

Posthuman Difference: *Traveling to Utopia with* Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries

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In a 2007 article for the *New York Times Magazine*, Julian Dibbell reports on the rise of a new type of “new economy” worker: the Chinese “gold farmer,” a (typically male) Chinese laborer whose work, paradoxically, is to play Blizzard Entertainment’s popular MMORPG (massively multiplayer online role-playing game) “World of Warcraft,” amassing as much virtual money (in the form of gold coins) as possible during his twelve-hour-a-night, seven-night-a-week schedule.¹ This virtual wealth is important to the game for one main reason: it allows players to purchase the appropriate gear (e.g., weapons, armor, and spells) that enables them to defeat enough enemies to successfully “level up.” Getting the coins, however, is tedious and consumes a great deal of time, which is where the Chinese gold farmer comes in. The virtual coins earned by the gold farmer are sold by the company that employs him to an online retailer, for real money and profit; the secondary retailer then sells them yet again, for even more profit, to players in Europe and America too busy to accumulate the gold themselves. For this, the worker makes about thirty cents an hour; Dibbell estimates that there are thousands of gold farming businesses all over China, employing at least 100,000 workers, who “produce the bulk of all the goods in what has become a \$1.8 billion worldwide trade in virtual items.” As Dibbell suggests, while this type of “labor” seems, at first glance, indistinguishable from the general pattern of outsourcing that occurs in industries as varied as “toy production” and “textile manufacture,” what is unique about the gold farming “industry” is the bizarre fact that these workers perform leisure as labor, or vice versa, in a situation in which virtual money produces actual surplus wealth—for somebody, at least.²

One is tempted to read this tale as yet another example of late-capitalism’s ability to reproduce ever-more specialized and differential local economies that serve global markets, chalking it up to yet another iteration of the postmodern condition.

What makes such a reduction difficult, however, is the way that the local, and specifically, the history of Chinese laborers in America, returns to haunt this globalized virtual space, particularly in terms of the way episodes of virtual violence against Chinese gold farmers (often in the form of a “virtual” lynch mob that hunts down and “kills” the suspected gold farmer) uncannily echoes the actual violence against Chinese immigrant labor in the US during the nineteenth century.³ Equally disturbing are the videos uploaded to YouTube and other sites, in which players document these killing sprees under the headings, “Chinese Gold Farmers Must Die,” and “Chinese Farmer Extermination.” Dibbell, citing Nick Yee’s research on gaming and online environments, suggests that the rhetoric of these acts of virtual mob violence, and the comments directed against gold farmers (not all of whom are Chinese), directly echoes the anti-Chinese rhetoric of the “Great Driving Out” period of the late nineteenth century, particularly in the linkages between terms referring to disease, pestilence, and extermination. This connection is made all the more uncanny in that Yee contextualizes this rhetoric within a history of transnational labor that partly centers on Chinese immigrants doing laundry for Americans during the . . . *Gold Rush!*⁴ How do virtual worlds end up, as in this instance, not only producing and reproducing the economic structures of the physical world, but also the socially determinate, and historically grounded, signs of ethnic and racial difference?

I begin this essay with the story of the Chinese gold farmer not to emphasize, or not only to emphasize, how “networked” culture is at once absolutely weirder than culture before the age of the Internet, and (weirdly) dishearteningly the same, but also to signal how the example itself raises a provocative and challenging set of questions for Asian American critics. In which arena, for instance, should one locate this particular act of racialized violence—within the specific servers that house the “World of Warcraft” game? Within the “real-time,” ahistorically fantastic story-space of the game itself—in the *virtual* interactions between nonhuman “avatars” controlled by users scattered across the globe, and the networks that construct and organize them (interactions paradoxically enabled by a *physical* infrastructure that spans multiple nations and economies)? Or, in the material spaces inhabited by the users themselves (assuming that they can be easily identified), whose encounters with one other occur almost exclusively in virtual worlds? In which *nation* or *nations*, if any, does this racialized violence occur, and to *whom* or *what*, exactly? As these questions indicate, the example of the Chinese gold farmer instantiates a space of bewildering indeterminacy, refusing to settle easily into any discrete disciplinary frame. It is at once a tale of technological mediation, political and economic history, and discursive form, *and* a register of the material experiences of the subjects represented. In this sense, the story of the gold farmer, and the gold farmer himself, serve as examples of what Bruno Latour labels “quasi-objects” and “quasi-subjects,” hybrids of discourse and material experience that seem to defy our increasingly beleaguered disciplinary frameworks of understanding. Registering the increasingly difficult task of keeping separate these “imbroglios of science, politics, economy,

law, religion, technology, fiction,” Latour challenges the ostensibly stable nature of the terms “subject” and “object,” asking, “is it our fault if the networks are *simultaneously real, like nature, narrated, like discourse, and collective, like society?*”⁵

Asian American literary critics have yet to find a way to articulate a theoretical response to this type of quasi-object/subject, in which the human *and* the nonhuman mingle and emerge as simultaneously real/natural, narrated/discursive, and collective/social. What Latour’s work highlights is precisely the way in which disciplinarity (even within the broadly interdisciplinary field of Asian American studies) acts to “translate” and “purify” subjects and objects into separate realms of “nature” and “society,” thereby not only reifying the subject, but more importantly, eliding the very processes through which subjects become known as “human” subjects.⁶ In other words, the Chinese gold farmer is *either* a “real” (political, economic, material, human) subject, *or* a “narrated” (scientific, technical, mechanical, nonhuman) object, *but never both*. Yet, as a quasi-object/quasi-subject, it is clear that the Chinese gold farmer is constituted precisely through a chaotic admixture that collects both human subjects *and* nonhuman objects. In this regard, Latour’s work, tracing as it does one version of the “posthuman turn” in critical and literary theory, presents itself as a provocative challenge to, and a productive opportunity for, Asian American critics to reconsider the subjects and objects of their own discursive and material practices. This essay, then, is an attempt to put into conversation these two distinct, and rarely conjunctive, discourses: posthumanism, which focuses on how technological mediation and networked culture forces a reconsideration of the very categories of “subject,” “object,” and “literature”; and Asian American literary criticism, which seeks to continually interrogate how Asian American subjects are produced, reproduced, and represented (in both material and discursive registers), with a particular focus on the unequal and uneven treatment of these subjects.

My argument will progress in three stages. Firstly, I argue that posthumanism, if seriously considered, provides a troubling critique of Asian American literary criticism in two important respects. Posthumanist theory allows for a more complex understanding of the shift, within Asian American criticism, from nation-bound models to transnational frameworks. Here, I suggest that posthuman theory presents a critical intervention in the way one understands this shift, not as a re-evaluation of the relationship between subjects and nations, but rather, as a *response* to a crisis inaugurated by the dissolution of the humanist subject itself. Moreover, posthumanism’s emphasis on technological mediation and networked culture provides an important new theoretical framework for Asian American literary criticism, particularly in terms of the way that subjects are produced and reproduced through, and in conjunction with, technological objects. In the second stage of this essay, I argue that, if posthumanism presents a critique of Asian American criticism, then the reverse is also true—Asian American literary criticism’s focus on the material effects of discursive cultural productions both pinpoints and illuminates a critical

aporia in posthuman theory: its uncertain and equivocal treatment of race and ethnicity. Here, I articulate how the terms “difference” and “Other” are, in much posthumanist theory, oddly unmoored, *despite* the fact that these very terms are mobilized, by posthumanists, for both the constitution *and* the dissolution of the humanist subject. An Asian Americanist critique of posthumanism, I contend, thus highlights the way in which the de-/re-stabilization of the “liberal humanist subject” itself depends on a re-essentialization of a nonhuman/inhuman other, wherein actual difference—material, corporeal, and discursive—is flattened and equalized. I conclude with a reading of another “quasi-object,” Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries’ *Traveling to Utopia: With a Brief History of the Technology*. Here, I argue that considered together, the form and content of the piece enact an aesthetics of “posthuman difference” which both spotlights the limits, and requires the strengths, of posthumanist *and* Asian Americanist discourse.

The Crisis of the Subject/The Subject of the Crisis

There is an ongoing debate about the terms “the posthuman” and “posthumanism,” which can roughly be characterized as describing a rift between those who theorize what it might mean to *be* “the posthuman” subject and those who theorize what it might mean to *think* as a “posthumanist” critic.⁷ I am less interested in establishing a precise definition for either term (and will use them more or less interchangeably throughout this essay) than I am in highlighting the significant contributions posthumanism might make to Asian American criticism, the first of which revolves around the dissolution of the liberal humanist subject, and, along with it, the “fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism itself.”⁸ The deconstruction of the humanist subject functions as a central tenet that unites various versions of posthumanism, and as such, suggests a critical consensus. This deconstruction is also, of course, one of the critical tasks of Asian American criticism in that the constitution of the liberal humanist subject is intimately connected to processes of objectification and dehumanization that demarcate the line between “human” and other (inhuman/nonhuman) subjects, including, at various points in past and present history, Asians and Asian Americans. At the same time, however, posthumanists caution against the *reproduction* of the humanist subject under deconstruction, particularly in terms of the re-assertion of the stability of the subject through a liberal humanist approach to the posthuman. As Cary Wolfe notes, “we must also recognize that there are liberal humanist ways of engaging” in the very critique of the liberal humanist subject, *even if* the subject is imagined as a liberal “posthumanist” one.⁹ In other words, a radical critique of the humanist subject should not simply involve an expansion of possible subject positions, nor should it seek to dislodge one subject in place of another. Instead, the disembodied, autonomous “humanity” of the liberal humanist subject, and the “ontological hygiene” necessary for its maintenance, is itself the contested, unstable territory in

which “humanism reveals itself to have been always already housing the alien of posthumanism.”¹⁰

This critical *caveat* opens up interesting possibilities for re-framing recent theoretical debates over the nature and scope of Asian American literary criticism, particularly in relation to the shift from a nation-based model of inquiry to a transnational framework. What if, rather than viewing this shift as a response to the increasingly varied ways in which multiply-positioned subjects and nations interact, one re-frames it as a response to a crisis of the liberal humanist subject itself? More importantly, what if, in responding to this crisis, Asian American critics have overlooked the *specific* ways in which this subject becomes deconstructed—via technological mediation and networked culture—and instead have struggled to *recuperate* a humanist subject that was not only *always* unstable, but is now unstable in a historically unique way?¹¹ Here, it is useful to briefly review Sau-ling Wong’s influential articulation of the three key components of the “denationalization” of Asian American literary criticism and the shift toward the transnational. The first is the “easing of nationalist concerns” due to changing demographics, leading to new theoretical interventions along lines of class, gender, and sexuality; the second, the increasingly permeable boundary between, on the one hand, Asian Americans and “Asian Asians,” and on the other, Asian American Studies and Asian Studies; and the third, the “global movement of transnational capital,” leading to a multiplicity of subject positions, and situating “Asian Americans in a diasporic context.”¹² Wong’s work is a response to what she identifies as a theoretical crisis faced by Asian American critics. From a posthumanist perspective, however, what Wong is actually describing here, in addition to the changing demographics of Asian America, and the shifting relations between Asia and America more generally, is in fact the troubling dissolution of the humanist subject *against which* the Asian American subject might be dialectically defined. In this sense, what Wong is charting out, in a kind of reverse dialectic, is not a theoretical reconfiguration of the *Asian American* subject, but the dissolution of the theoretical *liberal humanist subject*—autonomous, individual, disembodied—that underwrites the stability of the very term “Asian American.”¹³

The “transnational” turn described so incisively by Wong is, in fact, a posthuman transnational turn, which traces not only an altered relationship between multiplied subjects and nations but also the historically unprecedented reconfiguration of the way subjects are constituted. By incorporating technological mediation as an additional underlying factor that unites all three of the factors discussed above, it is possible to re-contextualize the transnational turn in Asian American criticism as a recuperative response to the dissolution of the Asian American (humanist) subject. Thus, “denationalization” occurs not simply in terms of shifting economies and borders, nor only in terms of transnational crossings of people and goods, but also in relation to the multiple ways in which the very category of the “human” has become *imbricated with, constructed through, and ultimately deconstructed by* technological networks of information, capital, and culture.¹⁴ While

I am sympathetic toward Wong's concerns about "denationalization" and her cogent expression of its risks and rewards,¹⁵ and moreover, find much to agree with in recent theoretical interventions in Asian American literary criticism—including those by Lisa Lowe, Anne Cheng, David Eng, Viet Nguyen, Kandice Chuh, and numerous others—it seems that Wong's initial pronouncement, in "Denationalization Reconsidered," unfortunately still holds much truth, fifteen years later: Asian American literary criticism continues to find itself at a "theoretical crossroads," "undergoing dramatic changes from whose influences no one in the field of Asian American studies can be exempt."¹⁶

I am not, however, suggesting that the categories of subject formation most relevant to Asian American critics no longer function as operative and productive categories, but rather, that those very categories—race, ethnicity, class, gender, and nation—can no longer be theorized *in addition to* and *constitutive of* (yet *separate from*) autonomous subjects. Instead, they should be understood as technologically networked mediations that disrupt the status of subjects as such, thereby de-hierarchizing the traditional oppositions between subject/object, human/nonhuman, and self/other. What I am proposing, then, is that Asian American critics seriously consider the challenge posed by posthumanist theory: how might we continue the project of deconstructing the liberal, humanist subject, without also reproducing it? How might we identify and articulate the construction and maintenance of difference, if difference no longer inheres either *in* the subject or *in addition to* the subject, but instead, *between* human subjects/nonhuman objects? Where might one locate a "posthuman difference"?

Asian American criticism seeks to at once problematize the epistemologically homogenous concepts "Asia/Asian" and "America/American," and to attend responsibly to the ontological, irreducible heterogeneity of the various populations that move within/between these discursive and material spaces. Yet, the theoretical aim has remained relatively constant: to map out the increasingly divergent categories of existential subjects and their representative objects. In proposing the possibility of a "posthuman difference," I argue for a procedural turn that enables a more expansive framework for theorizing how technological mediation has re-scripted the very subjects/objects of our inquiry. This procedural turn describes a minor, but significant, shift in emphasis: a turn from the tracking of unstable subjects to the "*tracing of associations*" between de-formed and re-formed subject/object hybrids.¹⁷ As I will argue in the section that follows, Asian American critics might approach this "tracing" quite differently than posthumanists, and, in that difference, identify and critique a critical aporia in posthumanist thought: the treatment of race and ethnicity (or the lack thereof).

Posthuman Difference(s)

From the perspective of an Asian Americanist, the posthuman emphasis on the dissolution of the liberal humanist subject and the reconfiguration of subjects through technological mediation might rightfully be critiqued for its less-than-stellar treatment of questions of race and ethnicity. As Thomas Foster argues, however, what is at stake is not simply theory's ability to attend sensitively to racial and ethnic difference (he suggests that while recent "technoculture studies" do much to explore how technologies impact gender and sexuality, they often "minimize their implications for race and ethnicity"), but rather, whether terms like "race" and "ethnicity" can be said to have any significance for the posthuman at all.¹⁸ For Foster, the tension between the liberatory discourse of the posthuman as a critique of universalism, and that discourse's emphasis on the dissolution of the unified subject through technological mediation (thereby making terms such as "Asian" potentially moot), is one of posthumanism's most problematic antinomies. Likewise, in her study of the visual culture of the Internet, Lisa Nakamura points out that the (perhaps premature) pronouncement of the dissolution of the humanist subjects leads too often, and too quickly, to an uncritical celebration of networked culture as "a space of utopian post-humanism where differences between genders, races, and nationalities are leveled out."¹⁹ N. Katherine Hayles also charts this antinomy and warns against the "fantasy . . . that because we are essentially information, we can do away with the body."²⁰ However, what happens to the "body" in a posthuman age? Moreover, what happens to the racialized body if the posthuman body is at once "a technology, a screen, a projected image . . . a body under the sign of AIDS, a contaminated body, a deadly body, a techno-body . . . a queer body"?²¹ This is a question for which posthumanist theory does not have a satisfactory answer—which is not to say that this body does not make an appearance in posthuman theory.

The gendered, sexualized, and, to a lesser extent, racialized and ethnic body is a question *much* attended to by posthumanist theorists. Paradoxically, it's the emphatic presence of the "other" in the work of these thinkers that evinces its disappearance. To cite but a few examples of this attention: Donna Haraway argues that "the discursive tie between the colonized, the enslaved, the noncitizen, and the animal—all reduced to type, all Others to rational man, and all essential to his bright constitution—is at the heart of racism and flourishes . . . in the entrails of humanism"; Elaine Graham suggests that "women, racial and sexual minorities, political radicals or those with physical and mental impairments are designated inhuman by virtue of their non-identity to the white, male, reasoning, able-bodied subject"; Latour claims that "one society—and it is always the Western one—defines the general framework of Nature with respect to which others are situated," a "particular universalism" that allows for both relativism and the "surreptitious return of arrogant universalism"; and Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston assert that "the posthuman marks a solidarity between disenchanting liberal subjects and those who were always-already

disenchanted.”²² As these examples suggest, posthumanist thinkers are quite wary of inadvertently reproducing the “notorious universality” that underwrites the construction of the liberal humanist subject.²³ Yet, insofar as posthumanism seeks to challenge the “human,” its enlistment of structurally equivalent forms of otherness results in a relatively myopic approach to tracing the associations through which the nonhuman and inhuman “other” have been, and continue to be, *differently* enlisted in the naming of the “human” subject. Wolfe, for instance, attempts to differentiate the posthuman by stating that “‘we’ are always radically other, already in- or ahuman in our very being”; Neil Badmington puts forth a similar argument, observing that “otherness has *always* been part of ‘us,’ parting ‘us’ from ourselves”; and Latour argues that, like the “Bedouins and the !Kung who mix up transistors and traditional behaviours, plastic buckets and animal-skin vessels . . . we have all become premodern again.”²⁴ What these assertions make explicit is posthumanist theory’s troubling reliance on the re-essentialization of otherness; if the posthuman subject arises through the deconstruction of the “human,” pinpointing the “other” at its very core, then *all* posthuman subjects can be claimed as *always* “other,” even if that otherness wasn’t recognized as such by the subject itself. It is possible, then, to identify, within the seemingly playful re-mixing of Latour’s influential assertion that “we have never been modern”—from Haraway’s “we have never been human” to Wolfe’s “‘we’ are not ‘we’”—yet another negative dialectic: not, “we have always been Other,” but more accurately, “we have never *not* been Other.”

From the perspective of an Asian Americanist, then, the posthumanist’s insistence on a departure *from* the liberal human subject paradoxically puts under theoretical erasure that large population of human beings for whom the possibility of such unified subjectivity was never granted—that population *against which* the “liberal human subject” authorized itself (and continues to do so), through oppressive, exclusionary, and violent means intimately bound to the construction and maintenance of *hierarchies* of difference. In this regard, Asian American criticism, with its attention to the material and discursive conditions that continue to produce and reproduce difference along lines of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality, and with its commitment to a politics of social justice and equality, can deepen and productively complicate recent posthumanist work, leading to a more “ethical posthumanism.”²⁵ If, from a posthumanist perspective, Asian American criticism has not yet provided a thorough accounting of how technological mediation has reformulated the subjects/objects of its discourse, then, from an Asian Americanist perspective, posthumanism has not yet imagined and enacted an interpretive strategy that adequately charts how posthuman difference operates in both discursive *and* material registers. Posthuman theory seems to treat the constitution and maintenance of the liberal humanist subject as something of an epistemological, temporal detour, through which one might reach the originary “otherness” of the asynchronous, atemporal posthuman.²⁶ Yet, it is critical that Asian Americanists, in their reconsideration of the subjects and objects of *their* discourse, identify methodologies

for tracing the discursive *and* material processes wherein the nonhuman and inhuman become the necessary “others” for the continuing, uneven, and unequal constitution of the “human.” In the next section, I turn to a reading of Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries’ digital text, *Traveling to Utopia: With a Brief History of the Technology*, another quasi-object/quasi-subject that, like the Chinese gold farmer, skirts disciplinary capture. It is a text that, I claim, highlights the limits of posthumanist and Asian Americanist discourses, and, in so doing, demands an interpretive strategy that questions the strengths of each discourse.

Traveling to Utopia?

Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries’ work presents an interesting challenge to both posthumanist and Asian American literary criticism in the context of some of the convergent divergences (for lack of a better term) raised above.²⁷ Their work is, at first glance, deceptively easy to describe: Based in Seoul, South Korea, YHCHI began life as a collaborative effort (between a South Korean, Young-Hae Chang and an American, Marc Voge) to create web-based electronic literature, using the Flash computer program to construct animated narratives paired with music (at first, classic jazz, but more recently, electronic music of their own production).²⁸ As other commentators have noted, their “signature style” involves several graphic and aural elements, all of which are, in computer programming or “coding” terms, quite simplistic, even minimal: the exclusive use of the typeface Monaco; the pairing of animated text with music, often synced rhythmically; translation and the use of multiple languages, beginning with English, French, and Korean, but since branching out to include Spanish, Turkish, Russian, Galician, Chinese, Japanese, and others; and finally, the works’ emphasis on text, rather than image, and on address, rather than on exchange.²⁹ The content of the work ranges widely, from the parodic mixing of political, technological, and sexual discourse (*Cunnilingus in North Korea* and *Samsung Means to Come*), to the serious, yet playful re-envisioning of modernist texts (*Dakota* and *Beckett’s Bounce*); from the politics of tourism, national identity, and the demilitarized zone that separates North and South Korea (*If I Were You I’ll Go To The Palace* and *What’s Your Nationality*) to narratives that portray momentary, if enigmatic, slices of everyday life (*The Last Day of Betty Nkomo*). Many, but not all, of the pieces thematize ideas of “distance, homelessness, anonymity and insignificance” in a technologically mediated world.³⁰

In other words, YHCHI’s work is, for the most part, formally repetitive but thematically diverse—they tend to “look” and “act” in a similar manner, but narrate events that span across multiple subjects and locations, most often from the direct first-person perspective (even if it is rarely clear who, or where, that person is).³¹ This in itself is not unusual, as it describes the output of any number of authors. What makes the particular work of YHCHI interesting, I argue, is the way that the tension between form and content enacts an aesthetics of “posthuman difference” that

interrogates the particular theoretical limits of the two discourses at hand, and for which neither discourse can yet account. In terms of form, their work adamantly refuses to be framed within contemporary posthumanist-inflected evaluations of electronic literature, forsaking the two key elements that function, for many critics, as the foundational characteristics of digital literary texts: interactivity and programmability. According to Adalaide Morris and Thomas Swiss, it is precisely these two terms that distinguish electronic literature (or, in their terms, “new media poetics”) from print literature: interactive programming involves the actual “coding” used by the author(s) to prepare the work for networked machines, which, when accessed by “programmer, poet, or ‘interactor’” can be “parsed, tweaked, snatched, sampled, altered, and/or recycled.” Programmed interactivity implies that, rather than simply “looking” at an image, users actually “enter” the image, “clicking, zooming, scanning, copying, cutting, pasting,” thereby becoming “cybernetic organisms joined in continuous feedback loops with media and information technologies.”³² When “entering” a work by YHCHI, one immediately notices how *little* control is given to the end-user, not simply in terms of programming (there is very little a viewer can do to modify the file in terms of parsing, tweaking, and snatching), but also in terms of interactivity (other than starting, stopping, and resizing the image, there are absolutely no elements in the work with which to interact). As YHCHI admit, these are works that are simply not interested in programmed interactivity: “in my work there is no interactivity; no graphics or graphic design; no photos; no banners; no millions-of-colors; no playful fonts; no pyrotechnics. I have a special dislike for interactivity.”³³ Elsewhere, they push this idea toward a slightly more absurd position, claiming that “people equate choice with democracy, but no one ever said that art and literature were democracies. We would like our own work to exert a dictatorial stranglehold on the reader.”³⁴

Yet, it is the works’ formal adherence to the other key aspects of electronic literature—digital production, networked distribution, and the effacement of the individual author in favor of collaborative work between writers, programmers, artists, and others—that challenges contemporary formulations of Asian American literary criticism, particularly in relation to that field’s reliance upon single-author texts that remain predominantly nation-bound despite the movement towards transnational frameworks. Indeed, as a cursory survey of recent work would indicate, much Asian American literary criticism is anchored by literary texts in which the relationship between author and nation is relatively clear-cut—authors and texts are most commonly drawn from within the space of the US nation-state, even if their work addresses a multiplicity of others. This seems the case, too, in recent criticism that focuses specifically on transnational Asian American literature, in which authors and texts remain grounded within the United States even as their work articulates transnational perspectives.³⁵ What to do, then, with a text that is published in multiple nations and languages instantaneously, and moreover, is “produced” not as a physically locatable *object*, but rather, a stream of data that one does not purchase

and “read,” but instead accesses and “experiences”? To whom should authorship be attributed when the process of production is shared between multiple individuals?³⁶ More importantly, how (or why) might one qualify such an object in the context of *Asian American* literature? In terms of the physical and literary form of the work, it is not quite “national,” although it “exists” within multiple nation-states (including the US), nor is it quite “transnational,” insofar as it operates within a network that connects a multiplicity of national spaces (thereby giving priority to none). In terms of the work as *cultural production*, it is not quite “Asian” (Marc Voge is an American, of course, but more importantly, the texts are written in multiple languages, in various iterations and reiterations, and “occur” in multiple places and times); neither is it quite “American” (as mentioned above, YHCHI are based in Seoul, which is where, I presume, the “home” server that houses the YHCHI website “lives”).

I argue that both the form and content of YHCHI’s work serve not only to establish the limits of each discourse, but also, paradoxically, demand an interpretive strategy that requires an expansion and mingling of the two, effectively drawing them together in a new discursive network. By denying users the kind of “entry” into the work that might be expected from the medium—indeed, by forcing the viewer into a “dictatorial stranglehold”—YHCHI presents an incisive critique of the posthumanist framing of electronic literature, centered around the operative metaphors of “access” and “control” that underwrite terms like “programmability,” “coding,” and “interactivity” (recall that Morris and Swiss define electronic literature as programmable, allowing users access, control, and entry “into” the work).³⁷ These questions become trebly dramatized in YHCHI’s *Traveling to Utopia: With a Brief History of the Technology*, not simply in terms of the formal elements of the work, but also in terms of content—two of the narratives are stories of how technology serves to monitor access and to deny entry (or, more specifically, re-entry), emphasizing how technology serves to produce and reproduce racialized and gendered subject/objects, while the third presents an ironic commentary on the rhetoric of technological liberation from the constraints of categorical difference.³⁸ We see the metaphors of access and control thematized in the very first two lines of the central narrative, in which the narrator states, “I’m born into a house with no computer. Then one day there is one.” The juxtaposition of biological and technological arrival foreshadows the larger plot of the narrative, which tells the tale of the protagonist’s voluntary, yet somehow forced (and reinforced) entry into and interaction with technology. In these opening lines, the sense that the subject is constituted through the arrival of technology—being born twice, perhaps, once prior to, and then again in conjunction with, the arrival of the “computer”—is amplified by the narrative content, which skips over the period between the arrival of the “I” and the appearance of the “computer,” as if the time in-between was simply that: awaiting the arrival of the computer. Indeed, it seems that with the arrival of the computer comes the arrival of gender, as well: “Just a girl, I take the monitor, with its dim glow, for a TV—weird TV show” (a topic to which I will return momentarily).

At the same time, as suggested from the shift from the “TV” to the “weird TV show” of the monitor, the piece asks us to reconsider how “nation,” as an operative category of difference, is here reconfigured by the shift from analog to digital, and is posed against the representation of “nation” that, as in much Asian American literary criticism, still depends on phenomenological presence within or between clearly delineated borders. Here, the narrative compellingly suggests that the nation is not simply aided and abetted by technology, but that the concepts of “nation” and a “national subject” are literally re-constructed through technological mediation—in fact, “nation” becomes a technology in its own right. Thus, the coupling of the “I” with the “computer,” in the first portion of this narrative, is itself significantly doubled with two other terms that complicate a reading of this first image as primarily a commentary on the posthuman as constructed vis-à-vis technology: “house” and “monitor.” Paired with the merging of biological and technological birth, these terms suggest that the narrator is born not only into a familial and political regime, a “house,” but more significantly, a technological regime, a “house” that “monitors” its subjects through a technology that compels obedience—a directive which, at first, the narrator refuses to heed: “Although my father, a civil servant, forbids it, I sneak into the room where, day and night, the computer hums, to stare at the monitor with its green characters on a black background.” That this act of disobedience may, or may not, have any connection to the event described immediately after suggests, again, the narrator’s sense of voluntary *and* involuntary participation (indeed, the narrator defies the father not in order to *avoid* the monitor, but so that she might “stare at” it). The activities of this particular “house” are now re-configured as a “home”-land: “one day, my father leaves for the ministry, and never comes home. That happens when I’m thirteen. When I’m twenty, I go abroad to study.” The reference to the father’s position, as a “civil servant,” and the description of his disappearance—“my father leaves for the ministry”—serve to conflate the individual house with the collective “home” that is the nation-state (which, although it is easy to assume is South Korea, is actually never stated). The narrator is thus born not simply as a subject whose very constitution appears authored by technology—the narrator is, quite literally, technology’s “object”—but into a technocratic state that offers the metaphors of “house” and “home” as a kind of technological inscription that is suggestively borderless, and ultimately impossible to refuse.

The narrative compellingly suggests how technology’s ability to (differentially) reproduce the nation even *beyond* the nation provides Asian Americanists a productive new framework for conceptualizing the ways in which a “homeland” is now something more than a discrete territory with definable borders or symbolic ideal—it is, in fact, a technology embedded within subject/objects. Thus, despite the uncertainty of narrative cause-and-effect—did the father disappear because the daughter disobeyed? What exactly were those “green characters on a black background” that were not to be looked at? The narrator, away from “home,”

seems to have learned the unstated lesson so that when the “home” comes calling, she seems, this time, mysteriously compelled to obey:

One day, someone identifying himself as a fellow countryman is standing at my front door with a box from which he takes out, once inside my place, a laptop computer. “Our little community would like you to have it,” he says. Before I can respond, he turns on the computer’s little black and white screen. Attached to the laptop is a modem that, before leaving, he encourages me to use to send faxes back home.

The passage hinges on the tension between the polarities of “my” and “our”: it is not until “once inside my place” that the “fellow countryman” reveals the laptop, and it is the injunction of the phrase “our little community” that seems to bar any reply or response, either negative or positive. Indeed, in this moment, that which is “my place” and that which is “our community” become one, just as the merging of the “house” with the national “home” discussed above. Here, the sense of “place” expands beyond physical description, suggesting as it does the proper, appropriate, “place” of the narrator—the “community” here is literally putting this narrator back in her “place.” That this is done through technological mediation, rather than through representations of any strongly shared familial, cultural, or ethnic ties, further adds to the sense that all such terms are now increasingly conjoined through technological networks that have re-written them. Indeed, the image of “community” (as metaphor, and metonym, for “nation”) being offered to the narrator here is, to say the least, an unusual one, consisting largely of this anonymous “fellow countryman” and “a distant relative” who “phones” the narrator for “never faxing home.” Moreover, the odd “reprimand” has to do with the fact that the narrator “never mentioned [her] computer to anyone in [her] family.” The disappearance of the subject implied in the move from “my place” to “our [technological] community” is linked to another important metaphor of technological inscription that suggests how “community” is but one step away from “reproduction.” We can read this reproduction along multiple lines—not merely of nation, but, as I will suggest below, also of gender and race—yet, the command to participate in such activity threatens to radically undermine the already objectified subject herself. Indeed, the demand for “faxes” from the “distant relative” is not simply a pun on “facts”—this both is, and is not, a joke about feeling guilty for being out of touch with relatives, however distant—but expresses a slightly more chilling image of the “facsimile” as content which is replicated and reproducible, rendering unnecessary the original object.

The narrator’s refusal, unlike the one earlier, seems inconsequential and unintended. After all, despite her surprise at the relative’s eerie knowledge, the

narrator nonetheless concedes: “still, I begin to fax.” However, posed against the image of “place” that delineates the narrator’s pre- and post-laptop life, particularly as it relates to the act of *scripting*, this brief refusal begins to seem more profound. Thus, moving forward from this moment, the narrative follows the bizarre but somehow inevitable progress from “faxes” to “e-mails,” and from there, from being *constructed* through technology to becoming a *technological object* itself. The story ends with the narrator’s discovery of a “chip” implanted in her abdomen: a “Samsung Z-3000” which, she discovers, is “used in tracking systems, like, for instance, a special collar made for an engendered animal species,” and also in “global positioning systems.” Here, we see more clearly how technology “tracks” and “positions” the subject, putting her back in place, both in terms of gender—impregnated, so to speak, by this “chip”—and race. “Samsung” is the only reference to Korea in the piece, and serves not only as a metonym for nation, but *also* race—it, and nothing else, is what racializes the narrator (unless we presume that this text “represents” an identifiable “author,” living and writing in a specific nation—which, as already discussed, is quite difficult to do).

Moving backward, however, we might note that what the laptop/modem combo replaces, what the narrator used prior to her technological inscription in order to “type” her “papers,” is in fact “a manual typewriter that has a repeating space bar.” Here, I do not mean to suggest that the narrator made an error in judgment by not remaining in the trusty world of the analog, but rather, that the image of the “repeating space bar,” particularly as it resonates within the poles of “my place” and “our community,” suggests that the text imagines, posed *against* figures of repetition and reproduction, a momentary space of repeatable *indeterminacy*, a “space” that anchors meaning without actually meaning itself. In fact, I read the “space” here as the trace of a subject that counter-scripts the momentary possibility of resisting technological inscription and reproduction, a subject that exists as neither information nor material, but suggests potentiality and position. That this resistance is a dream, however, is made eminently clear by the conclusion of the narrative, at which point we find the speaker, “implanted” with the “Samsung Z-3000” tracking chip, turned into a technological subject/object. Indeed, it is precisely through technological mediation that the narrator is now *unable* to escape nation, race, and gender, which have inevitably recaptured her.

The narrative concludes with the narrator firmly back in the place of nation, race, home, and house (the absentee daughter returned to the absent father), and barred from future departure. The impossibility of entry and access (the narrator can neither leave her place, nor enter another) serves, finally, as a comment not only on posthumanism’s relative silence on the differential deployment, by nation-states, of technologies of mediation, thus reconfiguring subject/object itself, but also as a *formal enactment* of the way technological mediation constructs new formations of nation, race, and gender. Turning again to the image of the “Samsung Z-3000,” we might note that the piece might also be read as a meditation on the dream of escape

at the level of form: an ironic refutation of the dream that some, in fact, can “turn it off.” Although the viewer has little control over the piece, in terms of interactivity and programmability, one can always simply close the browser window—can turn it off, so to speak—thereby escaping into a different space. The concluding image of the narrator-turned-cyborg might thus also be read as an incisive commentary on the difference, say, between having a Samsung cell-phone and *making* a Samsung phone—or, in this case, *being remade* as a racial, gendered reproductive technology that “births” a Samsung phone. There are many who can, at will, turn on and off their cell-phones, but there are an equally large number of people for whom an escape from the interconnected systems of global finance, trade, and production—a network that has effectively reconfigured large populations in Asia and elsewhere, a majority of them women, as high-tech factory workers—is materially impossible. This reminds us not only of the inequalities upon which technological networks are built, but also of the interconnectedness of the subject/objects captured therein. In this sense, the image of the “Samsung Z-3000,” a computer chip that is infinitely reproducible and replaceable—one is as good as the other, at least to the machine—might also represent that large population of inexpensive and interchangeable subjects/objects who become, quite literally, *components* of the large multi-national conglomerate known as Samsung, effectively transformed into subjects/objects *against which* the “human” reader is posed, connected, and technologically mediated, even if differently so. One can dream of turning it off, or closing the window, YHCHI’s *Traveling to Utopia* seems to say—but can one remove oneself from the networks that continually track, place, and position human subjects/objects? To answer “yes” may be, the piece suggests, a utopian fantasy, a dream of escape to a non-place that, much like *Utopia*, is impossibly both “everywhere and nowhere” at once.

As a text like YHCHI’s demonstrates, technological mediation has radically altered not only the relations between subjects and nations, but also the constitution of subjects themselves, upending the very notion of what it means to be a “human” subject. As I have argued, although posthumanism and Asian American literary criticism seem, at first glance, quite far removed, both discourses share an abiding interest in undoing the damage wreaked by the constitution and maintenance of the liberal, humanist subject. While there are valid reasons for Asian Americanists to be wary of posthumanism, some of which I have discussed above, it is imperative that we also pay heed to how the de-/re-construction of “human” subjects *against* nonhuman or inhuman others is now impossible to understand without a serious consideration of technological mediation in its many iterations. In its imagination of new subject/object formations, YHCHI’s *Traveling to Utopia* represents a textual object that demands, from Asian Americanists, new theoretical paradigms and interpretive strategies. Certainly, simply reframing the recurrent questions—about the national and the transnational, about the Asian and the American—with an added tweak of posthuman theory does not magically eliminate the serious

difficulties one encounters in trying to qualify the text as Asian American. Yet, if we truly are living in an age of proliferating, hybrid subjects/objects, then it is perhaps inevitable that many of them escape disciplinary capture.³⁹ Rather than strive for a disciplinary recalibration that might realign representative subjects and their representative objects, we should seek instead to recalibrate our disciplines, so that we may more capaciously account for these new subject/object formations.

Notes

¹ Julian Dibbell, “The Life of the Chinese Gold Farmer,” *New York Times Magazine*, June 17, 2007. Last accessed June 1, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/17/magazine/17lootfarmers-t.html?fta=y>.

² Ibid. “World of Warcraft” is, according to Dibbell, “one of the most profitable computer games in history, earning close to \$1 billion a year.”

³ As Dibbell notes, another paradoxical effect of the purely instrumental approach to amassing virtual wealth in “World of Warcraft” is the resentment it breeds amongst players and game designers, many of whom feel that, at best, this kind of “play” is not really play at all, but cheating, and at worst, is a kind of “real-world” infringement of mercantile ruthlessness in a virtual world that ought to be pure of such behavior. The perhaps not entirely surprising—and yet nonetheless startling—result of this is that gold farmers (whose player patterns are repetitive and easy to spot) are often deliberately targeted and killed by other players, especially in areas where many Chinese gold farmers are known to congregate (though it is, of course, difficult to discern, with absolute certainty, whether or not an “avatar” is really a gold farmer—or even Chinese).

⁴ Nick Yee, “The Daedalus Project.” Last accessed June 2010, <http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus/archives/001493.php?page=4>.

⁵ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 6; italics in original. On “quasi-objects” and “quasi-subjects,” see 55–64. Throughout this essay, I use the term “subject/object” as shorthand for “quasi-objects/quasi-subjects.”

⁶ Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 11–30.

⁷ For a decent (if somewhat skewed toward a systems-theory approach) overview of posthumanism, including its genealogical link to post-structuralism, see Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), especially i–xvi.

⁸ Ibid., xv. See also N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 2–5.

⁹ Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, 121. Also see Bruce Clarke, *Posthuman Metamorphosis* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 3–6 and Neil Badmington, *Alien Chic* (London: Routledge, 2004), 110–112.

¹⁰ Badmington, *Alien Chic*, 124. The term “ontological hygiene” is from Elaine Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 11–12.

¹¹ Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human*, 2.

¹² Sau-ling Wong, “Denationalization Reconsidered,” in *Postcolonial Theory and the United States*, ed. Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 126–127. It is also worth noting that Wong’s essay could also be historicized as participating in the movement toward transnationalism within the larger field of American Studies. See Shelley Fisher Fishkin, “Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies—Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004.” *American Quarterly* 57.1 (2005): 17–57.

¹³ I find it suggestive that discussions of the posthuman and of transnational Asian America begin around the same time: Wong’s article (along with Fisher’s), published in 1995, roughly coincides with the appearance of several influential works on the posthuman, including: Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, Women* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993); Allucquère Roseanne Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995); Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, eds., *Posthuman Bodies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995); and Anne Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

¹⁴ A possibility that Wong gestures towards as well. See Wong, “Denationalization Reconsidered,” 125.

¹⁵ Wong, “Denationalization Reconsidered,” 134–141. See also Sau-ling Wong, “Maxine Hong Kingston in a Global Frame.” *AALA Journal* 11 (2005): 7–31 and “The Stakes of Textual Border-Crossing,” in *Orientations*, eds. Kandice Chuh and Karen Shimakawa (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 130–152.

¹⁶ Wong, “Denationalization Reconsidered,” 126. This is a massively reductive cataloging of important and complex work, about which a more detailed accounting is unfortunately impossible here. See Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000); David Eng, *Racial Castration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Viet Nguyen, *Race and Resistance* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Kandice Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). For one recent example of the reiteration of this “theoretical crossroads,” see Aihwa Ong, *Buddha is Hiding* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), especially 256–285. Ong argues that “theoretically speaking, the model of Asian America as a community of

ethnic exclusion is unable to conceptualize new transnational Asian subjects, except to identify them as ‘foreign-born’ and therefore not Asian American,” 259.

¹⁷ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5 (italics in original). See also 159–164.

¹⁸ Thomas Foster, *The Souls of Cyberfolk* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xxviii.

¹⁹ Lisa Nakamura, *Digitizing Race* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 34.

²⁰ Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 12. In her more recent work, Hayles somewhat modifies her thinking about the deconstruction of the liberal subject, suggesting instead a focus on “different versions of the posthuman.” N. Katherine Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 2–3.

²¹ Halberstam and Livingston, *Posthuman Bodies*, 9.

²² Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 18; Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human*, 53; Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 105; Halberstam and Livingston, *Posthuman Bodies*, 9.

²³ The phrase “notorious universality” is from Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 4.

²⁴ Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism*, 89; Neil Badmington, ed., *Posthumanism* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 157; Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 75.

²⁵ The phrase “ethical posthumanism” comes from Sherryl Vint, *Bodies of Tomorrow* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 189.

²⁶ As Wolfe claims, posthumanism, like postmodernism, “comes both before and after humanism.” Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, xv.

²⁷ I will henceforth use the abbreviation YHCHI, in homage to the collective anonymity of the acronymic multi-national corporations parodied by the moniker. In early interviews, YHCHI responded to questions in the first-person, but in more recent interviews YHCHI speak collectively as a “we,” which I read to be an intentional effort to foreground the collaborative nature of the work. See Thomas Swiss, “Distance, Homelessness, Anonymity, and Insignificance.” Last accessed April 3, 2010, <http://www.uiowa.edu/~iareview/tirweb/feature/younghae/interview.html>; Hyun-Joo Yoo, “Intercultural Medium Literature Digital.” Last accessed April 3, 2010, <http://www.brown.edu/Research/dichtung-digital/2005/2/Yoo/index-engl.htm>; Philagrafika 2010, “Interview.” Last accessed April 3, 2010. <http://www.philagrafika2010.org/node/208>.

²⁸ YHCHI’s works can be “read” at “Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries.” Last accessed August 31, 2010, <http://www.yhchang.com/> (all future citations of their work refer to this

website). On YHCHI's use of music, see Fixit, "Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries." Last accessed April 3, 2010, <http://fixitemst.blogspot.com/2008/12/young-hae-chang-heavy-industries-nna.html>. Although initially focusing solely on the Internet for the reception and distribution of their work, YHCHI has since expanded their terrain, presenting installations at museums and public spaces, including the New Museum, New York City; the Tate Gallery, London; and the Centre Pompidou, Paris, among others.

²⁹ N. Katherine Hayles, *Electronic Literature* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 124–128. See also Jessica Pressman, "The Strategy of Digital Modernism." *Modern Fiction Studies* 52.2 (2008): 302–303; Mark Tribe, "An Ornithology of Net Art." Last accessed April 3, 2010, <http://www.tate.org.uk/intermediaart/entry15274.shtm>; and Dana Solomon, "No User Required." Last accessed April 3, 2010, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/7nn8r5q3>.

³⁰ In the interview with Swiss cited above, YHCHI state that "distance, homelessness, anonymity, and insignificance are all part of the Internet literary voice, and we welcome them."

³¹ An exception to this formal rigidity is their more recent work, including *If I Were You I'll Go To the Palace* and *What's Your Nationality*, done in collaboration with Candy Factory Projects (a Japanese media arts collective), which incorporates images of South Korea and Korea's DMZ (Demilitarized Zone).

³² Adalaide Morris and Thomas Swiss, eds., *New Media Poetics* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 4–15. Although the discussion here focuses on Morris and Swiss, they are not alone in identifying "interactivity" and "programmability" as key elements of digital literature. See, for instance, Hayles, *Electronic Literature*, 14–35 and Loss Pequeño Glazier, *Digital Poetics* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2002), 21–28. For a critique of the "myth of interactivity," see Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 56–61. For more on new media, generally, see, among others: Espen Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1997); Alexander Galloway, *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Mark Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Nakamura, *Digitizing Race*; and Brian Kim Stefans, *Fashionable Noise: On Digital Poetics* (Berkeley, CA: Atelos, 2003).

³³ Quoted in Pressman, *The Strategy of Digital Modernism*, 303.

³⁴ Yoo, "Intercultural medium."

³⁵ See, for one recent example, Shirley Geok-lin Lim et. al., *Transnational Asian American Literature* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006).

³⁶ YHCHI remain deliberately, even comically, ambiguous when asked questions about process, responding in only the vaguest of terms: "We sit in front of our computers side by side on the tiny floor of our tiny pre-World War II Japanese house in Seoul and try to

ignore each other. Something inevitably comes up, and the laughs—sorry—the collaboration process begins,” in Swiss, “Distance, Homelessness, Anonymity, and Insignificance.”

³⁷ For an argument about how “control” is in fact a critical effect of decentralized networks, see Alexander Galloway, *Protocol* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

³⁸ The narratives are diegetically distinct, but overlap dialogically within the piece. Given the scope of this piece, my reading will focus largely on the “main” central narrative. The “top tier” story focuses on an unidentified narrator, seemingly in Seoul, Korea (though not himself, perhaps, Korean), who is stopped by the police in a subway station, recalling to him a similar encounter with police in Paris, France. The “bottom tier” story, written in Korean, is a looped, parodic prayer of thanks to a “digital god” who, “thanks to high technology,” has transformed the speaker into a “white man” and also, oddly, a “lovely white woman” (translation provided by Joseph Jeon and Youngmin Choe).

³⁹ Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 2.