quantity over quality" (34), and is commonly referred to alongside homogenization - it is a pervasive force of global capitalism, available to all and wanted by very few.

Hong, however, invokes McDonaldization as part of a push to reimagine models of globalization, pointing to the ironies present and power imbalances absent within metaphors of global capitalism which center the homogenization of cultures into a global neighborhood. Arjun Appadurai, too, uses the term "McDonaldization" in a somewhat

tongue-and-cheek manner as he calls for a rethinking of various simplistic models of globalization. He claims that “if a global cultural system is emerging, it is filled with ironies and resistances” which often lead to a “nostalgia without memory” (Appadurai 28). Appadurai describes histories similar to those in the Desert hotels: reproduced in the sphere of entertainment and leisure so they may be consumed by those who, while they did not experience those histories, are nostalgic for them. In the St. Petersburg Hotel, the Guide points out “radish turrets stuck wit tumor lights around hotel, /lika glassblown Russki castle sans Pinko plight, /only Ebsolute vodka fountains”³⁷ and a spa where tourists can “be roused bine molten sauna where Babushkas bap your tush /wit boar bristle switch” (Hong 27).³⁸ Tourists can live the excitement of a life filled with Russian cultural artifacts like vodka, radishes, and castles and become sexually stimulated by Russian history in the form of a frisky disciplinarian grandmother. These experiences are isolated from the “Pinko plight” - or the history of communism in Russia - so the tourists’ displaced nostalgia can be lived out comfortably. The ironies which Appadurai highlights are garishly apparent here: American-esque consumerism shapes the hotel that stands in for a country which is defiantly anti-capitalist and often anti-U.S. American. Of course, McDonald’s restaurants differ from high-end hotels in their institutional aims: the former provides cheap, widely recognizable food to whoever wishes to consume it, while the latter is marketed toward upper-class, worldly tourists. They both, however, incorporate elements of their home country into their products. Just as the St. Petersburg Hotel sells vodka, McDonald’s restaurants in India sell the McSpicy Paneer. McDonaldization does not just represent the homogenization of cultures, which amounts to a blurring of

³⁷ Turrets are stuck with tumor-like lights around the hotel, like a glass-blown Russian castle sans Pinko plight - only Absolut vodka fountains.

³⁸ ...be aroused in a molten sauna where Babushkas bap your tush with a boar bristle switch.

boundaries between customs and peoples and a dissolution of difference, but a global power imbalance which leads to cooptation of non-Western traditions by Western commoditization.

What makes the Desert hotels particularly apt representations of this appropriation is that, in terms of their basic infrastructure, they shrink time and space. McDonaldization as a metaphor for globalization, Lisa Lowe argues, speaks to the “apparent shrinking or elimination of distances and a general reduction of time spent” brought about by technologies that promote the same brutal efficiency and hierarchical standardization as the McDonald’s kitchen (49). With the Bangkok Hotel down the street from the Paris Hotel, Hong’s Desert embodies this “elimination of distances” which is a crucial element of diasporic convergence. This collapsing of distance is evident inside hotels as well: in any hotel, one room is flush against another nearly equivalent room so that hundreds of people can occupy a small space. McDonald’s-esque cultural homogenization, then, is not the only force at play here. Appadurai and Hong both center the act of McDonaldized ease- and leisure-oriented consumption but also call for an understanding of global capitalism which delves deeper than the projection of a homogeneous “global village.” They assert that nationalist narratives, global cultural flows, and capitalist standardization intertwine in the marketplace and in citizens’ imaginations, and that imaginings and representations of these global processes often inadequately represent the layers of inequities present within them.

Hong, in particular, posits that the act of capitalist reproduction is something more complicated and ominous than an internationally unifying force. As in the Babushka’s spa, the hotels highlight the ironies of global cultural flows, embodying not just

“Merikken” styles of luxury but reproducing local history for consumption by global elites. In the St. Petersburg Hotel, “[b]lood rust has been Windexed to amber shine, /insurrecta’s marauding soul wetted into papa-machetes, /looted radio back en turtle-doved municipal hands” (Hong 27).³⁹ The hotels, as the Guide describes here, sell access to pleasure by painting over tension and conflict in their cities’ histories, tying together disparate moments of history with an alluring bow and selling these packages to wealthy tourists from around the world. The hotels as mere representations of cities do not carry historical weight and can capitalize on their simulatory nature by scrubbing the red “blood rust” of national conflict and popular uprising into an alluring amber shine. Old revolutionary heroes become hollow papier-mâché versions of themselves and government agents of the municipality become peaceful and nurturing turtle-doves. Bloody conflict is thus reproduced as a decorative, empty, marketable gesture of unity.

The hotels commoditize several bloody conflicts in particular, thus calling Hong’s world into conversation with real, historical conflicts. Remembered through the Guide’s oration, the Kwangju uprising is a central conflict throughout DDR. Being in the St. Petersburg hotel, the Guide implicitly refers to insurgents in St. Petersburg, Russia massacred during the Bloody Sunday protests of 1905, hence the reference to “blood” which begins the aforementioned stanza. Hong also describes DDR’s eponymous revolution during which indigenous inhabitants and laborers revolted against tourists and Desert guards. As Dougal McNeill notes of Hong’s poetry, her “theoretical and experimental trickiness is always secured, thanks to the problem of location and history, to specific political dilemmas” (McNeill 80). While McNeill is concerned largely with

³⁹ Blood rust has been Windexed to amber shine, /the insurgent’s marauding soul wetted into papier-mâché (whetted into machetes), /and a looted radio is back in turtle-doved municipal hands.

language, this sentiment pervades DDR's historical and physical setting, as the hotels are both playgrounds built on top of a fictional civil war and representations of cities with histories of real contention. This invocation of Hong's imagined civil conflict - the Dance Dance Revolution - is thus "secured" by allusions to and fictionalization of national histories and ultimately situates the Desert as an allegorical space which explores the convergence and interplay of capitalism, class conflict, and nationalist historical narratives.⁴⁰

McNeill's compelling examination of Hong's securing DDR in real historical events is complicated, however, by the fact that these hotel-ized "anchors" of revolutionary cities - Paris, St. Petersburg, Bangkok - are souped-up simulations themselves. As such, the hotels, while markers of various nations, are glitzy ghosts of history and nationalism rather than legitimate nation-states themselves. They allude to real histories while remaining mechanisms of the Desert economy, allowing elite tourists to consume history and nationalism itself. The centrality of consumption - in the bathrooms, dunes, and lobbies - trumps any other defining characteristic of the hotels. While claiming to represent various nationalities and providing easy access to simulated cosmopolitanism, the hotels also allegorize a world in which economic globalization

⁴⁰ Mentions of national allegories may bring to mind the famous debate between Fredric Jameson and Aijaz Ahmed in which Ahmed critiques Jameson for homogenizing "third-world" literature and placing it in binaristic opposition to "first-world" texts. I do not take up this debate in detail because Jameson and Ahmed are more concerned with the allegorical representation of "third-world" cultures through stories of "the private individual" (Jameson 69). Hong's allegory, on the other hand, uses the Desert as a fictional setting on which allusions to and representations of nationalist histories play out. The Desert thus does not fit into Jameson's categorization of national allegory as a necessary element of "third-world" literature in which "*the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*" (Jameson 69, italics in original). I do not read the Guide or Historian as such an allegorical character or believe that DDR can be considered "third-world" literature. I also find Ahmed's critique to be somewhat overblown, though I do believe that this particular statement homogenizes the "third-world" literature it claims to describe.

utilizes nationalism - specifically, the narratives and histories that nations construct to promote unity between citizens - as a tool of self-perpetuation. Throughout tracing the ways in which global capitalism and nationalism intertwine, Hong presents these processes in a convergent setting, allowing her to break down “center” and “periphery” models and thus eschew more simplistic images of globalization. Hong invites her reader to question their conceptualization of global capitalism through this world-building, ultimately arguing that capitalist globalization does not erase national differences as some metaphors of globalization claim, but harnesses the same constructed sense of unity that nationalist historical narratives promote so these narratives may be sold.

Class Conflict in the Underbelly: Fighting an Invisible Tyrant

As revolutionary nationalist histories are commoditized in Hotel rooms and lobbies, the Desert revolutionaries themselves are repressed in the name of propping up the Desert economy. It is in their failure to fight their exploitation as cogs in the commoditizing machine that the urgency of rethinking metaphors of globalization becomes apparent: it is impossible to fight a tyrant which is intangible. The playful irony of bathroom luxury takes a dark turn as Hong shifts our focus to the less glamorous side of the personification of economic forces and their despotic power. After witnessing the tourists’ experience of consumption within the Hotels, the Guide and the Historian descend from the upper floors of luxury and hedonism down to the basement of the St. Petersburg Hotel. In doing so, the Guide and the Historian enact the motion of consumption, effectively being chewed, swallowed, digested, and deposited into dark, labyrinthine hallways. The Guide describes the lower level of the St. Petersburg Hotel as

“intestinal runnels and chambas” that are “full o rust puddles, grim service men, /y ffurious mekkinations, /bosh dis stygian hush” (Hong 87).⁴¹ Similar to Hong’s image of the Desert’s digestion hiding dead bodies in the sand, the intestinal workings of the basement are “stygian,” suggesting that the puddles and darkness within conceal bodies on their way to the underworld.

Just as past civil conflicts are spruced up and marketed to Desert tourists, laborers and the New Town population are swept under the rug entirely to hide a rebellion which seems largely to go on between the working class and the Desert itself. While many Desert laborers were previously employed in factories which farmed and packaged carp for consumption, a poem entitled “Once the Factory, No Longer the Factory” details their transition into a service-oriented economy. In the Guide’s words, “Nomono factory...now all customa is king service” (Hong 95, ellipses mine).⁴² During the Guide’s tour, these laborers - who had been exiled to New Town after the Dance Dance Revolution - continue to resist the forces which determine their livelihoods and wrench them between various exploitative employments. The Guide warns the Historian not to trust those working class civilians who “allatime sneak /back miming as guides” as these “Pied pipers lead ye to dunes liced wit land mines /dat slice all ye limbs off” in attempts to “wrest desert back” (98).⁴³ The New Town rebellion, which consists of exiles from the Desert’s diasporic labor force and those who are indigenous to New Town, targets

⁴¹ Intestinal runnels and chambers...full of rust puddles, grim service men, and furious machines. Bosh (screw) this stygian hush!

⁴² No more factories...now it’s all “customer is king” service.

⁴³ The Guide warns the Historian not to trust those who “always sneak back, miming as guides” as these “pied pipers will lead you to dunes packed with land mines that slice all of your limbs off” in attempts to “wrest the Desert back.”

wealthy tourists. Their goals to reclaim the Desert for the working class are reminiscent of a proletariat revolution.

In reclaiming the Desert, however, the real enemy appears to be mysterious, uncontrolled economic forces - in other words, the Desert itself. As mentioned earlier, the Kwangju uprising is often remembered alongside, and contains clear parallels to, the Dance Dance Revolution. In Kwangju, young factory workers made up a significant portion of the resistance against Chun Du-Hwan and his military coup. Notably, this 1980 uprising was indelibly tied to economic growth, and scholar Jini Kim Watson stresses the importance of reading “Korean literature of the 1970s - the very early days of South Korea’s spectacular economic rise - within the specific context of military dictator Park Chung Hee’s 1972 *Yusin* (‘revitalizing’) reforms” (106). She cites Cho Nam-hyun’s description of South Korea’s dictatorial economic growth, which explains that “‘political regression and giddy economic growth were the twin realities Koreans had to cope with in the 70s’” (Watson 106). Ultimately, Watson asserts, “the burden of a developing postcolonial society such as South Korea is precisely the forced pursuit of economic independence and growth through a reliance on its subaltern position within the conditions of late capitalism” (111). While DDR is not Korean literature from the 1970s, the Guide is a Korean university student who helps stir the Kwangju uprising with impassioned speeches over the radio after becoming a Marxist. She is later interned in a prison camp and performs forced labor as punishment (Hong 111). Thus, Hong is certainly concerned with the dual forces of market tyranny and governmental dictatorship, particularly in Korea. She invokes a historical context in which capitalism and authoritarianism intertwine, with deadly consequences for non-elites.

Unlike the Kwangju uprising, however, the revolution in the Desert has no authoritarian figure to target. As such, the Desert region itself - an embodiment of global capitalism - is under attack rather than the Desert government. In fact, a central Desert government does not appear at all throughout DDR. Instead, the targets of maimings are wealthy tourists visiting the hotels, who are often attacked via land mines which blow up the land around them as well. Desert rebels do not necessarily end the tourists' lives but certainly make a dent in the landscape. These insurgents, then, appear to fight the Desert as if the setting itself is their oppressive enemy. With this revolution, Hong pushes the reader to imagine market forces as tyrants. In juxtaposing a Marxist struggle against a dictatorial government with a working-class revolution against embodied economic forces, Hong extends the Desert's human-like drive for consumption to an authoritarianism which is at once human and decentralized, both bodily and intangible.

Of course, the Desert does have foot soldiers in the form of mysterious, gruff guards whose existence complicates the notion that the Desert - and the forces of globalization it represents - acts autonomously. The reader encounters the Desert guards briefly in "The Guardsman's Warning," in which the Historian notes that "[g]uardsmen in long black coats spiraled around the bridge that led to New Town" to discourage any tourist from entering. Unlike the Desert guides, the guards' most noticeable linguistic influence is British English. One in particular warns the Historian: "lest ye old cheek wants a bing cherry shing, /cargo on, get off ye sprakin dunghill pulpit...get on, nu'ting to see" (97, ellipses mine). Despite their accent, the guards bear no national flag or distinguishing camouflage and are simply adorned in long black coats. They respond to landmine explosions and keep rebels confined to New Town, thus protecting the tourists,

the hotels, and the Desert landscape rather than a sense of national unity or a particular regime. The guards thus prop up and defend the Desert economy, highlighting the fact that, while it is afforded human qualities, the Desert cannot sustain itself alone.

The Desert's dependence on the guardsmen suggests that, while the global economy may be described as a human-like, agentic force, such language obscures that markets are a construct which rely on human action and interaction. Yes, the global capitalist marketplace calls for the constant consumption of luxury by elites, thus placating the wealthy on the backs of diasporic laborers through commoditized cultural artifacts. But the marketplace does not act alone. Working hand-in-hand with globalization's flows and economies, the metaphorization of globalization allows it powers of persuasion and exploitation by presenting it as a human force. In an attempt to familiarize the processes of globalization, bodily metaphors actually serve to absolve humans of responsibility for the inequalities that globalization perpetuates. If globalization is an intangible tyrant with invisible hands, human regulations and interventions are helpless to mitigate its impact, hence the failure of the Dance Dance Revolution and the conflicts which follow it. Hong ultimately suggests that globalization is not modelled after humanness, but a reflection of human actions; it is an extension of elite human despotism, not an elite despot in and of itself.

Notably, the Guide's description of the New Town landmine rebels is followed directly by an excerpt from the Historian's memoir which provides a parallel image to the nation-statelessness of the Desert. The Historian illustrates a scene from her childhood at a military school, where the school is "surrounded by five hundred flags painted in violent sunsets" (Hong 100). After she is caught burning ants in a field, she is "forced to

bow before each flag...And then I had to do it all again, the bowing, until the school house emptied...and the sun dipped over the horizon, and all there was, was my breath” (100, ellipses mine). Curiously, the Historian is not asked to pledge allegiance to one particular nation represented by one flag, but to five hundred flags, far more symbols of statehood than there are states in the world. The flags are at once “violent” and shrouded by dusk, both painted and obscured by sunset. Like each hotel, every flag is a mere representation of nationality, but they disappear in the midst of the Historian’s punitive display of loyalty.

In both the hotels and the Historian’s military school, many nations exist in one place but the importance of nationality itself flickers on and off. While theorizing a post-postmodern literature in terms of Junot Diaz’s fiction, Johannes Voelz explains a similar phenomenon. While nation-states certainly persist globally, “the transnational spaces we see developing around the globe today also emphasize the limits of national power. They do so by exceeding the bounds of nationally prescribed versions of culture, economics, and politics” (Voelz 10). Voelz describes a world which is “diminished and constricted” by globalized capitalism, but which also contains complex cultural flows which nation-states cannot. Flows of migration and culture cross and transcend national boundaries, blurring the line between what is national and what is global. While certain identities and cultures have always exceeded (and many have preceded) the development of the nation, globalized capitalism at once gives global cultural flows the avenues through which they may spread and attempts to systematize them, thus constricting them.⁴⁴ Voelz, then, explains a central issue taken up by Hong in DDR: global capitalism

⁴⁴ This image of intertwining flows of migration and culture which mix the national and the global but are also constricted by global capitalism evokes similar imagery to the jars mentioned

can use transnational spaces to its advantage, shaping migration and economies and thus shaping nations themselves. In the Historian's military school, hundreds of flags fly adjacent to one another, exerting power over the Historian but also rippling, shifting, and being alternately illuminated and eclipsed by the sun. In the Desert, hotels represent various nations mere feet apart from one another, but simulate those nations to serve a tyrannical economy. According to Hong and Voelz, then, global capitalism promotes the appearance of transnational unity, but, in reality, global markets simply utilize constructs of unity which exist within and between nations - like the cultural artifacts and histories sold in the St. Petersburg hotel - to gain footholds across the world.

Of course, the cultural exchanges in the Desert are often read as a type of productive hybridity and unity, and sometimes escape commoditization. Ruth Williams, for example, notes Hong's depiction of linguistic creolization and the resulting lack of clear national and ethnic boundaries with a sense of optimism. According to Williams, "the people of the Desert resist a fixed notion of national identity" and, rather than nationalism, "[h]ybridity, and the preservation of it, becomes a positive organizing principle in the Desert's diasporic space" (659). Williams' analysis is useful when examining the constantly morphing language of the Desert, which is, indeed, sometimes presented as a celebration of unity between diasporic groups in the Desert. However, this particular analysis plays up the sense of unity in DDR. Williams cites Hong herself in support of these claims:

Hong has said we are meant to view the Desert as 'an allegorical space of a present condition' ... Though the history within DDR may have happened, as the

in Chapter 2 as an apt representation of diasporic convergence which at once allows for mixing and contains this mixing.

Historian says, 'elsewhere,' we are asked to recognize 'as the world shrinks, elsewhere begins to disappear,' necessitating that we question how this 'elsewhere connects to us now'...she recognizes that flux is always stronger than fixed as in this fluidity one is able to create new articulations of revolution that will ultimately prove more resilient than in the past. (Williams 665, ellipses mine)

I have thus far treated the Desert as an allegorical space as it relates to globalizing capitalism. After examining the Desert's sinister omniscience, however, it becomes clear that the Desert and the New Town rebellion against it do not serve as any kind of model for community or resistance. While Hong intends the Desert to be read as allegory for a shrinking (globalizing) world, the setting itself is presented not as a utopic region but a quasi-state in which stratification prevails. The borders and othering which nationalism inheres are not eradicated but perpetuated by economic forces, now manifesting as economic boundaries and socioeconomic classes which extend beyond state borders and create global gulfs between elites and the working class.

In portraying the Desert as an allegory for a world in which market forces have replaced nationalism in all its stratifying capability, Hong maintains that neither of these forces operate independently. Pheng Cheah lays out a similar argument in his examination of the overlap between cosmopolitanism and nationalism:

The ethico-political work that nationalism and cosmopolitanism can do at any given moment depends on how either formation emerges from or is inscribed within the shifting material linkages and interconnections created by global capitalism at a particular historical conjuncture. (31)

He also asserts the necessity of nation-states to the global political economy which “show[s] us the untenability of postnationalism” (36). Neither does Hong assert the possibility of a world entirely without nation. Rather, she depicts a world in which the balance of nation-statehood and global markets leans toward the latter in terms of organization and power. Hong, then, is keenly aware of the interplay that Cheah describes: the division and unity brought about by nationalism can only do as much as global markets allow, as these markets control the cultural flows which determine how people from across the globe communicate with and understand each other. In DDR, this asymmetrical entanglement is always present. Various nationalist struggles are constantly in the background to depict how the Desert economy harnesses them for financial gain in the Hotels. Throughout her life, the Guide transforms from an inspiring revolutionary to a bribe-accepting “yes man” based on her own financial and social position. Thus, nation-statehood is not the prevailing organizational unit of the Desert, as Williams points out. However, hybridity does not organize the Desert’s civilians either and, as examined more closely in Chapter 2, may even serve to isolate them from each other. What masquerades as unifying hybridity - New Town’s diasporic population, representations of nationalism in the form of the hotels, and the presence of global elites - is actually stratification exacerbated by market tyranny. The organizational system of the Desert is a hierarchy of economic winners and losers, and the Desert economy itself is the dictatorial ruler who quashes revolution, chews up the bodies of revolutionaries, and sells their failure.

It is apparent that the Desert has these powers of division from the beginning of DDR, at which point we see its churning dunes decomposing the bodies of dissenters. As

global capitalism self-perpetuates by covering up histories of dissent and strengthens itself by selling these histories, it utilizes other global organizational units like nationalism to make global stratification and inequality endure. Rather than promoting a “global village,” global capitalism at once appears to homogenize cultures and reinforces divisions like class. By presenting her readers with a caricature of the global economy - one where the human traits we attribute to it take on exaggerated bodily qualities and powers - Hong pushes us to question metaphors of globalization which allow markets a sense of agency. Markets pull, push, tyrannize and homogenize not as godly beings, but because we allow them too, standing by as global capitalism at once weaves humans together into a global tatting and tears that cloth into tatters and shreds.

Conclusion

In “Delusions of Whiteness in the Avant-Garde,” Cathy Park Hong holds no punches as she points toward the hypocrisy and racism in the contemporary American poetic institution’s attempt to devalue poets who incorporate voice and subjectivity into their work as a means of grappling with disenfranchisement. Drawing from James Baldwin, she dubs this double standard “[t]he avant-garde’s ‘delusion of whiteness,’” or “the specious belief that renouncing subject and voice is anti-authoritarian” (Hong). In fact, Hong posits, “the disenfranchised need such bourgeois niceties like voice to alter conditions forged in history.” She admits that these two camps - avant-garde gatekeepers who define the genre strictly and Eurocentrically on one side, and poets of color who challenge these restrictions on the other - are not entirely concrete and often intersect. Her point, however, is that “critics and curators of experimental poetry are quick to downplay” the importance of race in contemporary, experimental poetry. In other words:

The avant-garde has become petrified, enamored by its own past, and therefore forever insular and forever looking backwards. Fuck the avant-garde. We must hew our own path. (Hong)

Throughout the piece, Hong posits the importance of taking history, subjectivity, voice, and race seriously in poetry. Downplaying and discouraging these themes relegates poets of color to the margins of poetic institutions and cheapens the revolutionary and disruptive potential of art. In her provocative and widely cited line “[f]uck the avant-garde,” she encourages experimental minority poets to “wrest control of the wheels of innovation” (Hong). In other words, she believes it necessary to eschew this poetic institution and coalesce beyond its constrictions if the full potential of radical writing is to

be realized. Even in her critical and non-fiction work, then, Hong centers the importance of forming coalitions which challenge and exceed Eurocentric, whiteness-obsessed expectations which only serve to support and reinscribe racial hierarchies. Poetry, she contends, is at its most powerful when it accommodates the convergences within identities between race, history, and language.

All of these themes are present in Hong's diaspora of convergence, and throughout this thesis, I have argued that this model offers valuable insight into diasporic coalitions, subjectivities, and resistances. Diasporic convergence allows the process of diaspora to be conceptualized beyond discrete time periods by pulling history into the present rather than allowing it to rest in a romanticized past. In turning our attention away from longing for the homeland, Hong reconceptualizes common imagery which depicts diaspora as a masculinist, scattering process in which peoples diffuse across the globe. Instead, Hong highlights the importance of feminist coalitions forged through difference, in which diasporic people converge into supportive networks which both contain revolutionary potential and allow for the breakdown of the yes-man/naysayer binary which puts the onus of revolution on women of color and allows men to benefit from this labor. In highlighting the importance of coalitional resistance rather than positing women of color as inherently revolutionary, Hong challenges "ideal type" logic which serves to uphold the nationalist expectation that citizens be heterosexual and white. Diasporic convergence and the coalitions which fall under its umbrella thus allow for the collapse of binaries such as revolutionary vs. complicit citizen and ideal citizen vs. vagrant. This collapsing can be imagined as a pulling together of two binary poles which, in

converging, can no longer serve to uphold racist and nationalist ideology. Diasporas of convergence point to this collapse as a means of resistance.

Hong's diaspora of convergence also allows us to rethink binaries in which hybridity and creolization are considered the pure and revolutionary alternatives to non-hybridized languages and identities. Hybridities and creolizations are markers of diasporic convergence as they allow for the adding and culmination of identity facets and languages. They are also markers, however, of historical trauma and forced migration. In writing against celebratory readings of these convergences, Hong posits that no convergence is inherently revolutionary. Instead, when hybridity and creolization are utilized as commodities and instruments of self-preservation, they serve largely to isolate those who use them from those who may have offered revolutionary coalition.

Finally, Hong's model of diaspora gives us insight into the relationships between nationality and globalization through her construction of the Desert as a setting where these forces converge and control the diasporic labor population. She illustrates the Desert as a human body which digests and mixes peoples, appearing to homogenize cultures but, in reality, reinforcing class divisions and harnessing national histories of resistance to do so. Through metaphorizing globalization as such, Hong critiques both the conditions of globalization (namely the inequality just mentioned) and the metaphors which we commonly use to familiarize it. Rather than giving us deeper insight into global capitalism's flows and processes, Hong argues, common metaphors of global markets allow them agency as humanlike tyrants and make them nearly impossible to resist against.

Through turning our attention away from moments of scattering, highlighting revolutionary coalitions, allowing for the dissolution of binaries which impose normative expectations of citizenship, and providing a means by which we can understand intersecting and convergent processes of globalization, Hong's diaspora of convergence presented throughout *DDR* is a valuable model by which we can understand the complex processes and subjectivities within diaspora. Examining diaspora in terms of convergence leads to several questions for further study: given that queer and woman of color coalition occur on the margins of society, how might we imagine the coexistence of marginality and culmination? How might convergence allow for the dissolution of oppressive binaries and while acknowledging the material impacts these binaries have on diasporic subjects? What else does convergence point to as a limit or potential breeding ground for revolution? I believe that exploring these questions will further prove the rich readings and depictions of diaspora that are possible through attention to convergence.

In presenting this model of diaspora, Hong also proves that there is radical power within centering racial identity and creolized voices in avant-garde poetry. Her Guide is an iconic and complicated figure whose identity is formed by myriad intersecting forces, including U.S. imperialism, a wide variety of languages, and the demands of the global economy. Throughout *DDR*, her tender friendship with the Historian reveals the importance of forming bonds which do not necessarily center racial, ethnic, and linguistic identity, but allow room for all of these concepts which crucially inform each person's interactions with the world. In the end, Hong does hew her own path, completely subverting the racist expectations that voice and subjectivity be marginalized in experimental poetry. As she traces the Guide's ceding and ceding, Hong sows seeds of

resistance against both the forces which constrain her characters and the institutions which attempt to limit the revolutionary potential of converging identities in art.

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