Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion

Recovering the "Body Politic": Racialized and Gendered Diaspora in Accredited Graduate Theological Education[1]

Lester Edwin J. Ruiz

ruiz@ats.edu

"What has WTO got to do with your being a domestic helper?" Almost

indignantly she replies: "Don't you know that I am a product of this WTO? I

never dreamed I would end up a domestic helper in Hong Kong. I had to leave my

---

[1] This is a slightly revised version of my essay that will appear as "Recovering the Body Politic: When 'Race' and Power Migrate" in Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang, and Joshva Raja, eds., *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives—Regional Surveys—Ecumenical Trends* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010). Permission to reprint granted by Regnum.

family because the salary I earned back home would not allow me and my family to live decently. I've been here for more than six years now. I want to return home but I cannot. No job awaits me there... each time I try to start saving (part of my salary), the price of oil at home rises. I am stuck. I am a stock…

"Turning to a migrant advocate, she said, *"Di ba, Ate? Para akong toilet paper sa tindahan? Kung mabili ka, okay. Kung hindi, diyan ka lang. At pag nabili ka naman, pagkagamit sa iyo, tapon ka na lang. Hindi ka naman kinukupkop.* [Is it not true, Big Sister that I am like a roll of toilet paper in a store? If I am not sold, I remain on the shelf; if someone buys me, I get used up and thrown away afterwards. I am not cared for…]" *–Cynthia Caridad R. Abdon, "The GATS and Migrant Workers' Rights: Impacts on and Alternatives from Women," Panel presentation at the Ecumenical Women's Forum on Life-Promoting Trade, 12-14 December 2005, Hong Kong.*

"I can't help but dream about a kind of criticism that would try not to judge but to bring an *oeuvre*, a book, a sentence, an idea to life; it would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply not judgments but signs of existence; it would summon them from their sleep. Perhaps, it would invent them sometimes—all the better… Criticism that hands down sentences sends me to sleep; I'd like a criticism of scintillating leaps of the imagination. It would not be sovereign or dressed in red.

It would bear the lightning of possible storms."—*Michel Foucault, "The Masked Philosopher," interview conducted on April 6-7, 1980 by Christian Delacampagne, reprinted in* Michel Foucault, Ethics Subjectivity and Truth: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Volume I*, edited by Paul Rabinow (New York, NY: The New Press, 1997), p. 323.*

My agenda

What I hope to achieve in this essay is at least three things: first, to create a map, not about the disciplinary fields in which "race" and "power" are often formally located, but a map that identifies those elements which, while not directly about "race" and power, may be critical to their description and evaluation; second, to offer some interpretive metaphors that might allow improvisation in how "race" and power especially at their intersections can be "re-thought" for the purpose of fundamental change;[2] and, third, to enter into that ongoing, vital conversation

_____

[2]While there may be disagreement on the substantive, methodological, and, institutional definitions of "race" and power, I believe there can be agreement that their multistranded locations and positionalities are necessarily articulated in the interstices of a people's political, economic, and cultural life and work. See, for example, Cornel West, "A Genealogy of Modern Racism," in Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1982), pp. 47-65; Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993); Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1983); Margaret Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins, eds., *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology* (Florence, KY: Wadsworth Publishing, 2009).

While it is true that the question of "race" in the United States is articulated in terms of the ideology of "white supremacy" and "white power and privilege," from a global perspective, it is not reducible to it. See, for example, Nadia Kim, *Imperial Citizens: Koreans and Race from Seoul to LA* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008); Eileen O'Brien, *The Racial Middle: Latinos and Asian Americans Living Beyond the Racial Divide* (New York: NY: New York University Press, 2008).

among the readers of this journal about how the signifying *practices* of "race" and "power" help

(de)form accredited graduate theological education[3] in the US.

However, I want to accomplish these tasks with the recognition that the intellectual

production, reproduction, and representation, in which I am engaged, despite their aspirations

towards transformation, are still the discourse of a privileged Asian male in the US. As Foucault

reminds us, because *all* intellectual work is a passage through privilege, it is fraught with both

dangers and possibilities: dangers, because we are a species marked, not only by reason, or by

freedom, but also by error; possibilities because the history of thought, read as a critical

_____

[3] Situated in the context of a post-positivist, post-empiricist, poststructuralist tradition, I deploy the term "practice" much in the same way Michel Foucault used the term *dispositif*— "a resolutely heterogeneous assemblage, containing discourses, institutions, architectural buildings (*managements architecturaux*), reglementary decisions, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, philanthropic propositions… said as well as non-said (*du dit aussi bien que du non-dit*)…"—to signify the delightful and frustrating entanglements between "theory" (speculative reason), and "praxis" (practical reason), and their interplay with the personal, the political, the historical, and the sacred—in the service of transformation. See Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh" in *Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings,* ed., Colin Gordon (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1980), pp. 194-228.

Additionally, Giorgio Agamben's notion of "apparatus," by which he means, "a kind of formation… that at a given historical moment has as its major function the response to an urgency…always located in a power relation… and appears at the intersection of power relations and relations of knowledge" [he uses the example of the "mobile phone"] provides a richly textured and constructively suggestive description of how one might understand "practice." Cf. Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 2-3. Both Foucault and Agamben signal my methodological preference for "thinking about" the question of "race" and power within a wider polymorphic discursive formation, the resulting ambivalence of which allows for a more inclusive analysis, and therefore, their possible transformation.

philosophy appreciative of "fallibility," can become a "history of trials, an open-ended history of multiple visions and revisions, some more enduring than others."[4]

Therefore, the need for self-critical accountability, which begins with the acknowledgement of location and positionality, not to mention maneuver, is a spiritual, methodological, and political necessity. It helps to (1) frame the production and reproduction of knowledge as a passage to transformation—the creation of the fundamentally new which is also fundamentally better in the context of conflict and collaboration, continuity and change, and the creation of justice;[5] and (2) define the appropriate roles that producers and reproducers of this

---

[4] Michel Foucault, *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology, Essential Works of Foucault*, vol. 2, ed. James D. Faubion, (New York, NY: The New Press, 1998), p. 476. Of the act of criticism, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes, "… a caution, a vigilance, a persistent taking of distance always out of step with total involvement, a desire for permanent parabasis is all that responsible academic criticism can aspire to. Any bigger claim within the academic enclosure is a trick." Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 362.

[5] Manfred Halpern, *Transforming the Personal, Political, Historical and Sacred in Theory and Practice*, ed., David Abalos (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2009).

kind of knowledge can play in society, particularly in the context of those for whom and for what

purpose knowledge is produced.[6] As Foucault notes,

> The work of an intellectual is not to shape the other's political will;
> it is, through the analysis that he carries out in his field, to question
> over and over again what is postulated as self-evident, to disturb
> peoples' mental habits, the way they do and think things, to
> dissipate what is familiar and accepted, to reexamine rules and
> institutions and on the basis of this re-problematization… to

---

[6] The question of "the purpose of knowledge" is of fundamental importance to any aspiration for transformation. In the theologies of liberation, this notion is expressed methodologically in terms of the "preferential option of the poor" which gets modified over the years as "the epistemic *privilege* of the marginalized" or the "hermeneutical *significance* of the excluded." With recognition of the importance of location and positionality, and therefore, the profound challenges to the notion of "the poor," I believe we are called again to think more critically and creatively about the "for what and for whom?" of knowledge. Here, the task of the intellectual ought not to be extricated from its entanglements with "political struggle in the name of the victim." Jacques Derrida notes in "Passages—from Traumatism to Promise," that "one of the meanings of what is called a victim (a victim of anything or anyone whatsoever) is precisely to e erased in its meaning as victim. The absolute victim is a victim who cannot even protest. One cannot even identify the victim *as* victim. He or she cannot even present himself or herself as such. He or she is totally excluded or covered over by language, annihilated by history, a victim one cannot identify... But there is also the unreadability that stems from the violence of foreclosure, exclusion, all of history being a conflictual field of forces in which it is a matter of making unreadable, excluding, of positing by excluding, of imposing a dominant force by excluding, that is to say, not only by marginalizing, by setting aside the victims, but also by doing so in such a way that no trace remains of the victims, so that no one can testify to the fact that they are victims or so that they cannot even testify to it themselves. … To name and to cause the name to disappear is not necessarily contradictory. Hence the extreme danger and the extreme difficulty there are in talking about the effacement of names, Sometimes the effacement of the name is the best safeguard, sometimes it is the worst "victimization." …Cinders… is a trope that comes to take the place of everything that disappears without leaving an identifiable trace. The difference between the trace "cinder" and other traces is that the body of which cinders is the trace has totally disappeared, it has totally lost its contours, its form, its colors, its natural termination. Non-identifiable. And forgetting itself is forgotten." Jacques Derrida, *Points…: Interviews, 1974-1994*, ed. Elizabeth Weber (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 387-391.

participate in the formation of a political will (in which he has his

role as a citizen to play).[7]

Focusing the conversation

One way to focus the conversation about the *practices* of "race" and power is to ask the

question, "What might be learned about the *practices* of 'race' and power by re-locating them in

the context of the 'pursuit of the body politic' especially under conditions of (racialized and

gendered) Diaspora?"[8]

---

[7]Michel Foucault, "The Concern for Truth," in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*, ed. L. D. Kritzman (New York, NY: Routledge, 1988), p. 265.

[8] The linguistic device "(racialized and gendered) Diaspora" however awkward is intentionally deployed in this essay to signal that "Diaspora" not only cannot be understood apart from "race" and "gender" but also that it cannot be understood as a fixed, objective, essence. Moreover, this cipher cannot be extricated from its entanglements with the demographic realities of "race in the US." 2008 US population projections by race/ethnicity provided by the US Census Bureau gives a rather dramatic perspective of "race in the US." With 2010 as the baseline, the White population of 201 million is expected to reach 215 million by 2050; African Americans will grow from 40 to 59 million; Asians from 16 to 38 million; and Hispanics from 50 to 133 million. This means that by 2050, the 2010 population projected at 312 million will reach approximately 452 million. By mid-century, Whites will be 48 percent of the population, African Americans, 13 percent, Asians, 8 percent, Hispanics, 30 percent, and Others including American Indian and Alaska Native, 2 percent.

Numbers, of course, do not tell the whole story. But they suggest trajectories that invite thought. If these projections are accurate, even leaving room for variances in the unreported or undocumented US population, what the numbers indicate is that Whites will remain the largest ethnic group in 2050; and while all four groups show an increase in number, with Hispanics being the fastest growing of the group, these increases remain circumscribed by the predominantly White population even though there will be no clear majority. Still, as Daniel Aleshire, Executive Director of ATS has recently pointed out this is a demographic sea change which has huge implications not only for accredited graduate theological education, but for polity and economy as well. For a recent discussion on "race" in accredited graduate theological education in the US and Canada, see the special issue on "Race and Ethnicity" of *Theological Education* 45: 1 (2009).

Are there grounds, in fact, to transpose the question of "race" and power to questions of "the body"? In an intentionally textured, highly nuanced essay entitled "Navigating the topology of race," Jayne Chong-Soon Lee, affirms Kwame Anthony Appiah's relentless and uncompromising challenge to the "uncritical use of biological and essential conceptions of race as premises of antiracist struggles," and acknowledges that "the term 'race' may be so historically and socially overdetermined that it is beyond rehabilitation."[9] At the same time, she is convinced, along with Ronald Takaki, that racial experience is both quantitatively and qualitatively different from ethnic experience; and that, therefore, Kwame Appiah's preference for "ethnicity" or "cultural identity" to refer to the structures and processes of "race," fails to account for the centrality of race in the histories of oppressed groups… and underestimates the degree to which traditional notions of race have shaped, and continue to shape, the societies in which we live (p. 443)

In this context, Chong-Soon Lee concludes, not only that "race as ethnicity may actually hinder our ability to resist entrenched forms of racism,"[10] but that "race" as a creature irreducible to "ethnicity" is needed in order to understand, for example, that colonialism, say in

---

[9] Jayne Chong-Soon Lee, "Navigating the topology of race," in Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, eds., *Critical Race Theory* (New York, NY: The New Press, 1995), p. 441.

[10] Chong-Soon Lee writes, "The benefits of substituting the notions of an ethnic or cultural identity for a racial one are many. First, we can move away from the notion that race is a biological attribute possessed only by people of color. Second, we can undermine the racialist premise that moral and intellectual characteristics, like physical traits, are inherited. Third, we can counter the belief that nature, not effort, binds together members of a race. Fourth, we can rebut the idea that the ways in which we act, think, and play are inherited rather than learned. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has instructed us, '[o]ne must learn to be 'black' in this society, precisely because 'blackness' is a socially produced category" (p. 442).

Africa, as an expression of imperialism, is both about racial domination and cultural oppression. For this reason, Kwame Appiah's abandonment of "race" in favor of "ethnicity" or "culture" may be both flawed and premature.

More important, drawing on the work of Michael Omi and Howard A. Winant which deploys the term "racialization" to signify "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group," thereby underscoring the "contingent and changing nature of race and racism while recognizing its pervasive and systematic effect on our history," Chong-Soon Lee argues that there can be no homogenous or unitary notion of "race" and that its meaning will, of necessity, arise not only out of its multistranded contexts, but also will have multiple accounts: biological, social, cultural, essential, and political.[11]

This abbreviated, admittedly oversimplified, summary of Chong-Soon Lee's narrative about the nature of "race" and ethnicity or cultural identity is interesting for several reasons. First, it clearly describes the fundamental divide between the proponents of "race as social construction" and the proponents of "race as biology" that continues to cast its long, if epistemologically-flawed shadow on present-day discourses on "race." Second, and probably more directly relevant to the agenda of this essay, it suggests that the discussion on "race" cannot be extricated from socio-historical and physicalist considerations of "the body" precisely because such "ontological differences" rely on racialized physical and morphological traits. Third, it points to ongoing discussions, say in the work of Omi and Winant that the very notion of "race"

_____

[11] Michael Omi and Howard A. Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960's to the 1980's* (New York: NY: Routledge, 1986), p. 68, cited in Chong-Soon Lee, p. 443. See also, Omi and Winant, pp. 21-24.

not only continues to change over time, but also that "race" may be more productively

understood by its effects rather than its definitions.[12]

The pursuit of the "body politic": root metaphor for interpreting the practices *of "race" and*

power

In fact, what this discussion does is it suggests that at the center of particular discourses

on "race," especially in the US, one finds not only a notion of "the body," but also a particular

interpretation of that body which shapes the very practices of "race" to which it is attached. Here,

we are dealing not only with "the body" as an epistemic paradigm, but also with what Aristotle

called, praxis, i.e., a practical activity that addresses specific problems which arise in particular

situations. Until we find our way through to the root metaphor of that "body" that informs our

notions of "race," it will be almost impossible to deal comprehensively and adequately with the

problems of "race" and power.[13] Perhaps, more important, because this "body" is a "practical

activity," it cannot be anything other than a "political body." And because the question of "race"

and power, noted earlier, is articulated at the contested interstices of personal, political,

historical, and sacred life, it essentially and strategically becomes a political struggle to

rediscover or re-constitute, if not re-assert the importance of, the "body politic," much in the

---

[12] "We should stop thinking of race," Chong-Soon Lee writes, "'as an essence, as something fixed, concrete and objective...' we instead [should] think of 'race as an unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle…" (p. 443).

[13]For a discussion of the notion of root metaphors, see Gibson Winter, *Liberating Creation: Foundations of Religious Social Ethics* (New York, NY: Crossroads, 1981).

same way that some women have articulated their struggles around questions of "their bodies" in political life."[14]

What can we learn about "the body" from these struggles?

In the first place, feminist and womanist struggles to recover the place of the body in political life involve different ways of producing and reproducing knowledge (epistemology), affirming the connections among situated knowledge, partial perspectives, and, subjugated and insurrectionary knowledge and agents of knowledge. Such struggles have consistently focused, among other things, on the necessity, if not desirability, of rethinking the relationship between reason and desire and the construction of conceptual models that demonstrate the mutually constitutive rather than oppositional relationship between them.[15] On face value, this may be a straightforward, even simplistic, if not obvious, statement about the nature of knowledge—and the bodies that produce and reproduce them. However, when one understands that these claims are set in the context of the historical pretensions about the universality of (masculinist) reason as opposed to say, feminist desire, and of the reality that the latter is associated with subordinate groups—particularly women—and deployed to discount and silence those realities deemed to be incongruous with (masculinist) reason, then one begins to realize how these new epistemologies

---

[14] Rose Weitz, ed., *The Politics of Women's Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance, and Behavior*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[15] Allison Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology," in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 190.

actually explode patriarchal myths about knowledge in political life[16] and asserts that bodies are

constituted by both reason and desire, matter and spirit.

In the second place, feminist and womanist struggles to recover the place of the body in

political life involve different modes of being (ontology), insisting, not only that thinking,

feeling, and acting are *relational* practices, but also that bodies are more than (passive) biological

objects; that, they are, in fact, "volatile bodies," that can be re-figured and re-inscribed, and that

move through and beyond the conventional divide—not unlike the divide on "race" noted earlier

in this essay—of gender as socially-constructed, on the one hand, and of sex as biologically-

given, on the other hand, to "our bodies ourselves." Elisabeth Grosz already suggested over a

decade ago, that the "male (or female) body can no longer be regarded as a fixed, concrete

substance, a pre-cultural given. It has a determinate form only by being socially inscribed."[17] As

a socio-historical 'object', she continues,

the body can no longer be confined to biological determinants, to an immanent

'factitious', or unchanging social status. It is a political object par excellence; its

_____

[16] Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka, eds., *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Springer, 2003); Jane Duran, *Worlds of Knowing: Global Feminist Epistemologies* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001).

[17] Elisabeth Grosz, "Notes towards a corporeal feminism," *Australian Feminist Studies* 5 (1987): 2; See also, Elisabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006);

forms, capacities, behaviours, gestures, movements, potential are primary objects

of political contestation. As a political object, the body is not inert or fixed. It is

pliable and plastic material, which is capable of being formed and organized.[18]

Thus, as an "inscribed surface of events,"[19] the body as both palimpsest and apparatus becomes

malleable and alterable, its surface inscribed with racialized and gendered meanings, appropriate

behaviors, expectations, and standards or norms, for example, of femininity, ethnicity, and

"race." The "body politic," then, as a site of politics, is not only about "who gets what, when,

where, and how" (politics as distribution) but also that the "what, when, where, and how" are

inscribed—written on, embodied in—our very bodies (politics as inscription).

The example of Latin and ballroom dancing is another illustration of what I understand by

the "body." Dancers know that the dance floor, and I would say, the ceiling, are constitutive

elements of the dance, along with the beat of the music (to which most dance) and the melody of

the music (to which the best of the best dance). Latin dancing, and its characteristic "Cuban

motion" is achieved by one pressing from the waist down *into the floor*—actually, one of the

reasons for the sensuous, earthy intensities of Latin movement. In contrast, the gliding, soaring,

almost ethereal, movement of the ballroom waltz or foxtrot, is accomplished, in part, by

stretching one's body toward the ceiling. Both floor and ceiling are, in this sense, constitutive of

---

[18]Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, ibid.

[19] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York, NY: Random House, 1984), p. 83.

the dance, in the same manner that heaven and earth are constitutive of human life. To put the matter rather starkly, ceiling and floor are part of the dancers' bodies.

In the third place, feminist and womanist struggles to recover the place of the body in political life involve different forms of "consciousness" (subjectivity), not only acknowledging that consciousness arises out of concrete and sensuous reality, but also that subjectivity itself is performative (i.e., it exists only when it is exercised or put into action—hence, its relational character; and that spirituality (or matters of spirit) are always and already *embodied* experience. If it is true that human beings are more than *logos*, but also *eros*, *pathos*, and the *daimon*, then consciousness, and the structure of subjectivity that accompanies it, would have to include touching, feeling, smelling, tasting, eating. Theoretically put, consciousness, subjectivity, and, *spirituality*, refuse, on the one hand, the temptation of a disembodied transcendence, and, on the other hand, reject their articulation as a totalized immanence. To say that "spirituality" is about "touching, feeling, smelling, tasting, eating" is to acknowledge, not only the inadequacies of the received traditions of "spirituality," but to affirm that this "spirituality" is about a peoples' concrete and sensuous *experience* of self, other, and, for the religiously inclined, of God. "Babette's Feast" may very well be the metaphor for such spirituality.[20]

In the fourth place, feminist and womanist struggles to recover the place of the body in political life involve different *empowering* practices (politics), recognizing not only the importance of self-definition and self-valuation, or of the significance of self-reliance and

---

[20]See Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen), *Babette's Feast and Other Anecdotes of Destiny* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1988). Cf. "Babette's Feast" (New York, NY: Orion Home Video, 1988, 1989). See also Rubem Alves, *Poet Warrior Prophet* (London: SCM, 1990).

autonomy, but also the necessity of transformation and transgression, and of finding shared safe places and clear voices in the midst of difference, particularly where the asymmetries of power are mediated through structures and processes that legitimize or naturalize some differences and not others.[21]

In fact, what contemporary feminist and womanist struggles have contributed to our understanding of the "body politic" is a mode of discourse that interprets, describes, and evaluates the complex and interdependent relationships among theory, history, and struggle, focusing on the intricate and intimate connections between systemic and personal relationships, and, the directionalities of power. In developing her political analytic, for example, Dorothy Smith introduces the concept of "relations of ruling" where forms of knowledge and organized practices and institutions, as well as questions of consciousness, experience, and agency, are continuously fore grounded. Rather than positing a simple relation, say between colonizer and colonized, capitalist and worker, male and female, this perspective posits "multiple intersections

---

[21] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd Edition (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), pp. 273-290. More recently, see, Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004).

of structures of power and emphasizes the process or form of ruling, not the frozen embodiment of it."[22]

Feminist and womanist struggles, in their insistence on a thoroughly relational and intersectional understanding of knowledge, being, subjectivity, and politics have demonstrated that such notions as "race," gender, class, nationality, and sexuality—formative elements of the "body politic"—are not only "simultaneously subjective, structural and about social positioning and everyday practices," but are re-inscriptions of the very meaning and substance of the "body politic" itself.[23] Thus, it may be desirable, if not wise, not only to insist on but to follow, the migrations of "race" and power from their origins hinted above into their intersections with other elements in order to arrive at a more adequate understanding of their effects.

_____

[22] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism," in Chandra T. Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, eds., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 14. Mohanty writes, "… third world women's writings on feminism have consistently focused on (1) the idea of the simultaneity of oppressions as fundamental to the experience of social and political marginality and the grounding of feminist politics in the histories of racism and imperialism; (2) the crucial role of a hegemonic state in circumscribing their/our daily lives and survival struggles; (3) the significance of memory and writing in the creation of oppositional agency; and (4) the differences, conflicts, and contradictions internal to third world women's organizations and communities. In addition, they have insisted on the complex interrelationships between feminist, antiracist, and nationalist struggles… "Cartographies of Struggle," p. 10. See also, Avta Brah and Ann Phoenix, "Ain't I a Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality" *Journal of International Women's Studies* 5:3 (2004): 75-86.

[23] My notion of "inscription" has its origins in Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1977).

Re-orienting the *practices* of "race" and power

Diaspora and Estrangement: Contexts for the practices *of "race" and power*

The *practices* of "race" and power have not always been associated with the realities of (racialized and gendered) Diaspora. However, with the exponential growth of processes of profound structural transformation that have gained some level of autonomy at the global level and which sustain—often with displacement and dislocating effects—the movements and flows of capital, people, goods, information, and ideas and images, the concept of Diaspora, Avta Brah and Ann Phoenix observed, has been "increasingly used in analyzing the mobility of peoples, commodities, capital and cultures in the context of globalization and transnationalism."[24] In fact, Brah's *Cartographies of Diaspora*, explored at great length and with care as early as 1996 the intersectionalities of "race," gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, generation, and nationalism including both productive and coercive forms of power across multiple spatial and temporal locations and positionalities.[25]

While deeply appreciative of Brah's and Phoenix's epistemic and strategic challenge to the more conventional analytics of globalization and transnationalism, and while I recognize the necessity for an intersectional (some would say "interstitial") approach to socio-political

---

[24] Brah and Phoenix, p. 83.

[25] "We regard the concept of 'intersectionality'," Brah and Phoenix write, "as signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis [sic] of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts," p. 76.

interpretation, description, and evaluation, I take an additional, though certainly not

incompatible, methodological step, one which Brah and Phoenix may not wish to take. Not

unlike the notion of the "body politic," (racialized and gendered) Diaspora is not only an

epistemic paradigm; it is also a particular "way of being"—a set of (religio-moral) practices,

which has consequences both for the analysis of "race" and power, and for its transformation. As

I will suggest in this essay, a full appreciation of intersectionality—including an insistence on the

importance of concrete, sensuous *essentially* "strategic bodies"—embodied in the Stranger(s)

which (racialized and gendered) Diaspora, global capital, or empire produce and reproduce,

provides both a context and condition for the possible transformation of the *practices* of "race"

and power. [26]

In his analysis of modern international politics and global capitalism, Michael Dillon

notes

---

[26] (Racialized and gendered) Diaspora is certainly no stranger to global capital and empire. The academic literature on this is extensive. See for example, Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire* (London, UK: Verso, 2003), David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), Gopal Balakrishnan and Stanley Aronowitz, eds., *Debating Empire* (London, UK: Verso, 2003), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000)); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2004). See generally Paul A. Passavant and Jodi Dean, eds., *Empire's New Clothes: Reading Hardt and Negri* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004). See especially Ernesto Laclau, "Can Immanence Explain Empire?" in Passavant and Dean, *Empire's New Clothes*, pp, 21-30. Cf. Mark Taylor, *Religion, Politics, and the Christian Right: Post 9/11 Powers in American Empire* (Philadelphia, PA: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2005), Sharon Welch, *After Empire: The Art and Ethos of Enduring Peace* (Philadelphia, PA: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2004).

In this context, Charles Amjad-Ali and I have suggested elsewhere that every empire, whatever their *raison d'etre*, is fundamentally an articulation of racialized and gendered power. Rudyard Kipling's famous poem, "White Man's Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands, 1899," with its binary beknighted natives and do-gooder colonizing Westerners, is a classic example of racialized and gendered power. Though a British colonialist, Kipling urged the US to pursue its colonial and imperial project, while justifying the effort as a great contribution to the colonized peoples of the Philippines. See, Charles Amjad Ali and Lester Edwin J. Ruiz, "Betrayed by a Kiss: Evangelicals and US Empire," in Bruce Ellis Benson and Peter Goodwin Heltzel, eds., *Evangelicals and Empire: Christian Alternatives to the Political Status Quo* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), pp. 54-66.

It is also interesting to note that the direction, say of migrant labor—whether documented or undocumented—moves from "the global south" to the "global north," and that the "victims" of global capital (not to mention the Indo-China War and the three Gulf Wars) are largely peoples of color are enough to illustrate the racialized and gendered character of global capital and empire. See footnotes 28 and 29.

Moreover, Richard Slotkin has documented the mythology of "moral regeneration through violence" that runs through US history. See Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Tulsa, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).

Our age is one in which…the very activities of their own states—combined regimes of sovereignty and governmentality—together with the global capitalism of states and the environmental degradation of many populous regions of the planet have made many millions of people *radically endangered strangers in their own homes as well as criminalized or anathemized strangers in the places to which they have been forced to flee*. The modern age's response to the strangeness of others, indeed, the scale of its politically instrumental, deliberate, juridical, and governmental manufacture of estrangement, necessarily calls into question, therefore, its very ethical and political foundations and accomplishments —particularly those of the state and of the international state system.[27] [Emphasis mine]

In the Philippine context, for example, this estrangement is clearly demonstrated by the migration of Filipinos, today approaching over ten million, to other parts of the planet—a

---

[27] Michael Dillon, "Sovereignty and Governmentality: From the Problematics of the 'New World Order' to the Ethical Problematic of the World Order" *Alternatives: Social Transformation and Humane Governance* 20, no. 3 (Spring 1995): 323-368.

condition shared by many peoples in almost every region of the world.[28] Such estrangement, however, is not limited to those "outside" the homeland. The experience of (racialized and gendered) Diaspora reverberates from both "above" and "below" the conventionally drawn geopolitical, geo-strategic, and territorial boundaries of individuals, peoples, nations, states, and regions. The reasons for migration (and immigration), the forms that they take, and the conditions under which they occur, are many.[29] Yet, such movements of peoples are generally characterized by dispersal, displacement, and dislocation from particular origins and locations.

---

[28]The racialized and gendered character of migration is evident throughout the following documentary examples: International Migrants Alliance, *2008 Founding Assembly Documents* (Hong Kong: International Migrants Alliance, 2008). See also, Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, eds., *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2002); Grace Chang, *Disposable Domestics: Immigrant Women Workers in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Southend Press, 2000); Migrant Forum in Asia, http://www.mfasia.org/ (accessed February 22, 2010).

[29] (Racialized and gendered) Diaspora has many faces. See for example, on internally displaced peoples, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004D404D/ %28httpPages%29/CC32D8C34EF93C88802570F800517610 (accessed February 24, 2010); on child trafficking, UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_exploitation.html (accessed February 24, 2010); on women, http://www.unifem.org/worldwide/ (accessed February 24, 2010); Rhacel Salazar Parrenas, *Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); Daniel Rothenberg, *With These Hands: The Hidden World of Migrant Farm Workers Today* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); Additionally, useful demographic information concerning migration, may be found in, for example, International Organization for Migration, http://www.iom.int/jahia/jsp/index.jsp (accessed February 21, 2010); UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cmw.htm (accessed February 22, 2010; International Labor Organization, http://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm (accessed February 23, 2010); International Migrant Stock. http://esa.un.org/migration/ (accessed February 23, 2010).

Perhaps, the most innovative metaphor deployed to comprehend the reality of estrangement has

been that of *turbulence*, suggesting by its use not mere motion, activity, or movement, but

disruptive, unpredictable, volatile speed. [30]

To speak of (racialized and gendered) Diaspora today is to speak of a specific human

condition that is producing new forms of belonging and identity not to mention novel

understandings of contemporary politics and culture. Diaspora evokes and provokes images of

"borderlands," "border crossings," invasions, and estrangements; of co-optations, negotiated

settlements, and uncompromising refusals; of logocentrisms and hybridities.[31] It reveals global

de-territorializing trajectories as well as local re-territorializing surges or insurgencies, especially

under the conditions of an imploding transnational capital. [32] Diaspora underscores existing

political, economic, cultural and psychological/psychic contradictions and antagonisms, at the

---

[30] Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization, and Hybridity* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000), pp. 3-21.

[31] Gloria Anzaldua, *La frontera/Borderlands* (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1999). See also, Marwan M. Kraidy, *Hybridity, Or The Cultural Logic of Globalization* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2005).

[32]Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008). Cf. R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

same time that it intensifies their racialized and gendered uneven and asymmetrical structures

and processes.[33]

The other side of (racialized and gendered) Diaspora, which arguably has been largely

under-theorized, is its "subjective" effects on individuals, peoples and institutions: the

normalization of the ideology of unlimited "permanent" change, the cultivation of cultures of

mobility and improvisation, the re-inscription of codes and symbols of dispersal, displacement,

and dislocation (e.g., money, maps, information technologies, on-line and distance education), on

peoples' hearts, minds, and bodies, and, the seemingly endless invention and re-invention of

unfulfilled desires for "home"—multiple homes, to be sure, but homes, nonetheless—often

accompanied by the inevitable yearnings for the innocent safety, security, and rest, of an idyllic

Garden of Eden.

Brah and Phoenix capture the complex terrain of the experience of (racialized and

gendered) Diaspora when they deploy the term "diaspora space," by which they mean:

> The intersection of these three terms [referring to the concept of "diaspora"
>
> alongside Gloria Anzaldua's "border" and the feminist concept of "politics of
>
> home"] is understood through the concept of 'diaspora space', which covers the
>
> entanglements of genealogies of dispersal with those of 'staying put'. The term

---

[33] Gayatri C. Spivak and Judith Butler, *Who Sings the Nation-State? Language, Politics, Belonging* (Salt Lake City, UT: Seagull Books, 2007). Cf. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Racialized Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-Racist Struggle* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993).

'homing desire' is used to think through the question of home and belonging; and,

both power and time are viewed as multidimensional processes. Importantly, the

concept of 'diaspora space' embraces the intersection of 'difference' in its

variable forms, placing emphasis upon emotional and psychic dynamics as much

as socio-economic, political and cultural differences. *Difference is thus*

conceptualised as social relation; experience; subjectivity; and, identity…the

analytical focus is upon varying and variable subjectivities, identities, and the

specific meanings attached to 'differences.'[34] [Emphasis mine]

What might (racialized and gendered) Diaspora as the context for the question of "race"

and power mean for their interpretation, description, and evaluation?

First, it raises a critical question about the nature of the social totality of which we are a

part. Not unlike the metaphor of the "body politic," (racialized and gendered) Diaspora not only

has forced the negotiation and re-negotiation of political, epistemological, and academic/

disciplinary boundaries especially in terms of their long held correspondence among nation,

culture, identity and place,[35] but in the re-articulation and re-conceptualization of the notions of

space, time, and place that emerges as a result of dispersal, displacement and dislocation, it has

also enabled us to uncover their racialized and gendered character. Thus, Richard Thompson

---

[34] Brah and Phoenix, "Ain't I a Woman?", p. 83.

[35] Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, Race, Nation, Class (London, UK: Verso, 1991). Cf. Epiphanio San Juan, *In the Wake of Terror: Class, Race, Nation, Ethnicity in the Postmodern World* (New York: Lexington Books, 2007).

Ford has persuasively argued, for example, that "racial segregation" in the US is created and

perpetuated by "racially identified space" and that the latter "results from public policy and legal

sanctions…rather than from the unfortunate… consequences of purely private or individual

choices."[36]

In a different though not unrelated context, Foucault may be interpreted as underscoring

the racialization of space—or, the spatialization of "race" when he observes that

A whole history remains to be written of spaces—which would at the same time be the history of

powers (both these terms are in the plural)—from the great strategies of geo-politics to the little

tactics of the habitat… passing via economic and political installations.[37]

Second, (racialized and gendered) Diaspora also raises a question not only about

subjecthood, but also about subjectivity. This is the question of "the Subject": not only who the

subject is, but also what being a subject entails, and how it is simultaneously constructed or

constituted by the discourses in which it is embedded.[38] Both the plurality and contingency of

subjects and subjectivities pre-supposed by a "Diaspora" fundamentally challenge all ahistoric or

---

[36] Richard Thompson Ford, "The Boundaries of Race: Political Geography in Legal Analysis," in Crenshaw, Gotanda, et al, *Critical Race Theory*, pp. 449-465. "Segregation is the missing link in prior attempts to understand the plight of the urban poor. As long as blacks continue to be segregated in American cities, the United States cannot be called a race-blind society." Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p.3.

[37] Michel Foucault, "The Eye of Power" in Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1980), pp. 146-149.

[38] Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy, eds., *Who Comes after the Subject?* (New York, NY: Routledge Publishers, 1991).

essentialist construals of "the Subject" and directs us not only to the question "What is to be done?" but also to the questions of "who we are, what we hope for, and where we go?"—in short, "What does it mean to be a people under the conditions of (racialized and gendered) Diaspora?" And while the questions of the subject and of subjectivities remind us of the importance of *agency* and human action, they are now (re) set, or "re-installed" within a much deeper, broader, and wider intersectionality and relationality. In this context, both "race" and power are not only the effects of human action; they are also entanglements of structure, process, and agency.

Third, the reality of (racialized and gendered) "Diaspora" provides an organizing metaphor for situating the *practices* of "race" and power at the intersections of self, other, and world. Of no small methodological significance, locating these practices within the interstices of a peoples' cultural practices—defined broadly as those concrete, sensuous realities embodied in rhetorical forms, gestures, procedures, modes, shapes, genres of everyday life: discursive formations and/or strategies, if you will, which are radically contingent arenas of imagination, strategy, and creative maneuver[39]—not only challenges the narrow confines of conventional understandings of "race" and power but also locates and positions "concrete" human beings

_____

[39] Michael Ryan, *Politics and Culture: Working Hypotheses for a Post Revolutionary Society* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). See also, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, "Margins and (Cutting-)Edges: On the (Il)Legitimacy and Intersections of Race, Ethnicity, and (Post)Colonialism," in Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia, eds. *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2005), 114-65; Rita Nakashima Brock, Jung Ha Kim, Kwok Pui-Lan, Seung Ai Yang, eds., *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion and Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007).

within a peoples' pluralistic, and therefore, always and already contradictory, antagonistic and

agonistic histories, allowing, thereby for an appreciation of their stories, songs, poetry, arts; their

personal and political struggles; and their economic and cultural institutions. Another way of

stating the point is to suggest that (racialized and gendered) Diaspora ruptures the pretensions of

modernity's voracious appetite for an intellectual idealism articulated alongside a possessive

individualism as the foundation for human thought and action, and (re) positions them in their

appropriate historical "places."[40] It recuperates both human beings and human action, and

affirms not only their generative positions in the ecology of life: as creatures of the past who

transform their present in the name of the future, but also locates them in the wider context of

what Friedrich Nietzsche called the "grammatical fictions" created by discursive formations and

strategies.[41]

(Racialized and gendered) Diaspora as both an epistemic paradigm and an organizing

practice is always accompanied by estrangement. That is to say, dispersal, displacement, and

dislocation almost always create the Stranger—the Other—which/who in my view poses

---

[40] C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1962).

[41] I believe it would be a misunderstanding of Foucault's *dispositif* or Agamben's "apparatus" if they were to be interpreted as repudiating the validity of "individual and collective" human action. Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981). See also, Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

essentially a religio-moral challenge.[42] In fact, the event of Diaspora announces the existence of

the racialized and gendered Other who invites a religio-moral response, namely, hospitality. As a

creature of both modernity postmodernity,[43] (racialized and gendered) Diaspora radicalizes the

experience of the Stranger or of Otherness in our time; and the existence of the Stranger in our

midst raises for us the problems, prospects, and possibilities of fundamentally new and better

forms of knowledge and being. Strangeness, not to mention marginalization, it seems, is the

condition of possibility for community. It is its constitutive outside. At the same time, if the

Stranger is the constitutive *outside*, then, its constitutive *inside* is hospitality, by which I mean,

the inclusion of the Stranger into a community not originally his or her own, and which "arrives

_____

[42]Emmanuel Levinas. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969. My own notion of "the Other," particularly with reference to the dialogical "face-to-face" resonates with Levinas' notion of exteriority. See, Lester Edwin J. Ruiz, "Diaspora, empire, resistance: peace and the subaltern as rupture(s) and repetition(s)" in Shin Chiba and Thomas J. Schoenbaum, eds. *Peace Movements and Pacifism after September 11* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2008), pp. 49-76.

[43] The modern-postmodern divide is a profoundly contested one. By placing them in proximity, as I do in this essay, I want to suggest that these structures of meaning are best understood in both their continuities and discontinuities of method, cultural form, and political practice. Thus, I understand modernity and postmodernity less as periodizations and more as "conditions," "sensibilities," and "practices." My own orientation, sensibility, and location are probably more congenial with the theory and practice of postcoloniality than with modernity or postmodernity. See, for example, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995). See also, Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991). Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

at the borders, in the initial surprise of contact with an other, a stranger, a foreigner."[44] Indeed, in

the Biblical tradition, the existence of the Stranger is always accompanied by the challenge of

hospitality towards the Stranger. *Who* the Stranger is, is the socio-analytical question occasioned

by the stranger's existence; *how* we treat the stranger in our midst [hospitality] is the ethical

demand which is not caused by the Stranger, only motivated by the encounter.

To be sure there are temptations of repetition that lie at the heart of hospitality. In fact,

both the Stranger and the giver of hospitality are not immune to the desire or temptation for

"sameness" or uniformity, even as the long experience of the condition of strangeness and

hospitality often breeds certain fetishes for such strangeness and hospitality, not to mention

desires for the exotic. Moreover, hospitality does not always aspire towards genuine

compassion, i.e., unconditional plenitude or regard. In other words, hospitality itself, when

implicated in the perpetuation of power and privilege always casts its long shadow on the

struggle for a "genuine" hospitality that seeks to offer both the Stranger and the giver of

hospitality the opportunity to live well together in the context of their shared differences. Indeed,

the very structure of hospitality often must posit the existence of strangers "in need of

hospitality" dictating, therefore the legitimation of structures and processes that exclude before

they include. Such exclusionary logics of, for example, "race," gender, class, migrate on to the

---

[44] This I take to be the philosophical significance of Jacques Derrida's January 1996 Paris lectures on "Foreigner Question" and "Step of Hospitality/No Hospitality," published in Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, trans., Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). For the political significance of the "stranger" see Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

structures of "hospitality" without being overcome or transformed. Put differently, one must be open to the possibility that strangeness and hospitality [i.e., "Diaspora"] are necessary though insufficient conditions for the creation and nurture of radically inclusive communities that are often hoped for by those who are in Diaspora.

Racialized and Gendered Migration: An Asian and Asian-North American Example

The burden of this entire essay has been to insist, "we should stop thinking of race 'as an essence, as something fixed, concrete and objective...' [and] instead think of 'race as an unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed [through their inscription and re-inscription on the 'body politic'] by political struggle....'" Such a burden requires a move from "race" to "racialization," and therefore, refusing the temptation to construe power as some kind of capacity external to the latter, insisting, instead, that it is always and already an inextricable-part of the "racial assemblage" as both productive (i.e., it produces an effect) and coercive (i.e., it is incarcerative).[45] Interpreting, describing, and evaluating the

––––––––––––––––––

[45] Here I understand power in the way Foucault understood the notion of "governmentality," by which he meant, "the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security… the tendency which, over a long period and throughout the West, has steadily led towards the pre-eminence over all other forms (sovereignty, discipline, etc) of this type of power which may be termed government, resulting, on the one hand, in formation of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses, and, on the other, in the development of a whole complex of *savoirs…*" [the structural similarities between "racialization" and "power-as-governmentality" should be obvious here]. Michel Foucault, "On Governmentality" in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 102-103.

signifying practices of "race" and power, then, must yield to strategies informed by the realities of diversity and the normative/aspirational demands of radical inclusion.

While my desire is to attempt some kind of articulation of what these strategies might be, that will have to be undertaken another day. Instead, I wish to conclude this essay with an example of how Asian and Asian-North American accredited graduate theological education looks like when it is drawn on the canvas of racialized and gendered diaspora.[46]

What's in a Name? —Dilemmas and Aporias[47]

Among the many dilemmas and *aporias* raised in the vast literature of Asian and Asian-North American communities, theologies, and leaderships, one in particular, invites attention because around it clusters several key issues with which I am concerned in this essay.[48]

---

[46] This final section of the essay is adapted from a previously published essay, "What Do We Do with the Diversity that We Already Are? The Asian and Asian North American in Accredited Graduate Theological Education," by Lester Edwin J. Ruiz and Eleazar S. Fernandez in *Theological Education* 45: 1 (2009): 41-58.

[47] As David Campbell notes, "An *aporia* is an undecidable and ungrounded political space, were no path is 'clear and given' where no 'certain knowledge opens up the way in advance,' where no 'decision is already made.'" See, "The deterritorialization of responsibility: Levinas, Derrida, and ethics after the end of philosophy," *Alternatives: Social Transformation and Humane Governance* 19:4 (1994): 475. It's what we might find at the center of our historic biblical faith.

[48] Partly, in the interest of brevity, and largely because of my limited capacity to be exhaustive, this section is intended primarily to be illustrative of what I consider productive guideposts for understanding and negotiating the rituals of Asian and Asian-North American in the context of accredited graduate theological education. In effect, it is an exercise in selective cartography or mapping.

Timothy Tseng observes that the terms "Asian American" or "Asian and Pacific Islander American" are used to identify "East Asians," "Central Asians," "Southeast Asians," and "Pacific Islander peoples." In fact, these names are ciphers for communities with vast and complex diversities of distinct, though interrelated, cultural, political, and economic realities that are often contested, competitive, and incommensurable—and implicated in the capitalist, racialized, and gendered circuits of power, capital, labor, and knowledge. And while these linguistic devices have become part of the identities of the Asian and Asian-North American in their struggles for racial justice since at least the 1960s, still they are creatures of colonialism and neo-colonialism against which their liberative and transformative potentials have often been interpreted and negotiated. These linguistic devices are part of larger discursive and strategic formations that embody actual "relations of ruling." The point, of course, is not only that language is not innocent, nor that who speaks and whose language is spoken shapes the political agenda, but rather, that language is simultaneously productive, performative, and coercive.

The weight of these linguistic devices cannot be underestimated. They are, for example associated with the sexualized racial and gendered stereotypes like "the model minority," or the "middle minority," or the "forever foreigner," or the "honorary white"[49] that have historically shaped Asian and Asian North American communities in perverse ways. At the same time these very devices have set the stage for developing new and culturally appropriate identities and strategies for transformation. Taken as a "social totality," they are what Rita Nakashima Brock

---

[49] Jonathan Tan, *Asian American Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), pp. 36-56.

calls a "palimpsest with multiple traces written over a single surface."[50] The final report of the

ATS-Wabash Center-sponsored project, "Developing Teaching Materials and Instructional

Strategies for Teaching Asian and Asian American/Canadian Women's Theologies in North

America" completed in 1999 by a group of Asian and Asian American women scholars is

illustrative of Brock's methodological insight. In its self-organized, self- directed structure and

process the report addressed "as a single surface" the problems of teaching and learning in

accredited graduate theological education, giving full play to the multiple locations and

positionalities of the project team, while offering a set of shared recommendations on how to

overcome the problems they identified.

Happily, these (stereotypical) names are not only "limit situations" that regulate Asian

and Asian-North American identities and practice; they provide clues to their wider diversities. In

the context of the implicit challenges posed by the demographics noted elsewhere in this essay, it

is helpful to be reminded, as Jonathan Tan does, that the multi-stranded character of Asian

American theologies has a generational element. "The first-generation Asian American

theologians," he points out, "grounded their theologies on the issues of social justice and

liberation from all forms of institutional and structural racism and discrimination" (p. 93). Issues

of assimilation, integration, and autonomy loomed large, as well as concerns for "Asian Christian

identity" in relation to both sides of the Pacific within a largely church-based and mediated

movement arising mainly out of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean contexts in the 1960s and 1970s.

_____

[50] Cited in Tat-Siong Benny Liew, "Review of *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion and Theology*," American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, (2007), p. 4.

The second generation Asian American theologians include among its ranks a much wider, more diverse group of Asians and Asian North Americans reaching into multiple and overlapping constituencies, disciplinary fields, ecclesial families, and political and religio-moral commitments. Influenced, to some extent, by the rise of the cultural studies movement of the 1980s and 1990s,[51] it is not surprising that second generation Asian American theologians are more intentionally interdisciplinary in their approaches; and focus, in addition to issues of reconciliation and community transformation, on the relations between faith, the bible, and evangelism, on the one hand, and ethnicity, culture, and economy, as well as interfaith/inter-religious dialogue, on the other hand. Moreover, while not oblivious to the call to engage with the claims of a Pacific and global world, second generation Asian Americans have a clear substantive, methodological, and political/institutional commitment to their particular locations and positionalities that sees the "local" and the "global" as co-constitutive.

This commitment is shaped by the subtle interplay between a post-Newtonian, post-Kantian understanding of space, time and place characteristic of postmodern postcolonial thought, and the deep experiential rootedness in ancestral traditions and counter traditions tied to land, body, even food. It is not surprising that one of the dilemmas running through Asian and Asian-North American academic and intellectual discourses on identity and practice is how one positions one's self vis-à-vis the temptation not only of essentializing and homogenizing what it

---

[51]Political and intellectual movements in the 1980s and 1990s are complex, often contradictory. Still the legacies of critical theory and hermeneutics, as well as feminist, womanist, and queer theory, and their myriad delineations along post-structuralist, post-positivist, post-modern, and post-colonial lines have shaped, for good or ill, the work of Asian American scholars, academics, and public intellectuals.

means to be "Asian", but of locating one's self in the certainty of claims made by the so-called "native informant."[52] This temptation is rendered more complex by the geopolitical and geostrategic legacy of colonialism that limits "Asian" mainly to its Pacific and Indian Ocean Rim, despite the historical reality that Asia runs through southern Russia to the Caspian Sea.[53] Thus, it is methodologically and spiritually refreshing to be reminded not only that "Asian American" is a polymorphic, multivalent palimpsest, but also that it is a "socio-historical object" whose forms, capacities, behaviors, gestures, movements, and potentials ought not to be limited to biological determinants or unchanging social statuses.

Where is home?

The dilemma about one's name, associated with one's generational and methodological location, is also a question about one's "home" within the larger ecology of the social totality that is constantly being (re) interpreted. In fact, Asian and Asian-North American communities, theologies, and leaderships are deeply rooted in religio-moral communities shaped not only by specific generational and disciplinary interests, but also by ecclesial commitments. Of the three ecclesial families within the Association of Theological Schools (Evangelical, Mainline, and Roman Catholic/Orthodox), the fastest growing is the evangelical community, followed by the

---

[52] Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* fn. 3.

[53]If "Asian" were to be fully "extended" methodologically and spiritually to correspond with this wider geography of "Asia," then, a (re) articulation would be required in our understanding of who Asian Americans are. This will mean, for example, that Islam will become a much larger part of Asian and Asian-North American self-understanding and practice—a sea change of huge proportions.

mainline community, with the Roman Catholic/Orthodox community weighing in as a small third.

With the majority of Asian and Asian-North American students being shaped by their evangelical heritage, and being taught by faculty who largely self-identify with a largely "liberal" (some would say postmodern, postcolonial) Asian Christianity, but who are embedded in communities and institutions that may have to address a less than hospitable cultural ethos, the challenge of finding religious, intellectual, and spiritual homes (read "identities") that are responsive and accountable to a multicultural society looms large. For most Asian American theologians serving under the flag of evangelicalism (however understood), the main task is to discover what it means to be "resolutely and vigorously" Asian, American, and Evangelical all at once. For Amos Yong, this means building one's identity and practice on the historically mediated tenets of evangelicalism as they are appropriated within particular Asian American contexts.[54]

The institutional side of finding a home is equally important. This is the question of the future of Asian and Asian-American Christianity which itself is changing. The dilemma may be put polemically in this way: one could conceivably argue that Asian and Asian North American Christianity cannot be extricated from its historical, and therefore colonial past; that Christian identities in the US and Canada, despite the long century between the time the first missionaries "Christianized" Asians in their homelands to the time Asian American Christianity planted itself

---

[54]Amos Yong, "The Future of Asian Pentecostal Theology: An Asian American Assessment," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 10:1 (2007): 22-41. The challenge of Asian American evangelicalism is particularly strong in Chinese and Korean Christianity with the exponential growth they have experienced in the past ten to 20 years.

in North America, still holds sway, and that the many waves of Asian migrations and immigrations to the US, in particular, is nothing more than the return of the colonized to their homeland. Indeed, one may observe that an Asian's inherited Christian identity was often aligned with whichever missionary group had occupied one's homeland.

The point is not to return to the old contestation about the American imperial and colonial project. That is a discussion for another day. The point is a slightly different one, namely, given one's Christian inheritance, what are the conditions under which an authentically transformative Christianity or religious identity and practice can be articulated, and what is the role of accredited graduate theological education in this articulation especially given its tendency to be disconnected from the historic communities (e.g., the churches) that give rise to the need for accredited graduate theological education in the first place? And should the question be answered however provisionally that it is to the churches that accredited graduate theological education needs to be attentive, if not accountable, then, one will also have to ask what in the current practice of our learning, teaching, and research needs to be revisited, at the very least, in order to begin to address the larger questions of what Asian American Christianity ought to look like at mid-century's end.

The challenge of these multi-stranded diversities is at least three-fold: how one understands such diverse locations and practices, whether or not one can or ought to link these diversities, and, how one negotiates the linkages especially since what is at stake is not only their plurality but their inextricable, mutually- challenging and enhancing relations, under conditions not only of change, but of uneven, asymmetrical change. Such asymmetries particularly in

institutional resources that affect learning, teaching, and research, as well as access to power and

privilege can no longer be addressed as if they were external to accredited graduate theological

education in North America, let alone to the formation of personal, political, historical, and

sacred being.