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## Performing IR

### Abstract

This research is an attempt to create a new way of understanding international relations, which is defined here as knowledge and practice that informs us of the nature, goals, and actors of international politics. At the core of the research is a simple concern, but one I am still rather unsure I have thought of enough: what does it mean to create a different discourse? The argument made is that international relations as we know it, is a discourse centered on state, sovereignty, and anarchy, and also white, hegemonic masculine culture, which forces us to maintain that culture's social dominance.

Unfortunately, this cultural knowledge leads to a world of fear, wars, and deaths. The dissertation instead proposes that we instead work toward creating new international relations theories centered on our own personal experiences and on critical cultural theories. Accomplishing this requires us to reject the epistemology, genealogy, and theories of international relations. By doing this, we may be able to imagine a different international relations—open to diversity, accepting of differences, compassionate for marginalized and oppressed people.

Imagining a new international relations theory relies on the methodology of written performative autoethnography to draw on the researcher's personal experiences. The dissertation makes a connection between the researcher's identity as an Asian American male, international relations, and white, hegemonic masculinity. Through this connection, the researcher shows that by rethinking his identity performance, it is possible to subvert and reject international relations as we know it, and white, hegemonic masculinity, and create a new way to think about how we should relate to our world.

The dissertation concludes that we can create our own theories of international relations by interrogating our own identity performances. When we are able to reimagine what our own identity means and to form new connections to marginalized individuals and communities, then we can create new knowledge about our world that creates potentially new international relations. Simply put: if we want to know our world differently, we need to transform our identity into something more ethical, more compassionate, more accepting of difference.

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Performing IR

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

Charles Darwin LuLevitt

August 2020

Adviser: Dr. Bernadette Calafell, Ph.D.

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## ABSTRACT

This research is an attempt to create a new way of understanding international relations, which is defined here as knowledge and practice that informs us of the nature, goals, and actors of international politics. At the core of the research is a simple concern, but one I am still rather unsure I have thought of enough: what does it mean to create a different discourse? The argument made is that international relations as we know it, is a discourse centered on state, sovereignty, and anarchy, and also white, hegemonic masculine culture, which forces us to maintain that culture's social dominance.

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## CHAPTER 1: SEEING THE BORDERS OF IR

International Relations (IR) is not meant for the ordinary likes of you and me. If you are poor, lost, a person of color, or a trans-gender person<sup>1</sup>, or hungry and scared, just barely getting by one day at a time, then IR was never meant for you. IR is for rich, powerful, intellectual people, for the presidents, ministers, senators, kings, and world leaders, for generals, colonels, and warlords, for diplomats, and for academics. Too often it is a chess game: pawns of soldiers, knights of tanks, bishops of planes, rooks of ships, queens of missiles, kings of nukes. Plane to missiles seven, checkmate. Paid for with the lives of those whom IR was never meant for.

This dissertation is an attempt to challenge that way of knowing our world. Instead of a game played by a few, paid for by millions, IR shall be our stories—the stories of all people on earth. It is stories of how we struggle, how we build lives, and how we sacrifice for those we love. It is stories of care and compassion. Too often, IR is an academic sitting in his office, dreaming of abstract concepts dueling with abstract concepts. It shall not be presidents huddled in bunkers with their cabinets planning the next strike while watching approval ratings. It shall not a white scholar in the U.S. who wants to study Arabs, as if any human being can be studied like an animal (I only say Arabs here because this actually happened). No, IR is for you and me to show our

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<sup>1</sup> I adopt Johnson's use of trans- to represent non-heteronormative gendering (P. 137)

agency. IR is to hear other people's stories and to communicate dialogically with them (Alcoff; Conquergood).

By showing how IR is for us, by engaging it with my own personal experiences, to act it out and feel it with my own body, I hope that this dissertation will encourage readers to consider the ways IR is also for you, and how you can engage it with your experiences and your bodies. A lot of times, scholars write popular academic works for mass consumption, but not really seriously asking readers to consider how their lives can produce social change. Maybe this will be the opposite: a non-popular, more serious academic work that will be mass consumed. I would like for you to think about how your lives can create new knowledges about our world. IR is ours, for as long as we are all living in this world, we have a right to IR, to our stories being told, heard, and conversed with. So, I share my stories in this dissertation in the hope that I will one day hear others.

Is it odd to talk about IR in a communication work? I understand the confusion. It is rarely encountered. Yet, if we do not begin to think about altering our connections to sovereignty, states, and international anarchy, we may jeopardize the work done so far in advancing social equality, justice, and emancipation.

To end social oppression, we need to question sovereignty as the foundation of our notions of states and governments. Sovereignty implies that there is one power and one authority within a defined border. We can, for example, see that there are certain agencies licensed to use force to enforce laws. We have municipal police, county sheriffs, state troopers, federal marshals, the FBI, specific paramilitary law enforcement forces like ATF, Customs and Border Control, Secret Service, and so forth. One ring to rule

them all. The U.S. government generally (I say generally because there are armed groups the government unofficially allows or tolerates, but they still have tacit acknowledgement from the government) opposes the use of force from other sources. Sovereignty is tied to force. Thus, as long as we function under sovereignty, it is not clear how humane a government we can have.

In addition, as I will argue later on, sovereignty is bound to a biopolitics/necropolitics that uses power to benefit some population at the expense of others. We can say that sovereignty is the extraction of surplus capital from disadvantaged, marginalized communities to nurture dominant communities (I am expanding from Asian immigrants to marginalized communities from Lisa Lowe's *Immigrant Acts*). Sovereignty is the unequal distribution of resources, and in the U.S. that unequal distribution benefits white, hegemonic masculinity and those who can assimilate into, by extracting resource from everyone else.

This is probably, in my guess, one of the major reasons why so many countries experience civil conflicts. Having worked with international organizations and non-governmental organizations, I have often heard the frustration of international agents—aid workers, NGO and IO staff, military officers, politicians, diplomatic staff, and so on—when countries they are assisting experience civil conflicts. The general response is to blame it on corruption, racial and ethnic discrimination, historical grievances, poverty, underdeveloped political/civil culture, and poor leadership, but no one ever blames sovereignty.

The problem is sovereignty is not just the use of force of the structure of governance within a state's borders. Sovereignty is also the principles governing how we are supposed to see international politics work: states as the dominant actors existing in a condition of anarchy. My point in this dissertation is we cannot limit our criticisms and disruptions of sovereignty to inside the borders of countries. External and internal sovereignty, as I will show later on, feed off each other, and so both need to be challenged if we are ever to create governance open to difference, humane and equal to all human beings. To limit the effects of anarchy, states create powerful military and security apparatuses that are then employed to control domestic populations.

I do not however offer a clear set of actions, goals, or even tactics to attack sovereignty in the international system. I do not believe offering theoretical criticisms is appropriate either. My goal is simply to explore the possibility of creating a different IR, a new way to understand our world: the potential of a whole new way to think about international politics, centered not on Western, white, masculine, concepts like sovereignty, state, and anarchy, but on theories and wisdom of oppressed peoples (I will discuss more of José Muñoz's concept of potential, from his book *Disidentification*, later on). I just want to communicate a message to you: we need to challenge our understanding of IR if we want to challenge the way we are governed inside borders.

### **1.1. IR is Borders**

I feel hundreds of prickly pins on my face as the wind and dust blows by. I see faint images washed away by bright light as the sun hangs over me. This is a bleak, bleached, barren land. I look out onto it, squinting. Here, over 120,000 Japanese

Americans were forcefully interned, deported to. This alien land is containment, where foreign threats to the safety and security of the U.S. are contained in drafty, roasting, wooden shacks, boxcars, and makeshift homes.<sup>2</sup> My soul lives in fear of this place. My soul knows this place well. I am afraid of this ghostly land:

*and there's nothing wrong with me,*

I hear Green Day's *Jesus of Suburbia*.

*this is how I'm supposed to be,*

I am supposed to be afraid of this land, of the camps.

*in a land of make believe,*

The wooden shacks, the barbed wires, all vanished into the winds of history.

*that don't believe in me...*

But figments remain, apparitions that haunt, ghost sightings appearing whenever we call for containment... Muslims, migrants, immigrants, refugees, Mexicans, and Central Americans. No rest for spirits.

“Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge.”

—Anzaldúa 25

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<sup>2</sup> For those unfamiliar, containment was a post WWII U.S. foreign policy toward the U.S.S.R., with the goal of preventing Soviet ideological, political, and military expansion to challenge to the U.S. and its postwar goals (Gaddis).

The camp is my borderland; the barbed wires, machine guns, armed patrols, and watchtowers are my borders. They separate them, the unsafe, from us, the safe. Borders are everywhere, defining/dividing our existence, our subjectivities, identities, knowledge, and potentials. Borders are often thought of as the boundaries between states and are the foundation of international relations. But they are also the boundaries of who we are.

Borders cut (the Earth, land, map, heart, soul)

divide (peoples, territories, resources, wealth, homes, us)

organize (governance, hierarchy, capital, labor, goods,  
subdivisions)

separate (families, friends, communities, histories—mine, yours,  
ours)

contain (unwanted, indigenous, foreign, ugly, scapegoats)  
into camps, reservations, administrative zones,  
detentions, chambers, graves

kill (children, women, queer, men, populations, difference)

in 10s, 100s, 1000s, 100,000s, 1,000,000s, mass graves, no  
graves, gas chambers, massacres, burned villages, hollowed  
out cities, camps

through (pain, starvation, neglect, terror, time—mine, yours, ours)

To help engage IR, I focus on borders: the borders in IR, of IR, and thus in me and of me. I explore the ways my performances construct the borders of my identities and sustain the borders around countries and international politics, sustaining wars, violence,



and deaths. IR has much pain and suffering, and if I am IR, then I also play a part in causing pain and suffering, in addition to feeling pain and suffering. So, I want to see how I came to understand anarchy, sovereignty, states, our roles in international politics, and my role in borders, wars, and peace.

#### 1.1.1. Sovereignty and Anarchy

One of my main arguments is that borders work to maintain IR as a place (de Certeau) reserved for white, hegemonic masculinity. IR constructs the international system as a place denied to women, people of color, people with disability, and transgender people. To make IR for everyone, I use this dissertation to imagine IR as a space (de Certeau) open for difference—a space for inclusivity. IR is our space to live, struggle, and sometime fight, but ultimately find peace together.

IR, as I have learned it, sees borders as the central challenge of international politics, structural anarchy. Borders separate what we think as of “international” from “domestic” politics, which affects how we think of the world. For instance, most people view “domestic” politics as more relevant and impactful to their lives, while “international” is less relevant, requiring special knowledge and skills. However, except for a few critical scholars like Bartleson (*Sovereignty and A Genealogy*), borders are rarely examined in IR. Too often, IR treat borders like they are just there, like treating rocks or the sky, they are just there.

Rather than the nature of borders, IR is more concerned with the consequences of borders. Primarily, they constitute states as the primary units or actors of IR and sovereignty, the notion that within the boundaries of each state there can only be one

supreme authority and the reach of that authority ends at its borders, as the principle of international relations (Bull; Waltz *Theory*). Supreme authority within a territory means each state is independent of other states (Bull; Waltz *Theory*). Sovereignty in turn constitutes anarchy. This is not to say the international system is chaotic, as there are still rules and principles states abide by (Bull; Waltz *Theory*). But, any state can choose to violate the sovereignty of another state (Waltz *Man and Theory*). Anarchy is a world in which states must rely on their own military strengths for survival (Morgenthau; Mearsheimer; Waltz *Man and Theory*). Anarchy is the dominant way IR sees the world. There are no power above states. Weak states may be vulnerable and obey stronger states, but that is only because of the inequality in power amongst states. If a state wants to avoid becoming a puppet of another state, it must maintain a strong military power.

For IR, border is a paradox: borders create anarchy, but anarchy threatens borders. Classical realism (Morgenthau), neorealism (Mearsheimer; Waltz *Man and Theory*), and neoclassical realism (Grieco; Rose; Wolforth) all believe anarchy means states face the possibility of being attacked. Despite this possibility, neoliberalism argues states can overcome the logic of anarchy by creating international regimes—rules, norms, and institutions—to decrease the cost of international transactions and provide coordination, transparency, rules, and expectations (Keohane; Keohane and Nye; Krasner “Structural Causes” and “Regime and Limits of Realism;” Young *International Dynamics and “Regime Dynamics”*). Even computer simulations have shown that states can learn to develop trust and cooperation in anarchy (Axelrod).

### 1.1.2. We are Prisoners

The difference between neorealist and the neoliberal theories can be summed up in the prisoner's dilemma (PD). Pretend that there are two prisoners, you and I. I know nothing of what is happening with you, so I can only think about what will happen with me. In a pitch-black room, I am cuffed and blinded by a light shining into my eyes, a brilliant halo of pain. This is a simulated game, and IR is a simulated game. The police only have enough evidence to charge us each with three years in jail. However, they know we are wicked, and if they have more evidence, they can charge us each with 10 years in jail. So, they split us apart, put us into isolated interrogation. A low, raspy voice leans over and offers me a deal: "if you are willing to help us out and give us evidence of what your partner did, then we're ready to give you a full pardon, but only if you agree before your partner does." They offered you the same deal. According to IR, the choice is obvious. What will you do?

The rules of PD are:

1. Players are unable to coordinate or communicate their actions with each other. Each knows nothing about what the other player will do. I can only think about my interests and you can only think about yours.

		PRISONER 1	
		cooperate	defect
PRISONER 2	cooperate	3 / 3	0 / 10
	defect	10 / 0	7 / 7

2. Players have two choices, to cooperate and stay silent, or to defect and rat out your partner, giving evidence to the police against me.
3. Players can receive one of four payoffs depending on what you do and what I do.
  - a. If both players cooperate and remain silent, then they both only get three years in jail (top left square)
  - b. If player 1 defects, while player 2 cooperates, then player 1 gets no jail time and player 2 gets 10 years in jail (top right square).
  - c. If player 2 defects while player 1 cooperates, then player 2 gets no jail time and player 1 gets 10 years in jail (bottom left square).
  - d. If both players defect, then they both serve seven years in jail instead of 10 years, for helping the police out (bottom right square).

Because of anarchy, you and I will never trust each other. We are destined to sell each other out. States know that there is nothing stopping another state from cheating or attacking, so states cannot risk cooperating (Waltz *Man* 159-186). Realism believes IR is an individualistic game, where states have little information about others' intentions (and even if they did it can't be trusted), so states must only think about what is in their own best interest, without consideration for others (Grieco "Anarchy" 127). This means states must always seek relative gains over absolute gains (Powell; Snidal; Waltz *Man* 187-198). Realism traps me in a prison, one that I built in my own mind. How can I cooperate if I don't trust; how can I trust if I never cooperate? To be realism is to be damned. The payoffs are: if I defect, I get either zero years or seven years; if I cooperate, I get either three years or ten years. Only fools cooperate in realism. Did you defect?

On the other hand, neoliberalism contends that problems encountered in anarchy are common interests, not individual interests, so states have logical reasons to try to coordinate joint decision-making (Stein). If states want to get anything accomplished, they need to cooperate. Indeed, it is well known within IR that individual approaches to security often leads to a security dilemma, where one state's attempt to improve its security by increasing its military power will be perceived as a threat by other states, which decreases their sense of security. This will cause those other states to increase their own military power, which ends up decreasing the security of the first state and every state involved (Mearsheimer 35-36; Waltz *Theory* 186-187). Thus, individual security leads to general insecurity. A security dilemma is an arms race where no one wins. A classic example of this is the nuclear arms treaties between the U.S. and U.S.S.R., when both states realized that their individual security required making sure both feel secure from each other, which required coordination and joint decision-making. Thus, PD does not reflect real life.

Also, PD is rarely played just once in life. Rather, states play iterative PDs, creating long-term relationships that dilute the value of relative gains and increase the value of absolute gains (Lipson; Keohane 75-78). If I know that we will see each other again and that my choices now influence my reputation later, then I have more reasons to cooperate than defect. Because real-life scenarios often involve long-term, iterative interactions, states have incentives to create regimes to enforce reciprocity, punish and discourage cheating, and coordinating issues involving multiple states (not just two) (Axelrod and Keohane).

Even though neoliberal theories advance the possibility of cooperation, we should be careful and not see them as angels. Since neoliberalism also believes in anarchy, it only posits that states will seek to create regimes to aid in their cooperation if they have mutual interests and gains that can only come from joint activities. That is to say, if states do not need cooperation, they will not. Thus, neoliberalism is not offering world peace, morality, ethics, or altruism, for they believe as realists do that morals have no room in IR, only rational self-interest (Baldwin 9). Neoliberalism only offers a dim light of hope for salvation. I am still in a prison.<sup>3</sup>

I defected. I was IR. Did you defect? Once upon a time, I taught a student who would not defect. I explained over and over the logic, the payoffs, the structural constraints, but she would not defect. I remember being frustrated. I could not understand

---

<sup>3</sup> If, as the neoliberal theorists contend, regimes and IOs provide valuable resources that encourage cooperation and discourage cheating, then why is the U.S., the country that has benefited the most from the international order attacking them? The realist answer is the U.S. is becoming relatively weaker while other countries becoming relatively stronger. As U.S. hegemony declines, relative gains become more important than absolute gains, so the positives from international order become less obvious or less important. This is a significant reply to neoliberals, who hypothesized that even as U.S. hegemony declines, it will continue to support regimes and IOs so long as they continue to offer the U.S. benefits (Keohane *After Hegemony*). Thus, from a realist point of view, what the U.S. is doing is unremarkable, as it is simply logical to expect a declining power to oppose anything that may be helping potential rivals gain strength.

There is another explanation. The conservative political theorist Francis Fukuyama wrote an article that later became a book, "The End of History?", where he argued that history is a series of dialectical clashes that ultimately ended with the triumph of liberalism over its enemies, communism and fascism. However, the triumph of liberalism left it with no challengers. So liberalism can only compete with itself. The result is increasingly more radical and alienating versions of liberalism. Fukuyama warns that hyper liberalism will push its own boundaries of acceptability too far, triggering a reactionary backlash. Some argue that Trump is the realization of this warning.

Most other reasons offered fall under the belief that the U.S. has historically been isolationist and that with the end of the Cold War, it is simply, slowly, moving back to its traditional foreign policy.

why she was so stubborn about it. She made a moral choice. She was not IR. Did you also make a moral choice? Are you IR?

### 1.1.3. IR is in the Domestic

While realism and neoliberalism continue to debate the effects of anarchy, there are many theorists who reject purely “international,” systemic-level explanations, arguing IR begins inside the border. For them, IR needs to be aware of domestic politics too. This is important in terms of diplomacy, a “two-level game” with complex sets of domestic and international interests competing and cooperating to advance their goals (Moravcsik; Putnam). Foreign crises can be used to create intended domestic political effects, like rallying around the flag effect (Mueller). Bearing this in mind, rational choice theory believes foreign policy is the result of national leaders choosing foreign policies they believe will secure their hold on power (Bueno de Mesquita). Another theory looks at how domestic, coalition log-rolling in imperial Germany and Japan led to fatal over-expansion (Snyder).

Other domestic-level theorists argue that rationalism fails to grasp the complexities of IR and foreign policies. For example, the Cuban missile crisis shows how contingent bureaucratic policies shape international relations, as when Soviet engineers, applying standard operational set up for missile complexes, inadvertently alerted the U.S. to their presence (Allison and Zelikow). A more psychological, decision-making analysis applied groupthink to explain choices made by the Kennedy Administration during that crisis (Janis). These theorists believe that historical contingencies make rational theorization difficult if not impossible.

Despite the large community of scholars opposed to systemic-level theories, IR remains primarily a realist way of understanding the world, with neoliberal theories as its main challenger. As I will show in section three, IR locks us into a world of death and wars, offering no hope for peace. This is why we need to imagine a new IR.

#### 1.1.4. Sovereignty is Perpetual Violence

Although competing theories of IR evolved into a game-theory debate, IR is still about war. Charles Tilly is famous for writing: “war made the state, and the state made war” (*Formation* 42). States were created through capital accumulation and coercion: a dominant force defeats rivals to control a territory and must continue to use threats and violence to extract resources and wealth needed to perpetuate its control (Tilly *Coercion* 16-28). This is exemplified in the U.S. by law-enforcement agencies that ensure taxes are paid, laws are obeyed, and loyal is maintained, and domestic and foreign threats are contained or eliminated. Borders, Tilly reminds us then, must continuously be established and protected.

If states are won, then it stands to reason that they are maintained for the victors. Thus, we can ask for whose benefits borders are maintained. Agamben noted: “the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power” (“Introduction” 138). Historically, bios (the public, political, aesthetic life) was only available to men who secured zoe (private life devoted to labor, production, or accumulation) (Agamben “Introduction” and “Politicization”). Traditionally only wealthy, married men who owned slaves enjoyed the public, political life. However, this is no longer the case. In our times, an entire population (a corpus) enjoys public, political



life. But, this is only possible because sovereignty aims to secure their life needs (“Politicization”). Politics is now about securing life, or what Agamben calls inclusive exclusion (“Introduction” 140).

Sovereignty, however, does not care for all populations. Politics in our times is still limited to those who have secured their survival needs. Thus, sovereignty provides for the survival needs of some populations, and thus their ability to engage in politics, while refusing to provide for the survival needs for other populations (“Introduction”). Excluded from politics are populations who are forced to fend for their own survival needs, what Agamben calls *homo sacer* (“Introduction”). Mbembe explores this further with necropolitics and necropower:

the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead* (186).

We can think of this existence as ghettos, white-flight, food deserts, reservations, refugee camps, places where highways do not exit, and places like Palestinian areas that Mbembe writes about (173-177), or the use of law-enforcement to disrupt and impoverish marginalized communities in the U.S. Sovereignty is a never ceasing force and violence to benefit some bodies at the expense of other bodies. In the U.S., biopolitics/necropolitics is the nurturing of white, hegemonic masculine culture and those who are able to assimilate into it.

Biopolitics/necropolitics is rarely connected with knowledges about international politics, but they are—through me, and my actions. If we accept that sovereignty is the

production of a homo sacer, then it is my claim that I produce homo sacer when I try to be IR, like when I act “American,” believe in states and the U.S., adhering to the “international” and “domestic” divide through citizenship, and other behaviors that are congruent with notions of anarchy, states, and sovereignty. IR, as I will explain in the next section, is not just a discipline or a group of theories, it is what I do and how I think—it is performative. For now, what matters is that homo sacer secures my place in the U.S. Instead of an inclusive exclusion, I am exclusion inclusion: I am included in “American” when I can exclude someone else from being included. I leave them to fend for themselves; I deny them access to sovereignty’s love. That is IR, sovereignty, and me.

## **1.2. IR is Cultural**

This dissertation aims to rethink the process where I must risk others to save myself, to reorient the connection between IR, sovereignty, and me. Disrupting the connection between IR, sovereignty, and me requires a imagining IR as an inclusive space open to differences. To do this, I follow David Campbell’s path and reject IR’s commitment to epistemic realism—the belief that things like states, sovereignty, and anarchy are real objects that exists outside of human interactions, as if they are like rocks or celestial bodies (105). Epistemic realism forces us to mold our lives to fit these objects. In other words, we assimilate to the norms of IR and commit atrocities in its name. However, I cannot abandon IR theories, because they are the limits of my knowledge of IR. So, I use these theories to create new knowledge of IR, in a process called disidentification, which I will discuss in section four (Muñoz *Disidentification*). To imagine is to know differently.

### 1.2.1. IR is a Story

Instead of epistemic realism, I take the position that IR is cultural, meaning that it is, “to paraphrase Rorty, what kind of stories does it enable us to tell about fields of experience and how do they fit with other kinds of stories we want to tell about these and other local fields” (Conquergood 16). IR is stories that define what it is, who has agency in it, what their purpose is, who belongs where in this world, what effects and consequences can we expect, and what is acceptable and appropriate. Stories however are not nursery rhymes or fictions (although maybe that is a fitting description of IR, fiction we take as truths), they are our experiences—the events and situations we live through and remember, our ability to reflect on them, and finally our ability to act on those reflections. To sum it up, culture is the hopes and dreams that come from reflections (Madison *Critical Ethnography* 165-168).

Culture is also, as Conquergood recognized, a performance, or the vortex of “enabling energies”: “these volatile energies sweep and pull in opposite directions, simultaneously exerting centripetal and centrifugal forces. The centripetal force is the power of culture to draw everything in its ambit towards the center, which is always a moral center, a cosmology” (17). These are stories that tell us how we ought to behave, who we should become, and what we should avoid. They are also stories of futures—of what we can be, of hopes and dreams, and a different us. Performance is the tugs and pulls, the tensions, in our lives, which are important because they bring stories alive and give them meanings: “performance evokes experience, just as experience evokes performance” (Madison and Hamera 315). Stories (culture) and performance are

simultaneous double-thrusts of, on the one hand, events and situations, feelings, sensations, and emotions, and, on the other hand, the meanings we assign through reflections and thoughts. They come together harmoniously at times, crashing down on us at other times. In this sense then, culture is performance—the pain, joy, and sorrow, the times that shape our lives, and our ability to view ourselves, and the need for something more. Culture and performance reject a definition of IR as theories and abstract concepts; instead, IR is the complex struggles we experience to make sense of our world. IR is what I do.

To understand how a culture is stories sharing a center that pull us in toward it, I draw on Foucault's discussion of discourse (*Archaeology and History*). Foucault rejects the idea of discourse as statements about objects, such as statements about anarchy (*Archaeology*). Discourse centered on objects produces epistemic realism, because objects define our thoughts and actions. Foucault theorize instead that a discourse is centered on rules that govern how we relate to a domain—how we can talk, think, or act in certain ways about something (*Archaeology*). Discourse and cultures are about the ways norms define us. The IR that we know is stories from a center, pulling us toward performances that reaffirms states, sovereignty, and anarchy as the appropriate cause and effect of international politics. While IR sells itself as theories, variables, epistemologies, it is really stories that normalizes violence, wars, deaths, and white, hegemonic masculinity. This is what Conquergood meant by “enabling energies” (17) and Foucault's belief that power makes it possible for us to do things, expands the things we can do

(*History*). Norms make it possible for us to act and create in ways that pull us toward its moral center.

Norms also give us a center to push/pull away from, a path for social change. To understand the struggle between norms and performance, we need to think of Conquergood's mimesis, poiesis, and kinesis: "performance as imitation, construction, dynamism" (56-58). Mimesis is Goffman's dramaturgy: like theater, we all try to fulfill roles in our lives (56). Life is filled with scripts that tell us what constitutes good performances or roles. So, often in life, we try to follow scripts. From Turner's work, fulfilling roles and following scripts constitute our world, which is poiesis (56). Fulfilling roles moves us toward a moral center, like when we adhere to norms, or when I assimilate.<sup>4</sup> Yet, just because we have scripts does not mean we have to follow them. Sometimes we can alter scripts, enacting them subversively, or using them in unintended ways. When we do this, we practice kinesis: our ability to push against the current of the vortex, to push out away from the center and resist culture.

Another way to understand the power of performance is through performativity, or from Judith Butler and Elin Diamond, citationality: a repetition of norms—(qtd. in Madison *Critical Ethnography* 179-180 and Madison and Hamera xvi-xviii). Citationality is how we learn about norms and communicate them to others. Campbell argues states are performative—"the nature of identity can never be fully revealed"—because states have

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<sup>4</sup> I was thinking about this while showering, but if we fill a container with water and let it rest, the water becomes still. It is a smooth surface, no centers, no borders, and no currents. But, if I swirl the water with my finger, I create a vortex. The faster I swirl, the deeper the vortex gets and the stronger the center of the vortex becomes. The vortex and the center do not exist without humans swirling around it. A center requires us to constantly create it by moving with its current.

“no ontological status apart from the many and varied practices that constitute their reality, states are (and have to be) always in a process of becoming” (221). States aren’t rocks; they only seem real because we believe them to be and act like they are. Because believes and actions are the ontology of states, states can only exist through the constant repetition of these believes and actions (Campbell 171-234). States, if we strip everything else away, are the norms that we enact, the scripts that tell us to act like there is a state and it is sacred. This goes for anarchy and sovereignty too. If sovereignty produces homo sacer, it is only because we repeat stories that reify it as something that lets marginalized communities die. This is why I believe IR is more than a discipline—it is a story that has been repeated, a story that not only reifies anarchy, states, and sovereignty, but also the horrors of war, death, and genocide, and it has to stop.

“Enabling energies,” vortex, and performativity all point to how intimately culture/performance is related to power. But power does not mean we are helpless and hopeless, destined to fall into the center of the vortex, as Foucault notes in his discussion of discursive power:

Discourse can be both an instrument and effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resisting and starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (*History* 101).

This is kinesis. Foucault argues that power creates and produces, which means norms work not by denying us pathways, but by letting us do things, so we pull ourselves toward the moral center (it is not the norms that pull us in, it is our actions that pull us in, norms set the parameters for us to do this) (*History* 100-101). Since our actions pull us

toward a moral center, we can push away from it by changing our actions. Our actions create moral centers (17). Because, again Foucault, power is multiplicitous and tactical (power is what we do every day with our lives that sustains or challenges cultural norms), we are not bound to just repeat stories; we can also subvert them (*History* 100-101). And, the resources for subverting culture comes from our lives: “Experience becomes the very seed of performance,” showing us who we think we are and, more importantly, who we want to become (Madison *Critical Ethnography* 167-170). We are the current, moving it toward the center, but also moving it away. This dissertation is my attempt at swimming against the current to see what a different IR looks like.

To imagine a new IR, I start with my experiences, and consider who I want to emulate. Ever since I read Calafell’s “Mentoring and Love: An Open Letter,” I have wanted to be a compassionate scholar. So, I always think back to try and emulate the compassion she gives to her students. I think about the people in this world who suffer from and in IR, from the refugees to the injured to the dead, and how important it is that we begin to shift IR away from scholars and world leaders who are able to think and talk about IR within the safety to their offices. In addition, I try to emulate what Christina Foust calls transgression:

actions which cross boundaries or violate limits... Transgression redefines lines of distinction, giving new meaning to identities and social practices. Transgression thus shares a deep conceptual relationship to immanence, as that volatile force which ceaselessly attempts to consume, break down divisions, hybridize, or couples those elements which had been divided transcendently (3).

Transgression is to create something new from what we have now. Thus, it needs to be made clear that I have no interest in producing another IR theory (there are already too

many), or to join the theoretical debates. Rather, I use IR theories to tell a different story, one that shows how I assimilate and repeat IR stories and how I can create new IR stories. Specifically, I look at how IR disciplines me to serve white, hegemonic masculine interests, which I talk more about in section three. Since the resources for change comes from my own experiences, I tell stories from the pain I feel from disciplining others to the pain I feel when I am disciplined. These are my stories, and stories are acts of compassion, resistance, and transgression.

### 1.2.2. Performativity of IR

These theoretical debates have been profitable for IR as a discipline, creating many research agendas, scholar communities, and publications. But, to begin to imagine IR as a space for difference, I move away from all of these theories, move away from the “international” and “domestic” divide, and move away from borders as the demarcation of states and sovereignty. Instead, I take up the question David Campbell asks in *Writing Security*:

...if there are no primary and stable identities, and if the identities many had thought of as primary and stable, such as the body and the state, are performatively constituted, how can international relations speak of such foundational concepts as “the state,” “security,” “war,” “danger,” “sovereignty,” and so on? After all, isn’t security determined by the requirements of a preexisting sovereign state and war conducted in its name as a response to an objective danger? How can we speak of these categories once we acknowledge the nonessentialistic character of danger? (211)

If states, sovereignty, and IR are not fixed, essential elements, then what does that mean for me and you? What about the borders around countries, around IR, and around me?

Campbell argues sovereignty appears stable, but is actually a never-ending process of



securing a political community united by a national identity (192, 208, 221). Sovereignty is a constant process of “becoming,” requiring constant effort to secure what it will “become” (211). Foreign policies are the acts securing the “domestic” community by creating a foreign threat that the domestic body needs to be protected from (88-885). Securing a “domestic” community also means creating communities to let die. Thus, it is not just securing the United States, but securing a specific kind of United States—one where people of color and trans-gender communities are not protected and face violence from state and general population.

While this project is inspired by much of Campbell’s work, I am deeply troubled by Campbell’s focus on states and state sovereignty. I believe that the international-domestic dichotomy is wrong and a state-centric approach disenfranchises IR from almost everyone in our world, continuing to privilege the few. As well, this is another form of textual criticism of sovereignty and IR, which, although Campbell does criticize the Euro-centric history of sovereignty, still centers knowledge on white, hegemonic masculinity. Rather, the point I want to make is that we can open IR as a space for difference by centering knowledge through our bodies, our experiences. We need to conceive of IR as a de-textualized, performing (as in kinesis) space (Conquergood). Thus, in the rest of the introduction, I explain what it means to see IR as a performance. Specifically, what it means to do IR, to act out borders and sovereignty. I begin with a discussion of the borders around IR, pointing out how IR is a textual/de-contextualized knowledge of the world that is centered on the experiences of white, hegemonic masculinity (Conquergood). Then, I talk about the critical cultural theories that drive this

project, followed by a discussion of my performance methodology. Finally, I end with a preview of the chapters.

### **1.3. IR is a Textual Place**

While IR is about borders, it is also bordered by textualism. This is a commitment to an inherently elitist, sanitized form of knowledge: “the dominant way of knowing in the academy is that of experimental observation and critical analysis from a distanced perspective: ‘knowing that’ and ‘knowing about’” (Conquergood 33). Or, as the greatest IR theorist of all, Kenneth Waltz, puts it: “laws establish relations between variables, variables being concepts that can take different values” (*Theory* 1). “Theories explain law” (6). Law: what goes up must come down. Theory: gravity. Law: anarchy leads to balance-of-power. Theory: realism. “A theory is a picture, mentally formed, of a bounded realm, or domain of activity... The question, as ever with theories, is not whether the isolation of a realm is realistic, but whether it is useful” (6). This is a view from above the object of inquiry: knowledge “anchored in paradigm, secured in print” (Conquergood 33). Theory is in the head. IR is in the head.

Abstract

Objective

Hierarchical

Distanced

Disembodied

People vanish, lives lost

The laws of motion rules IR

Text is in the head, distanced and detached from the world of the living. Concepts, assumptions, theories, hypotheses, and variables are the ways text rob us of our agency. Anarchy says states must prepare for war and form alliances. Rational choice theory says we seek increased political power. We have no choice in IR, theories and laws have already determined our futures. Concepts over lives, definitions over experience, equations over choice, there is no place for dreams in IR.

### 1.3.1. Textualism makes me the Architect

I am the architect; I create my own matrix. *The first matrix I designed was quite naturally perfect. It was a work of art, flawless, sublime.* Blinded by text, I did not/could not see the world and the people in it. *A triumph equaled only by its monumental failure. The inevitability of its doom is apparent to me now as a consequence of the imperfection inherent in every human being.* IR has no room for us. We are imperfect; we muck up the text. So, the Oracle explains to me how *I am IR, I cannot see past any choice. I don't understand them.* In text, everything is a variable, determined by laws, explained by theories. *One at a time each variable must be solved, then countered. That was my purpose—to balance the equation.* I boiled you and me, and us, into  $f(x)=ax+b$ . The world is simply  $x$ .

Even as it robs us of agency, text also marginalizes different voices and knowledge:

Marching under the banner of science and reason, it has disqualified and repressed other ways of knowing that are rooted in embodied experience, orality, and local contingencies. Between objective knowledge that is consolidated in texts, and local know-how that circulates on ground within a community of memory and practice, there is no contest. It is the contest between science and “old wives’ tales” (33).

Text lets me disqualify other voices and ways of knowing about the world. Quite often, when teaching IR, I talk about the Vietnam War. I taught of containment, domino theory, and balance-of-power. I only talk about the people of Vietnam to highlight how different they are from us, to show how superior the U.S. was, how technologically backward Vietnamese were, to emphasize the tragedy of the U.S. defeat, to call them peasants and farmers. I mocked them, and students laughed. How could a bunch of peasants beat the U.S.? Students agreed with my assessment. Un-be-lie-va-ble. It mattered not what any Vietnamese thought about the U.S., about the war, about Vietnam; the only thing that mattered was that I was talking about the U.S. The theories of IR only care about us, of our great tragedy, and our great pain. IR is about the way the U.S., centered on white, hegemonic masculinity, sees the world.

Burning Fury

of napalm and cluster bombs

White dominoes

Red dominoes

if you are not white

you die.

This is marching under

the banner of science.

How can we call this objectivity? IR is stories told from white, hegemonic masculine voices, about white, hegemonic masculine people, for the good of white, hegemonic masculine bodies. Text is discourse and power; the kind of power that looks

down on all the different people of our world, banishing them as “unrealistic.” It is crucial that we reject the depiction of IR as a discipline or foreign policy or diplomacy. We need to see IR as textual place. A place is an institutionalized form of knowledge, where we are taught to view certain actions as appropriate, certain thoughts as logical, certain skills as necessary, certain art as pleasing, certain choices as prudent (de Certeau 595-735). Place is the script at work, the terrain from a moral center.

It was easy. My friends are almost all white men, my colleagues were all white men, and my professors were almost all white men. My students were almost all white. I looked up to and read from white men. When I looked in the mirror, I searched for a white face. A place is a strategic area, and this was my place. A strategy is our ability to make calculated moves within institutional rules to get what we want (139-142). For example, a CEO trying to beat a competitor, a manager trying to get promoted, a scientist doing textualism to get tenure, or a graduate student teaching what he has always been told about people on the other side of the planet so he can be seen as a good teacher.

Strategies serve the interests of a center, functioning much like state lines (Deleuze and Guattari 210-213, 222). These lines spread out from a center, connecting nodes (people, places, things, ideas) to it in concentric, hierarchical order, serving and resonating with the center (222). They function through mobilization, ordering, definition, division, and binary distinctions (210-213). When I taught IR, when I studied IR, I was a node repeating lines.

### 1.3.2. Wild Anarchy and the Necessity of Violence

The center of IR's vortex is white, hegemonic masculinity. I begin by first discussing hegemonic masculinity. Trujillo defines five features of hegemonic masculinity: 1) power centered on physical force and control, 2) capitalistic occupational achievement, 3) patriarchal representation, 4) symbolized by daring frontiersman and outdoorsman (the cowboy), and 5) heteronormativity (291). To these, Atkinson and Calafell add a sixth: a moral gray area where responsibilities are surrendered.

ICBMs, tanks, bombs, planes, and ships at his side, the state is the frontiersman, standing watch over his land and people, ready to fend off wolves, indigenous peoples, claim-jumpers, outlaws, rogue states, rival powers, terrorists, insurgents, refugees, and migrants. In the frontier, there is no sheriff or his deputies, and justice is the end of a smoking barrel. Only the powerful survives in the wild. Power is the capacity to produce an intended effect (Waltz *Man* 205), the distribution of capabilities (Waltz *Theory* 183-192).<sup>5</sup> More specifically, power is a country's economic and military strength, with ground army as the paramount indicator (Mearsheimer 55-137).

The state is the father. He makes the decision for his people and the people consent:

In the name of the state a policy is formulated and presented to other countries as though it were...the general will of the state. Dissenters

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<sup>5</sup> As Waltz noted, "power is a means," regardless of the outcome, because even countries possessing vast capabilities can still fail to get what they want (*Man* 192). This is important because realism, and IR in general, is a material theory, rejecting psychology. States are all alike, distinguished only by inequality in their material capabilities. Thus, if we give another country the U.S.'s military capability, they will act just as like the U.S. The size of the gun makes the man. This is a masculine perception, where all men are alike. Boys will be boys, men will be men, what makes one manlier has to do with material things like physical size and strength, wealth and possessions, and sexual activities with women.

within the state are carried along by two considerations: their inability to bring force to bear to change the decision; their conviction, based on perceived interest and customary loyalty, that in the long run it is to their advantage to go along with the national decision and work in the prescribed the accepted ways for change (Waltz *Man* 178).

The state represents the will of the people regardless. This is perhaps why surveys have consistently shown most voters view foreign policies as least important issues to them, or will support the government in times of foreign crises in what is generally known as a rallying around the flag effect (Mueller). Whatever citizens' motives may be, the effect is a concentration of power in the hands of a few when it comes to foreign policies. The frontier is no place for doubters and sentimentalists. This is a place for those with steel in their veins, tempering morality to the necessities of strategic interests and national security (Doyle 81-90).

Necessity is necessary for the frontiersman, for it creates the moral gray area that frees him to commit violence. Power, control, and patriarchy are exercised when we avoid responsibility, when we can say that we had to—no choice (Atkinson and Calafell). There are those who know a lot about necessity. They were born into. They are reminded of it. They still feel it. A long time ago, a child was whipped everyday day after school. He tried to run away, but the police kept returning him home.

The lashes kept coming

Big, wide, brown leather

bites into him.

The lashes kept coming

Arms stretched out

protecting his body.

The lashes kept coming

Swollen red stripes,

blood pooling

The lashes kept coming

A leech that coils

The lashes kept coming

around

arms,

legs,

chest,

face.

The lashes kept coming

Someone please help me

The lashes kept coming

Mommy...

please stop.

The lashes kept coming

Tears, screams, pain

drowning

until finally

darkness



The lashes stop coming.

It was necessary. A moral gray area is a self-constructed condition when actors surrender/ignore moral responsibility and commit immoral acts because they were “forced” to (Atkinson and Calafell). Was he really bad? Did he bring shame? He was his own fault. Necessity separates the hero from the barbarian. Nanjing, lebensraum, barbarossa, Auschwitz, Hiroshima, the Trail of Tears, the Western expansion, colonialism, rolling thunder, My Lai, desert storm and desert shield...all were necessary. It was anarchy’s fault. In the frontier, a state’s gotta do what a man’s gotta do.

### 1.3.3. White (glue) De-contextualization (glue) Hegemonic Masculinity

Necessity requires savages, someone to “force” the frontiersman to shoot. To speak of necessity then is to construct savages (Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki). The frontier is the West where the brave frontiersman protects settlers from violent natives. The frontiersman is therefore already white (Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki). It is through de-contextualization that the other is created. Necessity needs de-contextualization: erasing history, forgetting that indigenous people have lived here long before settlers and were simply protecting their lands (Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki). They are not crashing the border; the border crashed into them.

De-contextualization is a strategic rhetoric of whiteness: “whatever ‘whiteness’ really means is only constituted through the rhetoric of whiteness. There is no ‘true essence’ to ‘whiteness’; there is only historically contingent constructions of that social location” (Nakayama and Krizek 293). Whiteness is as whiteness does—we cannot see it, but we can feel it and experience it, so we must mark off the ways it functions in specific

situations to expose how whiteness makes some people, some things, some actions, some norms, some thoughts and ideas “normal” by making them universal, invisible, and appropriate (Nakayama and Krizek; Shome). In other words, we can only find whiteness by seeking out “its rhetorical character,” in how we treat something as normal (Nakayama and Krizek 293).

Our anarchic world is a white world—the European system expanded and imposed on the world. It is the great European wars, the reformation wars, the Napoleonic wars, the colonial wars, and the world wars, that are the hallmark of IR. It is the European states that are the ideal international actors (they possess full sovereignty over their territory and have the means to defend themselves and form balancing alliances). European warfare and deterrence are the principle strategy and goals of IR. Yet, we almost never see the word “European” in IR. We only see states, wars, balancing, and alliances, or we see failed states, dysfunctional states, weak states, regions of instability, and war prone regions. Without context, we are unable to understand the devastation caused by colonialism, imperialism, structural inequality, poverty, and exploitation on the Global South. Thus, IR naturalizes the ways whiteness defines itself as the ideal and others as problematic, unnatural, weak, troublesome, dangerous, chaotic, unstable, and threatening. To succeed in IR, we are told that we must act white. My teachers reminded me that I should look to Japan as prime example: “Japan escaped being colonized because it embraced European technology, military practices, and became a colonial power.” To survive in this world, states need to conquer, exploit, and destroy weaker people. Thus, borders are commitments to an objective, rational, de-

contextualized knowledge of the world centered on white, hegemonic masculine experiences and expectations. What is left out is the histories and struggles of the rest of the world—colonized people, displaced people, people of color, and trans-people—for equality, justice, self-determination, recognition, and survival.

De-contextualization also leaves IR empty of life. We have come to see wars, threats, and violence as natural, as laws and variables. Without context, we forget that these things have hideous roots in hate, bigotry, racism, sexism, and other forms of social oppression and prejudice. Ugliness is a part of life, the gritty, dirty things and places that IR theorists and scholars avoid in their sanitized, clean, clear theories. The real question should not be the effects of structural imbalance or alliance freeriding, but how we have come to accept de-contextualization? How is it that we can de-contextualize the naked, bleeding bodies piled high in deep pits and chasms of torture, cruelty, and murder? There is a picture of a Russian girl, her dress ripped up lying motionless, died of gang rape by German soldiers. There is a picture of Chinese women, naked and dead in the streets after Japanese soldiers finished “invading” their homes. There are pictures of mountains of skulls of ethnic minorities, victims of the Cambodian genocide. There are pictures of gaunt skeletal men freed from death camps in Europe in 1945 and 1992. How have we come to de-contextualize the dead and not show a sign of remorse? When the U.S. can bomb and napalm millions of Vietnamese and call it containment— that is IR. When the Nazis gassed, starved, toiled, shot, buried, raped, and murdered over six million Jews and we call it over expansion or imbalance-of-power, that is IR. When wars are N and deaths

variable, then maybe it is time for theorists to step aside and allow the rest of the world to rethink IR. It is easy to miss homo sacer when my head is buried in theories.<sup>6</sup>

#### 1.4. Reimagining IR

I dream of a world without wars, for IR does not have enough dreamers. They say IR is for realists; IR is law and variables. Laws are expectations (Waltz), natural occurrences, like  $V = m/p$  (objects displace the volume of their mass in water) or  $\Delta V = 3aV\Delta T$  (thermal expansion of solids in three dimensions). By accepting IR as laws, we accept wars and deaths as natural. Every death, every genocide, every bomb dropped, home destroyed, and every life vanished is normal. 1,000 battlefield deaths = 1 war; 1 war = N (Small and Singer). The value of your life is 1/1000th of N. The higher the N, the greater the statistics. IR is a death machine, a never-ending hunger for corpses, bloodshed, and violence. The killing goes on, and I pile the bodies higher and higher, so that I can become an IR scholar. I am become death; give glory to IR.<sup>7</sup>

Death x Anarchy = me.

The theories of IR claim objectivity, but if this is normal, then it is a normality that we disguise. Laws do more than naturalize anarchy and death; they make white, hegemonic masculine perspectives natural, perspectives that see wars normal and death appropriate. This is why if we are ever to think of IR as the making of peace, we need to

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<sup>6</sup> It is also easy to create homo sacer when there is pleasure in doing so. Foucault (*History*) talks about how power functions through pleasure, when we willingly reproduce power because we experience pleasure in the process. Think of the pleasure scholars get from researching, from going to conferences, presenting their papers, writing their papers, giving lectures, getting recognized and awarded, or me teaching IR.

<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that only battlefield deaths are counted. IR honors the warriors and their wars. Those who did not die on the battlefield do not count.

open IR to differences, to make it a space for diversity where different stories are loved and cherished. There is certainly no guarantee that opening IR to difference will end wars, but if we do not try, then we only continue to perpetuate unjust harm on all the people who do not or cannot fit into white, hegemonic masculinity. IR talks a lot about distrust: PD means we cannot trust. But, sometimes, peace and love require just a little bit of faith.

Gloria Anzaldúa inspires me to imagine a different IR, not just a different theory, but a different way for us to relate to world politics:

The struggle has always been there, and is played out in the outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come before inner change, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the “real” world unless it first happens in the images in our head (109).

Imagining a different IR begins with self-accountability, for I cannot ask others to change without changing myself. To make a difference I must open up to difference.

Reimagining IR requires me to interrogate my relationship to state, sovereignty, anarchy, IR, and people. To drawing lines of flight connecting me to institutions, politics, communities, systems, and other individuals in different ways (Deleuze and Guattari 222-250).

In imagining a new IR, I heed José Muñoz’s warning that future and hope are found in potentiality, not possibility: potentiality is related to “historically situated struggles, a collectivity that is actualized,” while possibility is abstract utopia that lets us make critiques but fails to create openings for something different (*Cruising Utopia* 2-3, 9). Potential is connected to our embodied and lived experiences, to the relations we cultivate in our lives, whereas possibility is abstract critique, and in our heads. To not just

talk about swimming against the current, but to actually do it. Thus, even though this dissertation may not seem like much, my writing it is a potential for a different IR.

#### 1.4.1. My Banana Designer Identity

My potential reimagining comes from a critical performance of my designer Asian American masculine identity and how it relates to the borders of IR. This identity is developed from Julie Ann Scott's disabled designer identity:

a personal embodiment that is perhaps just independent, mobile, and aesthetically pleasing enough while still being noticeably impaired to allow some to use their acceptance of me as evidence of their openness despite their rejection of less palatable, and in ten more stigmatized "brands" of disabled" (p. 103)

My brand of Asian American masculinity is a banana, yellow on the outside only. It is also known as a twinkie. I am white enough inside that my yellow on the outside becomes "pleasing," but still yellow enough that I count for diversity. I am the Asian that people in general, not just whites, can hang out with, even though they would not hang out with someone who is seen as more "ethnically" Asian.<sup>8</sup> Shinsuke Eguchi defines this condition as almost white: "an ambiguous domain for non-whites in which the economic and cultural capital enables them to visualize their proximity to the center maintained by whiteness" ("Uncultural" 300). I speak English well enough, I act like a white person, I enjoy white cultural activities and aesthetics, and I talk white. Less assimilated Asians will also let me know that I am too white. I know I'm wearing banana when Asians see

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<sup>8</sup> In my own personal experience at least, acting white is the default setting for making friends. If I was not assimilated, the people I call friends probably would not have talked to me and hung out with me. Vice versa, it is easiest for me to approach others who act white, even when it comes to another Asian person. This is the cultural norm I am used to and comfortable with.

me as a sellout from the ways their eyes and lips snicker at me and slide away. Some are kind enough to be honest with their disgust and revulsion. I know I am wearing banana when I swim in white waters. So well do I wear my brand that a white woman I loved once told me that she doesn't see me as Asian. That was something she admired about me. I'm just Charles to her. After all, I'm only yellow on the outside.

The banana gets to stay in the U.S. This is how I avoid deportation, how I run away from the camps in my soul. But, because the camps never die, apparitions reanimated by the U.S.'s constant need to detain, deport, intern non-white bodies, I constantly check to make sure I am a banana. However, wearing this brand is possible only when I brand others as foreign, as targets for containment. I sellout. I am safe in the U.S. only when I jeopardize another's place here. I make homo sacer.

Nakayama showed that identities are constructed in relation to other identities and Campbell also suggested that identity is constituted in relation to difference (217-235).



For example, in his criticism of the movie *Showdown in Little Tokyo*, Nakayama demonstrated how white, hegemonic masculinity is centered and constructed only by feminizing and demasculinizing Asian masculinity and dominating Asian femininity (“Show/Down Time”). To be Asian American male is to play into the roles that whiteness has already defined for Asian Americans; that is, I am Asian American only when I do things that whiteness expects of Asian American men (Eguchi “Revisiting”; “Uncultural”; Eguchi and Starosta).

Anzaldúa and Conquergood noted how whiteness also defines Others and their ways of knowing the world as unnatural or even parochial. Too often whiteness can only define itself as normal by defining something else as abnormal or marginal (Nakayama). My designer Asian American masculinity is constructed when I construct someone else as not being white enough, thereby making them vulnerable to containment and deportation. I am normal only when someone else can be marked as abnormal. I am white enough when someone else is not. So, we must not only mark the ways whiteness constructs itself, constructs me; we must also mark the ways whiteness construct others as difference, as foreign, and as threats.

#### 1.4.2. Spacing IR

When I wear banana, I sustain IR as place for anarchy, sovereignty, war, deaths, and white, hegemonic masculinity. I am a node of state lines. I am able to act strategically within the department of political science, within the university, according to norms of career achievement. Morpheus knows exactly what I am, speaking to Neo, “The Matrix is a system. Businessmen, teachers, lawyers, carpenters” and me. “These people are not ready to be unplugged, and many of them are so inured, so hopelessly dependent on the system that they will fight to protect it.” The river of crowd sweeps me away and I flow along them with, a flow of lines resonating with a white, hegemonic masculine center.

To swim against the river of inured, hopelessly dependent bodies, I embrace the teachings of Anzaldúa, who reminds me that change comes from an acceptance of our contradictions, a *Coatlicue* state where she was forced to “cross over” to gain new insight



and understanding of herself and her world if she was to survive (47-73). To live is to change, to gain new insights, to continue to feel torment until we “cross over.” For me, I must embrace myself not as yellow on the outside and white on the inside, but as being yellow and white. I need to subvert the white part of me that wants to eradicate my Asian part, and rethink what it means to be an Asian American male. The white part of me cannot be separated from the yellow, but I cannot longer continue to see the world through white eyes, so that I will not be blind to the racist, oppressive acts I commit when I am in white, hegemonic places.

A yellow white IR requires me to act tactically: “...a calculus which cannot count on a “proper” (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline line distinguishing the other as a visible totality...tactic belongs to the other” (de Certeau 142-145). Tactic is for those who cannot access strategic power or resources, who must repurpose them, what Deleuze and Guattari calls the nomad (*Thousand Plateaus* 387-403). Jose Muñoz calls this concrete utopia (*Cruising Utopia* 2-3). Instead of only dreaming of changes, we can affect portions of the places we are in by redefining our relationships, purpose, goals, and roles in resistive ways. We create spaces.

The process of reimagining IR is disidentification—a move to challenge, resist, or change dominant ideology by subverting cultural discourse through our actions and movements, our connections to people and surroundings, and our relation to discourse itself, as Muñoz states: to transform a cultural logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent structural change while at the same time valuing the importance of local or everyday struggles of resistance (*Disidentification* 457). By ideology, Muñoz means the

ways dominant culture helps us figure our world out: “ideology is the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (449). IR is an ideology that helps us figure out the world we live in. It is the idea that states are the legitimate actors, that anarchy is the nature of the world, that we should understand different peoples and cultures from a textual position of authority or are subject to the powers of sovereignty. It is also the idea that we should see the world from white, hegemonic masculine perspectives—a world of anarchy, states, and sovereignty, and a world where deaths, wars, and distrust is normal, a world that needs homo sacer for me to fit in.

Disidentification is a potentiality, a rejection of both assimilation into and breaking free from ideology (457). The former is obedience, subjugating oneself to ideology; the latter is an abstract utopian ideal that is too far away for us to experience in our lives and fails to liberate us (472). Rather, disidentification is a moment when we are able to see the ways ideology assimilates us, when we see how we identify with it, and we are able to subvert elements around us to produce a different identity, a rejection of identification with ideology. Such identification is not someone absolutely new or so different that it means we completely reject all elements of our lives. Thus, I can reimagine what it means to be an Asian American male, but I cannot reject being an Asian American male. It is a fantasy to simply create a brand, new identity.

The point here is that changing our image of IR will not come from new theories of IR or challenging/reformulating existing theories of IR. Rather, if we want to reconnect with IR, disrupting the connection between anarchy, states, and sovereignty, in

ways that are inclusive and open to difference, we must do it through our bodies, our identities.

### 1.5. Goodbye Father

I end the introduction with these thoughts.

detention camps

resettlement camps

refugee camps

internment camps

rape camps

concentration camps

death camps

Sovereignty is camps.

This dissertation is about the ways I performed and how I am performing that sustains camps. For most of my life, I was proud of being a part of sovereignty. I was dad-less. He left, abandoned us, before I was born. My mom eventually remarried, but he was always her husband.

*And the people bowed and prayed*

*to the neon god they made*

*And the sign flashed out its warning*

*in the words that it was forming<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> From the song *The Sound of Silence* by Simon and Garfunkel.

The state was my Father. The borders were his contours. Guns, planes, ships, rockets, those were his manliness. When I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life, I only thought about joining him, the USMC, the USN, the USAF, the US Army. I was proud to be an American, not a U.S., not an Asian, just American. I did not bleed red; I bled white and blue too. Honor, duty, and sacrifice were the hallmark of my conscience. These aren't just words, and I would have gladly paid the ultimate price for my Father.

But, this dissertation is also a recognition that life is about ethical choices. I believe there will always be borders. It is perhaps one of those human condition things philosophers like to talk about. However, the borders as we know it, of sovereignty, of states, of anarchy, is also of camps. This is a border that I wear as my designer identity to fit in, and in the process "out" someone else as a foreigner, as a threat. I am only safe in this border when I jeopardize someone else's safety, when I make them vulnerable to being deported into camps.

So, this dissertation is about making a choice. I know not what an alternative border and sovereignty look like. I do not have a clear vision of what an alternative IR is. Perhaps this is dangerous and irresponsible? But, we cannot continue as we have been. José Muñoz says of the present: "the present is not enough. It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and 'rational' expectations" (*Cruising* 26). I only know that we need to begin to imagine a new way of relating to borders, to IR, and to each other. I am fortunate enough to feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, but I know many more are not. Critical cultural communication scholarship teaches me to center my work on their

interests and needs. The only place I can begin to do so is from my own experiences, my own guilt, the pain I bring and the pain I feel, and my hope for a different world, and I am sorry I am not starting from somewhere better. So, I will start nonetheless, because I want to live in a world without wars, and without camps.

Morpheus opens his hands to me and shows me a red pill in one hand and a red, white, and, blue pill in the other. I take it and as I swallow it, I can only think:

Goodbye, Father.

*And the sign said, "The words of the prophets  
are written on the subway wall  
and tenement halls"  
and whisper'd  
in the sounds  
of silence.*

## CHAPTER 2: ROBERT McNAMARA AND ME

Walking through this park-like area, the memorial appears as a rift in the earth, a long, polished, black stonewall, emerging from and receding into the earth. Approaching the memorial, the ground slopes gently downward and the low walls emerging on either side, growing out of the earth, extend and converge at a point below and ahead. Walking into this grassy site contained by the walls of the memorial we can barely make out the carved names upon the memorial's walls. These names, seemingly infinite in number, convey the sense of overwhelming numbers, while unifying these individuals into a whole.<sup>10</sup>

–Maya Lin

Designer of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

As of May 2019, there are 58,276 names on the wall. Behind each is a lost,

A future

a friend

a child

a parent

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<sup>10</sup> The inspiration for using the Vietnam Wall and my memories of learning about the Vietnam War is from Lisa Lowe's discussion about debates over whether Maya Lin, an Asian American woman, should be allowed to design the memorial in *Immigrant Acts*.

a sibling

Lost.

This lost, the wall, is IR. Behind theories of dominoes, containment, core-periphery, balance-of-power, is lives...lost...in abstract concepts, tough talk, and power calculations.

Sadly, the wall also captures IR in another way. The wall only represents the loss of U.S. service lives, and even then, the lives of service members who meet the Department of Defense's strict criteria of who can be honored on it. It says nothing of the millions of Vietnamese civilians lost in the war or the hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese soldiers. And, that is the point: the wall is IR and it only sees the world from the position of white, masculinity in the U.S. It is not surprising therefore that during the debate over Maya Lin's design, Tom Carhart, a Vietnam War veteran, West Point graduate, a Pentagon lawyer, and a white man, rejected it as: "a black gash of shame and sorrow, hacked into the national visage that is the Mall" ("Insulting Vietnam Veterans"). His reasoning for this rejection: "Black walls, the universal color of sorrow and dishonor" ("Insulting Vietnam Veterans"). Vietnam, war, IR, they are only white.

What matters to IR has never been you or me; IR has always been sovereignty, state, anarchy, armies, soldiers, planes, tank, bombs, and our deaths, by the millions. This is the way of white, hegemonic masculinity. It is easy to think and talk about balance-of-power and containment when our homes are not the battlefields; our families are not war zones. Science and comfort escapes responsibility. It is easy to talk about poles and polar zones when the U.S. sits at pole position.

In the movie *Jarheads*, drill instructor Sergeant Fitch yells to the recruits: “You are no longer black, or brown, or yellow, or red. You are now Green! You are light green or dark green! Do you understand?”

Sir, yes, sir! Sir, what happened to white, sir?

This is no mistake. As I argued in the first chapter, sovereignty is not identity-blind; sovereignty benefits dominant culture. In the U.S., sovereignty is the biopolitical force sustaining white, hegemonic masculinity at the expense of other cultures. What makes this possible is not just the use of physical, legal, economic, and social violence inside the border, but also what the U.S. does outside its borders. Thus, if we fight an enemy, we fight as green/white. I am asked to forget I am yellow, to be green/white

And IR.

IR assimilates me.

What Sergeant Fitch said is me for most of my life: I never wanted to be yellow. I would have taken green because it gets me closer to white. I am IR. I will think like the old/dead white, male theorists do, in white, hegemonic masculine ways that they want me to. When I think IR, I get closer to white.

In *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*, there is a clip of Second Lieutenant Vincent Okamoto, son of first generation Japanese American parents, use “gooks” to describe Vietnamese he fought against. I feel shame washing over me, I want to take my hammer and break my skull, because I am Okamoto. This is how I described other Asians. That was the U.S. American way of describing Asians. That was



the white supremacist way of describing Asians. That was my way of describing Asians. I am green/white and IR.

I have never visited the wall. I came close, saw it at a distance, but I just couldn't. Maybe it was because I don't want you to see that I am Asian. I remembered the fight over whether a Chinese/Asian/non-white woman has any right to build a memorial to U.S. servicemen who died fighting against Asians. Maybe I didn't go because I didn't know how I would be treated. Some places do not seem safe for my Asian body, no matter how much I

want so badly to be a part of this nation.

but I can always feel that

I'm almost white

but only almost.

As Eguchi noted, almost white is a condition when I am able to assimilate into whiteness, but the degree of assimilation is only visible when compared to other non-white persons ("Uncultural" 300). There is a contrast going on: for my own assimilation to pass, I need a non-white person who can be seen as less assimilated, someone who stands out as a foreign threat. Without others who are perceived as less assimilated, it will be hard for whiteness to gauge how close I am to it.

## **2.1. Rational Theory and Robert McNamara**

Born at the end of World War I, lived through the great depression, served as a captain in the U.S. Army Air Corps in World War II as a statistical control officer, briefly the CEO of Ford Motor Company, Secretary of Defense for the Kennedy and Johnson

administrations, and president of the World Bank, perhaps no man represents IR better than McNamara.

*McNamara:*

I want to say, and this is very important: at the end we lucked out (speaking about how the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. resolved the Cuban Missile Crisis and avoided nuclear war). It was luck that prevented nuclear war. We came that close to nuclear war at the end. Rational individuals: Kennedy was rational; Khrushchev was rational; Castro was rational. Rational individuals came that close to total destruction of their societies. And that danger exists today (Errol Morris Films).

Mutual assured suicide–death—that is IR’s rationality. I remember learning about mutual assured destruction and the length U.S. and Soviet planners went to ensure mutual vulnerability to apocalypse. Much of IR revolves around the fear of death. Life is possible at the edge of it. IR needs death. Death is security is life. Death is rational.

The dominant theories of IR are all rational theories. The realist theories, comprising of classical realism (Carr; Morgenthau), neorealism (Mearsheimer; Waltz *Man, Theory*), and neoclassical realism (Grieco; Wolforth), assume states are the primary actors and make foreign policy base on utility maximization principle: states choose policies that they believe will increase their power and security. Thus, rationality is the ability to calculate which policies will give states the most benefits (defined as power and security for realism).

Neoliberalism accepts realism’s definition of rationality, but argues that survival means states sometimes need to seek cooperation on economic, social, environmental, and security issues (Keohane; Keohane and Nye; Young). Key to cooperation is establishing international regimes that help enforce rules, discourage cheating, and

encourage trust. Regimes work because they alter options available and calculations of benefits.

In contrast, rational choice theory focuses on national leaders as the primary decision makers, arguing against states as the unit of analysis (Bueno de Mesquita). It assumes that decision makers' ultimate goal is to stay in power, and so they choose foreign policies they expect will give them the best chance of strengthening or protecting their political position. For example, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, perhaps the most recognized rational choice theorist in IR, uses expected utility models to how national leaders choose foreign policies they expect will offer the most domestic political benefits.

Though an entire academic industry has risen around the difference between realism and rational choice theory, I do not see much difference.

*Realism:* "the Vietnam War was caused by the need to balance against the expansion of Soviet and Chinese power and the domino effect it will have on our allies and the industrial core of Japan and Australia."

*Rational choice theory:* "the Vietnam War was caused by successive administrations choosing to appear anti-communist by investing only enough resources to prevent the collapse of South Vietnam to win Presidential elections."

*Me:* "MILLIONS of Vietnamese died."

Sometimes, being an academic means being a magician.

We make the trivial profound, and the profound gone.

For Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations, checking Soviet and Chinese political expansion and getting elected without overcommitting to that goal were the same thing. Instead of the difference between realism and rational choice theory, what matters is that IR is rationality, and it is conditioned on death—yours, mine, and ours.

*McNamara:*

“Norman Morrison was a Quaker. He was opposed to war, the violence of war, the killing. He came to the Pentagon, doused himself with gasoline. Burned himself to death below my office.

He held a child in his arms, his daughter. Passersby shouted, "Save the child!" He threw the child out of his arms, and the child lived and is alive today. His wife issued a very moving statement: "Human beings must stop killing other human beings." And that's a belief that I shared. I shared it then and I believe it even more strongly today.

How much evil must we do in order to do good? We have certain ideals, certain responsibilities. Recognize that at times you will have to engage in evil, but minimize it.

I remember reading that General Sherman in the Civil War, the mayor of Atlanta pleaded with him to save the city. And Sherman essentially said to the mayor just before he torched it and burned it down: "War is cruel. War is cruelty." That was the way LeMay felt (General Curtis Lemay, a major, then colonel, then general of the U.S. Army Air Corps in WWII, considered by many the mastermind behind the tactic of fire-bombing Japanese cities). He was trying to save the country. He was trying to save our nation. And in the process, he was prepared to do whatever killing was necessary. It's a very, very difficult position for sensitive human beings to be in. Morrison was one of those. I think I was (Errol Morris Films).

War is cruel

Let it be cruel

The crueler and better

The world has no room for mercy,

Scholars are not to blame

It was anarchy's fault!

IR is helpless, blameless.

IR says we need

evil to do good

Thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions, they had to die.

This is innocence of theories and scholarship.

Atkinson and Calafell warn me that hegemonic masculinity deflects responsibilities, blaming structure, victims, anyone. Men with power are powerless and those they kill in the name of war are to blame (“Darth Vader”). McNamara performs IR. Claiming to want to end wars, to stop the killing, yet resigned to wars and deaths. How can you want something when you gave it up? McNamara is IR, pretending to be helpless. Science, theories, hypotheses, Xs and Ys, Ts and Rs, so much effort for appearance, to look like we have no options, no choice—wars and deaths are laws of nature. So many bright minds claim to know the problem, yet do nothing to solve it. They spend lifetimes analyzing it, theorizing it, proving it over and over, and in so doing keeping it alive, and we adore them. They spend lifetimes acting helpless, and we applaud them. They spend lifetimes letting people die, and we call them scientists.

Realists generally assume that states exist in a world where they have no authorities above them (a condition known as structural anarchy) and therefore are forced to pursue self-help (every state must do what they can to improve their power as a form of deterrence or, failing that, defense) for survival. Not all states can practice self-help

effectively, due to differences in capability, forcing states to form alliances to balance power (balance-of-power).<sup>11</sup>

Classical realists argue human nature (our desire for power) in anarchy causes international conflicts, because without governing constraint, states are free to expand their power (Morgenthau). Only a balance of power can deter states from pursuing power at the expense of other states. In contrast, neorealists discard human nature from the equation, pinpointing the problem solely on structural anarchy. Neorealism argues anarchy conditions states to behave in like-manners, regardless of our natures (*Waltz Man, Theory*). Even the holiest of angels must act in rational, self-interested ways.

All realists accept rationality as the only way to survive: states choose the option most likely to help them gain power for survival. Two important consequences result: one, states must subordinate ethics and morals to the needs of security and strategy, and, second, because states have different capabilities, they must form alliances to create effective balance-of-power. Rationalism means that states should only consider material power, and resist moral idealism: in a harsh world, states must prioritize survival over ethics (Carr; Doyle).

Like realism, neoliberalism has no interest in ethics, idealism, or morals; hypothesizing that cooperation comes from self-interest and strategic needs. Regimes and IOs help states gain power and stay alive. In contrast, rational choice theory makes no

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<sup>11</sup> One important consequence is ideology should play little role in determining alliances. States ally based on capabilities, and if an ally's capability changes, then states need to be willing to change alliances to maintain general balance-of-power. Anarchy makes states all alike in their goals, because it conditions all states, regardless of their regime types, to pursue power for survival. Therefore, ideology is irrelevant given the powerful influence of anarchy.

mention of ethics and morals. It makes sense, since rational choice theory takes a cynical view of politics. Leaders are political animals that view holding onto power as the most important thing, not that I think they are wrong. But, woe to the marginalized and oppressed, if this is all there is to politics.

*McNamara:*

We won the war to end all wars." I'm not so naive or simplistic to believe we can eliminate war. We're not going to change human nature anytime soon. It isn't that we aren't rational. We are rational. But reason has limits. (Errol Morris Films)

Is this why we try so hard to keep realism alive?

For decades, since the 1960s, neorealism was the pinnacle of the scientific expression of IR. However, as a professor in political science once made clear to me, with the end of the Cold War, neorealism should be dead, for its main hypothesis (bipolar balance-of-power is the predicted distribution of power in anarchy) failed with U.S. hegemony. States should have abandoned the U.S. and joined the U.S.S.R. For all realists, hegemony is bad, very bad, as it means one state becomes unchecked, which jeopardizes the survival of other states. Worse, ideology, not rational decision-making based on global distribution of capability, played a significant role in alliance choices.

Yet, we do not see the end of realism. It carries on, because others carry it on. Once upon a time, I wanted to carry it on too. Though there are different branches of post-neorealism, one of the more notable is neoclassical realism, which offers to keep neorealism's scientific rigor by returning to its classical realist roots, in the form of intervening variables such as ideology, strategic cultures, and information perception

(Ripsman). Neoclassical realism argues that neorealism is not wrong in its assumptions, but it is too sparse, too parsimonious.

The question IR scholars do not seem to ask is: why do you work so hard to keep realism alive? At what point do they stop pretending that this is all a science? When will they stop hiding behind theories, assumptions, Xs, Ys, Rs, Ts, and acknowledge that realism lives on because it is how they want the world to be?

I did, and left IR.

After much wandering, I have come to see these theories as white, masculine warrior-diplomats guarding the wild frontier of IR.

Realism is ideology.

And thus, it does not die.

I know, because I was there when Kenneth Waltz pronounced these words: “Fear! Fear, that’s what motivates men!”<sup>12</sup>

Is fear science? Did I miss something?

IR is fear. Fear of

the world it theorizes

the people it kills

the changes in life

and life itself.

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<sup>12</sup> It was 1997, I think, and I had since my senior year in college decided I wanted to keep studying IR. So, I went to check out the American Political Science Association conference in San Francisco, CA, where in a panel of realists discussing the relevance of realism post cold war, I watched Kenneth Waltz make this persuasion.



In the following sections, I present attempts by IR theorists to move away from realism. Although I have talked about neoliberalism and rational choice theory, the fact remains that critical IR theories are primarily aimed at challenging realism. Of all the theories, IR is most associated with realism, for it was and remains the dominant way IR scholars and practitioners see the world.

I had to leave realism behind. There is nothing in that theory except guns, tanks, planes, ships, rockets, and graves, countless millions of graves. I could no longer stare at dead souls without remorse, to use their lives as data and not hold myself accountable. We are 1/1000? Is that what our lives mean? All of our experiences, our love, our pain, our joy, our knowledge, our hopes, all of it is just 1/1000 of N? How do I tell the dead that their death means that? Sometimes, scholarship means I can't take it anymore. It means I look to other theories to see if there is room for life, for hope, for idealism. I leave behind IR. Without them, I can save no one.

## **2.2 Social Constructivism**

Before I leave IR, I will go through some of the critical theories of IR, to show I have reasons for abandoning it, that I have reasons for seeing world politics as communication and performance. I start with social constructivism (SC). It pulled me away from realism. It sold me with talks of ideas, cultures, and social change. Like a holy grail, I quested. I thought that I had caught a glimpse of a world without war and death. SC, it is the most influential challenger to realism in our post-cold war world. I heard it say IR is the culture states construct with each other and other international actors

(Wendt). I heard it rejected the realist claim that anarchy alone was sufficient to explain IR, so I quested for it.

Perhaps you can understand why the idealist in me wanted SC. In rejecting realism's pure material and instrumental logic; it swept me away with talks of normative rules—states exist in a world of ideas and norms that structure state behavior and provide resources for altering their social structure (Onuf "Constructivism").

SC's most prominent theorist is Alexander Wendt and his *Social Theory of International Politics*. He believes states create thin-cultures that he defines as Kantian (friends) and Hobbesian (enemy). States in a Hobbesian culture treat each other in self-help manner, while states in a Kantian culture cooperate and form trusting relationships (Wendt).

Through learning and imitation states choose the best strategy for survival, constituting the cultures they share. For example, countries can learn over time that cooperation is possible and preferred, or they can learn that certain countries are not to be trusted. Cultural adaptation explains why anarchy includes both realist and liberal behaviors (Wendt).

Another social constructivist approach examines international organizations (IOs) (like the UN, IMF, World Bank) and international regimes as creators of international culture (Barnett and Finnemore). States create IOs to serve their self-interest, but once created, IOs alter international culture to advance their missions, changing the way states behave in the process (Barnett and Finnemore). Thus, IOs change what states believe are appropriate and expected behaviors.

For all its enchanting beauty, SC left me wondering: what is identity? Hobbesian, Kantian, is that really identity? Are these really cultures? When I was young, my family moved to a new neighborhood. Someone bent our car's antenna and left a note: go back to your country. That is identity. When people are killed because of their race or gender, that is identity. When I was in high school, an English teacher asked the class: "How many of you don't like gays?" The popular guys threw up their hands. I kept mine down. Then I felt peer pressure. Then I felt low self-esteem. Then I raised my hand. "Alright!" Shouts of approval made me feel at ease, relieved. A good friend, someone I hung out with, thought greatly of, hesitantly also raised his hand. Years later, I found out my friend was gay. That's culture. When I feel stupid, when I hate myself for my cowardice, when I break because of the pain I caused. That's culture.

My god, what has SC done? Studying culture and identity without putting theirs on the line. What has SC done? It uses culture and identity, but what it really meant is altered rationality, different calculations. No subjectivities, no context, no life. SC dilutes culture, letting privileged scholars talk about culture without sharing theirs. I was one of you, pretending to be above culture, above race, gender, sexuality, and other identities. Pretending to be neutral, de-contextual, to talk of culture without accounting for it. Like SC, I talk about culture culture acknowledging its importance to marginalized communities. Is this not exploitation? What has SC done? "Thin" culture? "Thin"

identity? Just ways for me to avoid making mine accountable. Just ways for me to do white, hegemonic masculinity.<sup>13</sup>

Some social constructivists engage culture at a societal level. For example, Strömbom argues that intractable conflicts cannot be resolved without mutual identity shift, where the conflicting parties come to recognize each other as unique human beings worthy of empathy, a condition Strömbom defines as thick recognition (“Thick Recognition”). Parties that mutually identify each other as unique human beings worthy of empathy should exhibit a Kantian culture. Strömbom examines large social identities—Israeli view of Palestinians—arguing “New History” in Israel, which was a movement to introduce a critical examination of Israel’s history, is the seed of a thick recognition of Palestinians. The grail loses its luster. SC breaks my heart. “New History” has little to do with Palestinians; it is primarily about the Israeli Jewish experience. Thus, it is unclear how this could have affected Israeli recognition of Palestinians. After all, shouldn’t cognitive change involve social interaction? Can we talk about social change when we do not engage reflexivity ourselves (Jones). I do not want to be harsh, but I am not surprised Strömbom fails to find identity change.<sup>14</sup>

The use of “New History” points to a larger problem with SC: it is too centered on the interests and perspectives of dominant social groups in the world. SC remains tied to

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<sup>13</sup> For all the research on cultural change, in the era of Trump, none of social constructivist “thin” cultures seem to be Trump-proof. This is what happens when we talk about “thin” culture and identities.

<sup>14</sup> A “New History” scholar made it very clear to me once that just because they are taking a critical view of Israeli history does not mean they support Palestinian rights. Being critical of one’s own history does not automatically mean sympathy for someone else, especially someone seen as an enemy.

states and state-centered approaches. For all its promises of social change, its inclusion of culture and identity, SC has only offered us an alternative Western, Euro-centric, masculine conception of IR. The grail has lost its shine. A kinder, gentler, white, hegemonic masculinity. Since SC is always responding to rational-realism, it is already trapped in a binary relationship with a hegemonic understanding of IR, leaving it incapable of creating new approaches or incorporating the needs of oppressed and marginalized peoples, of people who cannot assimilate into white, hegemonic masculinity. SC does not see black, brown, yellow, and red. SC sees IR. SC only sees me when I am green/white and IR.

SC is textual criticism that is too far removed from the ground, blind to the lives of those who are affected by states, sovereignty, anarchy, and now regimes and IOs. Hobbesian and Kantian abstraction makes good theories, but remains inaccessible for many in this world. I am reminded that too often IOs, though they mean well, serve to only impose white, Western, masculine knowledge and standards on people in other parts of the world, often failing to recognize the need of those they claim to serve (Conquergood; Madison "Staging Fieldwork"). SC imposes a Eurocentric view onto the rest of the world, privileging dominant cultures over marginalized communities and erasing differences.

### **2.3 Discursive Theory of IR**

If the world is socially constructed, then I want to get at the process of construction and not merely examine the effects of construction. So, I turned to

discursive theories of IR.<sup>15</sup> The end of the cold war created spaces for alternative theories and methods. One area where this was seen is in the field of security studies, where scholars sought to expand the discourse of security beyond military security and national security to include rule of law, individual rights, environmental rights, and health concerns (Krause and Williams). There were also questions concerning who was being secured (Krause and Williams, Lipschultz).<sup>16</sup> Traditionally, security studies avoided questioning who was being secured, because it was felt that identities created insecurity, as they were often seen as a source of conflict. One particular criticism argued that identity conflicts caused anarchy (for example the 30-Years War between Catholics and Protestants in central Europe) (Williams “Culture”). Consequently, security and sovereignty exist today to serve a liberal anti-identity social contract: security comes from safeguarding a sovereign’s power over its subjects (security means having a power that is “above” identity politics; it is textual, abstract, and strategically normal) (Williams “Culture”). Thus, while security has expanded, it has also expanded sovereignty over

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<sup>15</sup> Within the discipline, these are generally considered post-modern scholarship. Although they may be post-modern, I use the label discursive theories because I think it captures their theories and analysis better. Too often, post-modern theories are still under appreciated and ridiculed. To lump many different approaches into one label demonstrates the discipline’s misunderstanding and, sometimes downright, ignorance of the many complex methods and theories involved. As a graduate student in political science, the impression left on me from faculties is that anything goes in post-modern research, that there is no methodological rigor involved.

<sup>16</sup> Professor Ronnie Lipschultz was my undergraduate advisor and mentor at UC Santa Cruz. I have always found this work to be really intriguing. When I was in IR, I found his work to be really cutting edge and insightful. It’s a difficult thing to criticize his work, for he helped me in my life.

individuals (Williams “Culture”). The line between sovereignty, state, and anarchy is maintained.

### 2.3.1. Discursive Theory of IR

Another way security was expanded was through the application of speech act theory: security is a speech act, a signifier that activates different meanings and actions, like human security, international security, and economic security (Wæver). Security speech acts, however, work by producing enemies, taking advantage of collective resentment against difference (Der Derian). Security is usually activated to curtail freedom, to marginalize groups, to empower a few, and to delimit our understanding of issues and context (Wæver). Thus, even though security has expanded beyond military and national survival needs, it still does not address the need of marginalized communities.

Aside from security discourse, others sought to show how IR was driven by rhetoric not rational objectivity. For example, it was argued that the Yugoslavian war and the post-war order were shaped by rhetoric (Beer and Hariman; Crawford and Lipschultz).<sup>17</sup> There are also semiotic works showing how the meanings of war, reason, and validity worked together to create discursive justifications for sovereignty and conflicts (Beer “War,” “Reason,” “Validity”).

Discursive IR theories, in general, seek to destabilize our conception of sovereignty and the international system. Yet, they do so from a white, hegemonic

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<sup>17</sup> Professor Frank Beer was on my comprehensive exam committee at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He was the lone post-modern scholar in the department, and I always felt really bad that I never related to his semiotic work.

masculine center. For example, Williams noted it is not that ideas have triumphed over materials in the post-war order; rather, military and material powers have been reconfigured to operate as cultures (“Cultural Strategies”). That is, military and material ideas have created a cultural understanding of security. Unfortunately, cultural power (expertise and knowledge) and symbolic power (authority) come together in international politics to reassert the dominance of the West over the rest of the world (“Cultural Strategies”).

Discursive and rhetorical IR theories fail to examine the ways security and sovereignty reifies a world dominated by hegemonic, white masculinity. For example, whether the world is rhetorically constructed probably has little bearing on the lives of marginalized people when it re-imposes racism and sexism. This does not mean that there is no value in discursive and rhetorical criticisms, but a call to be honest about the impact of one’s criticisms. Ultimately, discursive and rhetorical studies in IR emancipate white bodies from sovereign authority. What is missing are marginalized discourses about power and security. But it is also more than that. The location that security discourse originates from is white, hegemonic masculinity, it is invested in challenging the effects of white, hegemonic masculinity on the interests of primarily white, men. It fails to recognize the ways security is raced and gendered. We need to move away from that location if we want to open IR up to difference.

### 2.3.2. Discourse from the Bottom Up

Instead of seeing security and discourse from a state-centered perspective, we need to examine the ability of ordinary people to define the meaning of security, in what



is called grassroots statecraft (Marsh). This is not “what security means for different people;” instead, it is a need to go further and question and state-centric understanding of security and our subjective relationship to that understanding (Walker). We cannot change the subject of security as long as we are subjects of state-centered sovereignty (Walker). Taking a cue from Campbell (“Writing Security”), one possibility is seeing security as performances. Security becomes acts that reconstitute the meaning and effects of sovereignty, acts that define who is in, who is out, and what are our relation to each other and social institutions mean.

In addition to Campbell’s suggestion, I offer an additional move: to center our understanding of IR and security on oppressed knowledge, the wisdom from marginalized scholars and groups. The point is not to add to the list of security studies or to do a different kind of security study. Rather, the point is to come from a different conception of security altogether.

#### **2.4. Feminist Theories of IR**

You were taught that the security of the state rests on power (getting it, keeping it, and displaying it), but were you told that norms of equality create a more sure security for the state? What makes a state safer—power or gender equality? ...Those states that foster gender equality through laws and enforce those laws are less likely to go to war (Hudson et al. p.3).

Unlike social constructivism and discursive theories, feminist theories seek to displace IR from its masculine center. They argue international politics is gendered, and existing theories of IR reflect patriarchal and masculine knowledge of international politics. This is why feminist theorists in IR try to inject gender into the discipline.

According to Ann Tickner, the most recognized feminist theorist in IR, feminist critiques of IR can be grouped into different responses. The first group, traditional feminist theories, also known as liberal feminism, sought to emancipate women from gender discrimination through equal rights, equal legal status, and greater representation in international decision-making (Tickner 193-208). Liberal feminist scholars employed primarily positivist tools to promote women's rights and interests in IR. The goal is to emancipate through empirical knowledge.

Rejecting this rights-only approach, radical feminist theories argue the empirical-emancipation method made little improvements for women's status, for the problem is much deeper: patriarchal construction of women as the inferior gender (Tickner 209-248). Radical feminist theories therefore challenge subordination in addition to inequality. They work to highlight and value women's knowledge and experiences as different from and equal to men. For instance, Hudson et al. defines gender as men's violence and exploitation of women, and argue peace requires addressing women's security needs (5).

On the other hand, socialist feminist theories accuse radical feminist theories of essentializing gender differences (for example women's security needs are different from men's security needs) (Tickner 248-265). Instead, they argue gender differences are the result of the different material-base men and women are positioned in. Seeking to improve women's material condition, socialist feminist theories seek structural change by changing the condition of women's everyday lives. Since gender oppression is expressed

materially, advancing women's rights necessarily means advancing women's material conditions.

#### 2.4.1. Third World Feminism

Finally, there is Third World feminist theories (Tickner 273-280) and postmodern feminists (Tickner 280-296), who inject race and class into their analysis. However, Tickner is opposed to these newer feminist theories, arguing, for example, postmodern feminism rejects identity, shifting from "things" to "words" without acknowledging discursive power (288). She also opposes injecting race into gender because she believes it only serves to divide women, benefiting hegemonic masculinity (300-301).

On the contrary, Third World feminist theories inject race into gender to disrupt the dominance of western feminism, rejecting its portrayal of Third World women as objects of study, opening up critical investigations of gender oppression in the Global South (Mohanty). Third World feminism examines power inequality from colonialism and racism through space and time to articulate the specific ways Third World women are disciplined (Mohanty). Injecting intersectionality has given Third World feminist theories a potent ability to challenge masculinity in ways unavailable to the mainstream white feminist theories that Tickner defends.

The traditional feminist theories—liberal, radical, and socialist feminist scholars—are too unidimensional in their attack of patriarchy. By positioning gender above other forms of oppression, IR feminism centers its observations and critiques on the needs and interests of white, Western women erasing the needs of other women. By not broadening to include other dimensions of oppression, traditional feminist theories limit themselves

to responding to white, hegemonic masculinity. Worse, IR feminist scholars can only describe the ways gender oppression works within those limited topics, and fail to recruit coalitions necessary to challenge patriarchy.

Unlike traditional IR feminist theories, the first feminist theory I read was Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*. Up to then, my IR experience has been abstract, textual, white, hegemonic masculine. Enloe's work was breathtakingly different, even compared to many feminist theories. Instead of an abstract criticism of patriarchy, Enloe looks at life condition of women all over the world, from international tourism to shoe factories in Bangladesh, to the effects of U.S. military bases on local women. This was the first time I encountered any sort of theory about IR that looked at people at the bottom of societies. Yet, as much as I admired the book, I could not help but feel one critical thing was missing: the voices of women from the places she covered. Thus, it remains that a major concern with feminist IR theories is that they privilege the voices of white, straight women over other women.

## **2.5. Postcolonial IR**

In addition to gender, there is a recent move to include race in the study of IR. One recent study traces IR's origin to a discipline dedicated to securing white people from the threat of people of color (Vitalis). While the world wars shifted the focus from people of color to international conflicts, white people continue to benefit most from studying security (Vitalis).

### 2.5.1. Postcolonialism and Decolonialism

Problematically, IR continues to erase the work of Black scholars, ensuring security is reserved for white bodies. For instance, Grovogui found a discussion about the “race problem” in IR is framed around the works of Hegel, Kant, and Arendt (who opposed desegregation as an attack on private rights) (“Deferring Difference”). Thus, even issues concerning lives of non-white people are framed around the theories and knowledge of whites.

Given IR’s inherent racism, it is perhaps not surprising that Samuel Huntington’s “The Clash of Civilization” has taken root and spawned an academic franchise, even though he makes overt racist claims that the future will be the white West fending off attacks from the rest of the non-white world—the West versus the rest he calls it.<sup>18</sup>

It is hard to challenge racism when one is already deep in white, hegemonic masculinity. The dominance of sovereignty and state-based theories affects the ways scholars think about security for the Global South. For example, criticisms against subaltern realism and Third World security is that they believe the only way for the Global South to become secure is to establish Western styled sovereignty (Acharya; Ayoob). As much as critical IR scholars want to challenge the discourse of state/realist-centered security, they end up speaking only to this particular conception of security, and

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<sup>18</sup> It is even more appalling that Huntington continues to be recognized as a great scholar even though he wrote books like *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, which claims white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant settler culture made the U.S. exceptional, and that U.S. decline is due to the decline of that culture, caused primarily by immigration. Huntington argues that the greatest challenge to the U.S. will be the “Hispanization” of the U.S. immigration. In his later life, Huntington spent much effort attacking Mexican immigration and multiculturalism.

thus end up silencing other ways of knowing security. This is the problem with binary ways of knowing things: it reasserts the violence of hegemonic culture (Conquergood; Cohen). Thinking within IR leads us to IR, to a world based on white, hegemonic knowledge. Thus, we need to center our thoughts outside of IR.

As a challenge to IR's refusal to acknowledge gender and race, postcolonial scholars argue these are critical to the way the world works. Persaud and Sajed (*Race, Gender, and Culture*) and Seth (*Postcolonial Theories*) argue IR, as we know it right now, began with colonialism, not abstract theories of states, sovereignty, and anarchy. They argue that colonialism more than Eurocentric theories shape our world, the problems we continue to experience, and the lives of the vast majority of the world's population. Going further, Seth theorizes IR from an anti-colonial center (*Postcolonial Theories*). Seth argues that it is not enough to simply write IR from a non-Western perspective (that is, writing a different IR from the same white, hegemonic masculine center), as that is still IR (so, sovereignty, state, and anarchy from a non-Western perspective) (p. 2). Instead, Seth seeks to critique and challenge IR as a whole, by rethinking our knowledge of the world not from Eurocentricism, but from anti-colonialism:

this exercise must be complemented by the expansion of disciplinary archives to include moral thought suppressed or lost in the wake of conquest, imperialism, and colonialism. The ultimate aim would be to open the discipline of international relations up to new imaginaries that reside in so-called local memories, arts and forms of knowledge without being wedded to nativism or native essentialism (p. 108).

The goal is not to create another theory or perspective within existing IR, but a different IR, to think of IR from a different center. Seth's goal is also mine. I too argue that it is

imperative not to center IR on white, hegemonic masculinity and its sovereignty, state, and anarchy line of thought. Instead, I center my conception of IR on marginalized and oppressed knowledge and wisdom, and on my own personal experiences.

## **2.6 Conclusion: IR is about the U.S.**

McNamara:

They (the North Vietnamese) believed that we had simply replaced the French as a colonial power, and we were seeking to subject South and North Vietnam to our colonial interests, which was absolutely absurd. And we, we saw Vietnam as an element of the Cold War. Not what they saw it as: a civil war (Errol Morris Films).

IR sees the world only in the interests of white, hegemonic masculinity. The main rational theories make no bones about this. Realism is clear: it is interested only in powerful countries, for they have the most effect on IR. Neoliberalism recognizes that regimes must serve the interest of powerful states (they are often the ones creating regimes), even while pursuing autonomy. Rational choice theories are only interested in national leaders, but like realists, they focus primarily on issues related to powerful states. IR serves powerful interests.

It seems clear that the U.S. cared only about Vietnam as a chess piece, a cold war front. It is also clear that Vietnamese lives lost mean nothing to U.S. officials, U.S. public, or to IR. To define for Vietnamese the war as a civil war is arrogance. A civil war means that it was the Vietnamese who were fighting, allowing the U.S. to wipe its hands clean. Not our fault. We just picked the losing side, that's all. Yet, this is IR and McNamara performs IR. Defining the world for everyone is IR.

*McNamara* (recounting an argument he had with former Vietnamese foreign minister Nguyễn Cơ Thạch):

Do you mean to say it was not a tragedy for you, when you lost 3 million 4 hundred thousand Vietnamese killed, which on our population base is the equivalent of 27 million Americans? What did you accomplish? You didn't get any more than we were willing to give you at the beginning of the war. You could have had the whole damn thing: independence, unification (Errol Morris Films).

It's the victim's fault. They resisted superpower ambitions. It was the U.S. that killed, but that does not matter. They resisted, and power cannot tolerate resistance.

Disgusting.

I grow sick of talking to McNamara

IR forgets its role in causing death.

It's just theory after all.

*McNamara* (recounting Thạch's reply):

Mr. McNamara, You must never have read a history book. If you'd had, you'd know we weren't pawns of the Chinese or the Russians. McNamara, didn't you know that? Don't you understand that we have been fighting the Chinese for 1000 years? We were fighting for our independence. And we would fight to the last man. And we were determined to do so. And no amount of bombing, no amount of U.S. pressure would ever have stopped us (Errol Morris Films).

There is a world out there that IR does not know, cannot know, and does not want to know. IR is blind to the people of the world, we are just chess pieces; it sees only powerful, white men. They only see power. IR hides from this world, shielded by science, by hypotheses, by research, by numbers and statistics, by wars, and by deaths. This is the world from the bottom up, of those who refuse to be oppressed, refuse to be objects, to be pawns, to be sacrificed for N. It is because IR oppresses that I write this



dissertation. Our knowledge of the world imprisons us in endless wars, fears, and deaths.

It is time to be independent of it.

### CHAPTER 3: IR WITH A CRITICAL CULTURAL CENTER

*When I was a young boy  
my father took me into the city  
to see a marching band.<sup>19</sup>*

Death comes for me, for you, for us

Slow march of corpses trudge

arms of bones, green brown purple flesh

constant buzz, darting, circling, laying maggots

They gesture to me

Join us! Join us!

More death, more N

IR is the reaper,

Though I live now

I live in the valley of the shadow of death

As Seth (*Postcolonialism*) pointed out, I cannot write another IR theory. There are already too many, one more will only serve me. So, I move to create a new IR, centered on critical cultural theories. With the help of critical whiteness studies, I expose IR's commitment to white, hegemonic masculine center. Rejecting that center, I instead center

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<sup>19</sup> This is from *Welcome to the Black Parade* by My Chemical Romance, a contemporary punk song (some calls this subgenre emo punk).

my IR on de-colonialism, intersectionality, queer of color theory, theory of the flesh, and monstrosity. It is worth repeating: centering IR on white, hegemonic masculinity only leads us to think about wars, deaths, and social oppression. If we want to create a world without wars and deaths, without social oppression, then we begin with theories and wisdoms from those who have been oppressed. Critical cultural theories help me imagine an IR centered on the need to emancipate, the need for equality, the need for diversity, and the need for love. What is IR without fear? What is IR with love?

### 3.1. Decolonial IR

*He said, "Son when you grow up  
would you be the savior of the broken,  
the beaten, and the damned?"*

So, I must leave IR

State, sovereignty, anarchy

IR is no savior

Life is a chess

we are pawns

Sacrificed for science.

I look to Anzaldúa, Moraga, Conquergood

Collins, Nakayama, Muñoz, and Calafell

I leave the parade.

As I have shown in the previous chapters, IR is an essentialist theory, arguing that states, sovereignty, and anarchy are natural elements of the world we live in. This is a

prerequisite to seeing the world as laws and theories. However, scientific IR is Western, white, hegemonic masculine discourse, inattentive and destructive of other people's discourses. This is the problem with binary ways of knowing things; it reasserts the violence of hegemonic culture—scientific IR is good and normal, other potential ways of knowing the world is unscientific and abnormal (Conquergood “Performance Studies”; Cohen).

To expose IR's commitment to a white, hegemonic masculine knowledge, I turn to critical whiteness studies, which theorize whiteness is centered in strategic ways that keep it invisible (Frankenberg; Nakayama and Krizek; McIntosh; Moon; Wildman and Davis; Shome, “Politics of Location” and “Outing Whiteness”). To expose whiteness, we must see how it operates locationally, so we need to name the ways whiteness functions in specific locations (Calafell, “When”; Shome, “Outing Whiteness”). As scholars we need to critically examine our institutional settings as locations of oppression, so I locate whiteness inside IR and its theories (Calafell, “When”). IR's silence on issues of race, gender, sexuality, and other identities sustains the invisibility of whiteness, which means whatever space they create is still reserved mainly for dominant, white men. As I have demonstrated earlier, IR is knowledge of international politics based on white, European histories, philosophies, and epistemologies that are constantly silencing and erasing other ways of knowing our world. To know IR as it is now is to know it the way powerful, privileged, white men know it. This is why I cannot change IR; I have to start from a different center.

To begin to create a new IR, I turn to decoloniality, which centers our knowledge on the experiences of oppressed peoples (Wanzer-Serrano). For instance, Patricia Hill Collins argues white men's experiences have been the center of Western knowledge and consequently Black women learned to be objectified as subordinates; the only way for Black women to challenge and resist subordination is to center theory and studies on their experiences, offering new knowledge (*Black*). They need knowledge that does not already see them as subordinates. Like Collins, Gloria Anzaldúa uses her experiences growing up in the borderlands, the way the borderlands travel with her, and the pain she feels from being disciplined, to present a knowledge centered on her queer Chicana experiences where she is the empowered agent (*Borderlands*). Similarly, Cherrie Moraga uses her experiences as a queer Chicana to build a new knowledge around the pain, privileges, and guilt she experienced as a way to challenge masculinity and Western dominance ("La Güera"). If I simply tell my experiences from within existing IR theories and epistemologies, then I will only end up portraying others and myself as subjects of sovereignty, state, and anarchy. This only reinforces what IR already tells me: we are part of its death machine.

I am reminded of Wanzer-Serrano's critique of postcolonial studies: "it is undergirded by a modernist rationality, tied too strongly to postmodernism modernism and, ironically, Eurocentrism" (256-257). Instead, he takes a decolonial perspective, which offers a frame to delink from modernity and colonialism, offering an alternative to modernism, post-structuralism, and postmodernism (Wanzer-Serrano 257-260).

Decolonialism argues that we need to situate knowledge in specific geographic and

embodied episteme (Wanzer-Serrano 300-301). Colonialism and resistance can only be understood from the experiences of oppressed peoples in the context of their location. For example, Patricia Hill Collins argues that Black women understand the world from a different epistemology, and because every group has a unique evolving worldview, no group should have to be interpreted by another group (34-44).

One of the great tragedies of IR is its refusal to accept different cultural perspectives. It commits what I will describe in chapter five as the grand theorist's voice, an approach that seeks to inject the theorist's voice into different bodies, so that it looks like all humans behave as theory predicts. The way to help make this world safer, more humane, and more equal is not for scientists to determine what other people need, based solely on Western knowledge, but to invite other people to begin a dialogue about what they need from us. The only way to delink IR from war and death is to create a new IR with a new genealogy that does not define or speak for others.

### **3.2. Intersectionality is in my Pain**

*He said, "Will you defeat them,  
your demons, and all the non-believers,  
the plans that they have made?"*

My designer Asian American identity

is my demon

Together, we oppress others

Fly to the light of white, hegemonic masculinity

IR is in my designer Asian American identity

To defeat IR

I will defeat me

Following de-coloniality, I move to center IR on my own specific geographic and embodied episteme (Wanzer-Serrano 300-301). Yet, that is not enough. It is also important that this center speaks to different voices dialogically—I need to invite others to share their stories and meanings as equals, and avoid defining them (Conquergood). Without dialogical performance, I may end up creating a different hegemonic theory. To perform dialogically, I turn to intersectionality, which is an epistemology involving theoretical, methodological, and practical approaches that argue oppression can only be resisted multidimensionally (Anzaldúa; Collins *Black*; Collins and Bilge; Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall; K. Crenshaw; May; Moraga; Nielson). Focusing on one dimension of oppression reproduces binary social categories that reasserts dominant ideologies (Cohen “Punks”), re-subjecting individuals to the violence of heteronormativity (Collins; Yep) and hides other forms of oppression (Anzaldúa; Collins; Bérubé; Dyer; hooks; Moraga).

Patricia Hill Collins theorizes oppression works through the matrix of domination, because oppression does not operate on just one or two dimensions, but on multiple dimensions (*Black*; May 33-40). Challenging white, masculine normativity requires individuals to reject additive, binary identity categorization, and see their subjectivities as an interlocking of different forms of oppression. Yep warns us: “intersectionality should not be treated in a superficial and roster-like fashion, in which an individual’s race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality is simply listed as categories of identity” (“Violence”). Indeed, Collins warns us that too often scholars like to use the word without actually

doing intersectionality (*Intersectionality*). It is important for me to see intersectionality is a way of exploring identities without seeing participants as the “sum of parts” (Nielsen).

Hegemonic, white masculinity oppresses through binary, additive categorization, making other dimensions of oppression invisible, and hiding the totality of our being. We must therefore recognize oppression as something fluid and complex and acknowledge our complicity, or risk failing to address it entirely (May). While I may be oppressed in one category—like race—I am also privileged and oppressive in other categories—like sex. But, it is even more complicated: I can be both oppressed and privileged racially. For example, being Asian means I am always viewed and treated as a foreigner, but it also grants me more access to whiteness than it does for a Black or Latinx person, a condition known as almost-white (Eguchi “Uncultural”; Eguchi and Starosta). My designer Asian American male identity also gives me more privileges than Asians who cannot perform a designer identity. I am already intersectional in that who I am and how I perform is a matrix of different dimensions of power working on and through me (May).

Intersectional scholars have done much to show how IR can be an inclusive space. Carrie Crenshaw found that the different dimensions of oppression in media portrayals of women in the Gulf War as “mothers at war” is visible only by incorporating racism and heterosexism, in addition to the men/women gender binary (“Women in Gulf”). Mohanty, Pratt, and Riley’s intersectional feminism looks at how the U.S. genders, racializes, and sexualizes its practice of wars, pointing out the ways it is not just gender oppression; it is also racial and sexual oppression (“Introduction”). Wars serve to civilize men of color and rescue women of color, all the while criminalizing, killing, and abusing peoples of



color within the US (4-5). Thus, one important aspect of intersectionality is to reject power as one-way, recognizing that oppression occurs simultaneously in many directions (Anzaldúa; Collins *Black and Intersectionality*; Collins and Bilge; Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall; K. Crenshaw; May).

Transnational feminist theories see intersectionality globally, engaging gender with global inequality locationally, spatially, temporally, and historically, such as the ways colonialism effects gender differently in different parts of the world, highlighting the complexity that spatial power can produce inequality even between women of color from the North and South (Shome “Transnational Feminism”). Indeed, intersectionality sprung from recognition that colonialism is interconnected with other forms of social oppression (Collins *Intersectionality*). Thus, Third World feminism disrupts the monolithic notion of feminism, rejecting the ways Western feminist theories portrays Third World women as objects of study (Mohanty). Instead, Third World feminism injects power inequality through space and time to articulate the specific ways Third World women are disciplined (Mohanty). For instance, Mohanty uses a spatial genealogy to show how her South Asian female body is read differently in the US and India (125-138). Puar’s queer study links international events, such as Abu Graib with biopolitical moves to incorporate queers into heteronormative ideologies of US nationalism (*Terrorist Assemblages*). Anzaldúa reconceptualizes the border between Mexico and the US as a mestiza space, a decolonizing performance that redefines the border as a brown space open to racial, sexual and other dimensions of mestizos (*Borderlands*).

Together, intersectional theories require me to interrogate the ways my Asian American masculinity provides privileges for me—allowing me to pass through whiteness, but requiring me to oppress others who are less able to assimilate into white, hegemonic masculinity—but also makes me vulnerable to social oppression. IR exerts its power to define and control us through my identity and my everyday actions. I reproduce IR. To examine my identity, I locate it in my borderland—the internment camps. From here, I try to open my identity up dialogically, exploring what it means to invite others to communicate with me as equals.

### **3.3. IR is in my Flesh**

Because both decolonialism and intersectionality ask me to be embodied, I turn to theory in the flesh and self-reflexivity, which theorize that individuals know their world based on their experiences (Anzaldúa; Calafell “Mentoring”; Madison “Performing Theory” and “My Occupation”; Collins *Intersectionality*; Moraga, “La Güera” and *Loving*; Moya).

This is an IR from my body

The pain I feel

The joys I experience

The people I hurt

The people who hurts me

IR not as abstract concepts

IR as human being

and human feelings.

Experiences create personal theories with unique insights into oppression and resistance (Calafell “Mentoring”; Madison “Performing Theory” and “My Occupation”) and are, thus, our cultural understanding of power (Calafell “Monstrous Femininity”).

Decoloniality and intersectionality are experienced in historical and social contexts from the heart, when personal struggles become central to political consciousness (Moya 45-46).

We all experience theories differently, and this is especially true for people who do not fit into white, heteronormativity. Abstract theories can give us general knowledge, but that knowledge is incomplete, forming only a map or framework. The specifics have to be filled out from experiences; the routes we walk can only be seen on the ground. People of color and trans-gender people build theories from their personal and painful experiences of hegemonic oppression as a means of survival. This is a critical moment, when the ways we are taught fails to numb the pain; when new consciousness is a necessity (Anzaldúa 70). For Anzaldúa this is the Coatlicue state, when pain forces us to cross the border, like a snake breaking through its shell (68-73). This is a process of renewal. As Calafell said: “the value of experience...counteracts dominant logics or ways of knowing” (“Notes” 241).

To know from embodied knowledge requires self-reflexivity. It is a contemplation of the scholar’s actions and a contemplation of how the scholar is contemplating her actions (Madison “Dialogical Performative” 321). When Moraga tells of how she went to college prep for high school while her cousins did not, how her light skin also saved her from arrest, and for all of that she had betrayed her people, she reminds me that

reflexivity is painful, but without interrogating the privileges we experience and the hurt they bring to others, we may never subvert dominant discourse (*Loving* 96-97).

Reflexivity acknowledges our position of authority and moral responsibilities, creating an introspective gaze to ethically understand our interpretations of the world, “an engaged praxis within our everyday life” (McIntosh and Hobson, see also Collins *Intersectionality* 1366). Reflexivity is the way my pain is connected to the larger system of power, the ways my pain exists in a matrix of domination (Collins; May). Reflexivity is recognizing our intersecting identities, acknowledging our privileges, and implicating ourselves in systems of oppression that hurt the people we care about (Jones, R.). I am able to connect my micro daily performances to macro international politics through the pain I experience. There are moments of guilt, shame, hurt, anger that, if we think about them, tells us our micro performances do not match up with the macro social structures we live in. These are moments when power slips and something is off. Reflexivity is thus a lens to moments when we can challenge power.

In addition, reflexivity is never just about “I”. As an intersectional move, reflexivity must be accountable to others; it is a dialogue (Calafell “(I)dentities”). Collins even describes self-accountability of the scholar/researcher/interpreter as a core of intersectionality (*Intersectionality* 1366). Intersectional reflexivity reminds me that my introspective gaze must hold myself accountable for all of the ways power marks me, including the ones I am not familiar or comfortable with (Calafell “(I)dentities”). Reflexivity is a vulnerability driven by love, relations, and an ethics of care (Calafell

“She Ain’t” 11). Richard Jones reminds me that reflexivity has got to hurt (“Putting Privileges” 124).

To understand reflexivity, we must discuss reflectivity. The latter is when we reconsider our actions, usually to gain new insight. The former is when we reconsider our actions in terms of power, complicity, ethics and accountability. The goal is not just new insight, but to understand the roles we play in oppression so that we can change our behavior. The latter is centered on the self. The former is centered on the needs of the other. An IR that is inclusive cannot simply be reflective, as many critical theories of IR tend to be. Rather, it needs to be reflexive, engaging personal, interrogating the researcher’s actions, motives, and experiences to produce alternatives.

My pain leads me to a new way of

knowing

seeing

IR.

### 3.4. Queering IR

*Because one day, I'll leave you  
a phantom, to lead you in the summer  
to join the black parade!”*

The dead passes

In the river of corpse

But the dead remains

Ghost and apparitions

Haunting me

Every N, every X, every Y

Every theory, every hypothesis

The body withers

The pain lingers

and IR is blind to suffering.

To help tie these theories together, I turn to queer of color theories for they encapsulate the strengths of critical cultural theories: an embodied, self-reflexive, intersectional theory centered on the experiences of oppressed peoples. Yet, queer of color theory is more: it is about disrupting, decentering, and destabilizing a normative center to create spaces, openings for differences. Queer of color theory helps me decenter IR from its white, hegemonic masculine center so I can create something new that is open to difference. To me queer of color theory is tactical, self-reflexive, embodied, and intersectional—knowing the world from everyday experiences, using bodily interpretations of events to challenge oppression and create spaces for diverse voices.

Johnson and Henderson argue queer theory destabilizes static, stable sexual identities and behaviors, and necessarily destabilizes and de-essentializes identity and discourse, because essentialist identity reinforces hegemonic power structures rather than dismantling them (Johnson and Henderson 5). Thus, we can destabilize social structures by destabilizing our own identities. In this way, Queer is ethical: we accept the need for change to fight social injustice.

Queer of color theory examines and exposes ideologies and power relationships (Yep “Queering” 119, “Violence”). It been used to examine violence and oppression from normativity, like heteronormativity. For example, Anzaldúa uses borderlands to critique the dominant binary conception of identities and push for a *mestiza* consciousness that is more than woman or man, but is both and more (*Borderlands*).

Queer of color theorists investigate the normalization of heterosexuality, a process that defines some individuals and groups as normal and natural, while disciplining those who do not conform to normality as the Other, deviant and lesser humans (Cohen 23; Yep, “Violence” 18; Yep, Lovas, and Elisa 29). Heterosexuality and dominant cultures are never stable and require constant construction of homosexuality and other identities as the subordinate Others to reaffirm themselves and their dominance (Yep, “Violence” 13, 28). Queer of color theory shares with critical whiteness studies the critique that identities do not exist alone; a dominant center can only exist when there is a marginalized group (Nakayama). Like whiteness, heterosexuality is unmarked and seen as normal, allowing its oppression to function unseen in a “now-you-see-it” and “now-you-don’t” character (Yep, “Violence” 13). Thus, it is necessary to make heterosexuality visible as a way to challenge it. We cannot fully grasp its oppression without investigating the construction of both marginalized and dominant groups. It is insufficient to critique IR from one social location. The only way I can create an IR open to diversity and difference is to be critical of my own complicity with dominance—the way I participate in the oppression of others and how I participate in oppressing myself as a way to assimilate into white, hegemonic masculinity.

Queer of color theory is ideal for this project because, at its core, it is about survival and social change, as it recognizes the world is dangerous to queers and other bodies that do not fit in with the dominant culture (Muñoz *Cruising Utopia* 27). Queer of color theory is a disidentification, a tactical move to subvert the dominant culture to create spaces where queer and other disciplined bodies can live:

Disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology. Instead of buckling under the pressures of dominant ideology (identification, assimilation) or attempting to break free of its inescapable sphere (counteridentification, utopianism), this “working on and against” is a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent structural change while at the same time valuing the importance of local or everyday struggles of resistance (Muñoz, *Disidentification* 457-462).

Muñoz warns me to be mindful of the ways IR is toxic to other peoples, not just silencing them, but destroying their voices, and erasing their existence. Centering the discipline on sovereignty, state, and anarchy not only strips away agency from people of color and trans-gender people, it justifies the use of violence on them to secure white, hegemonic masculinity. Thus, queer of color theory is important because it tells me that this is not just an intellectual exercise. Instead, there are lives at stake, and I need to make my scholarship responsive to the moral crises around me, to the needs of marginalized bodies.

### **3.5. I am a Monster**

*A world that sends you reeling*

*From decimated dreams*

*Your misery and hate will kill us all*

*So paint it black and take it back*



*Let's shout it loud and clear*

*Defiant to the end, we hear the call*

IR is misery and hate

A universe of fear

To live in balance

is on the edge of death

Sovereignty, state, anarchy

TAKE IT BACK!

To help ground the performance of my designer identity, I turn to monster theory, which uses monsters to critique U.S. American culture and history. (Calafell *Monstrosity* and “Monstrous”; Cohen; Phillips *Dark Directions*; *Projected Fears*; Poole). Monsters are not simply creatures of imagination, they are born out of our fear of the unknown, guilt and horror from our past, and things we are unable to contain (Phillips *Dark Directions*; *Projected Fears*; Poole). Most importantly, monsters are liminal creatures, existing at the boundaries of our representations, cultural norms, and social expectations, but also a desire (Calafell *Monstrosity*; Cohen). The monster is cultural (Calafell *Monstrosity*; Cohen).

However, rather than working with specific kinds of monsters, I prefer to use monstrosity, which adapts monsters to examine my own performances, as Calafell does (*Monstrosity*). I am greatly indebted to Cohen’s seven theses of monster culture, which, in a quick summary, theorize monsters are cultural knowledge of social boundaries and the policing against differences and social change (164-579). Monsters scare us because

they harbingers the destruction of social order and must be contained. Monsters, in this sense, have material effect by shaping our understanding of the world, our culture, and our behavior (Poole 641-729).

I am also indebted to Calafell's theory that monstrosity is transformation: the morphing of the body from the pain of being disciplined and into something resistive and liberating (*Monstrosity*; "Monstrous"). Monsters are queer—they are creatures of change, destabilizing social norms and expectations. Monsters are disciplined, attacked, and killed due to their difference, but they survive, for they are tactical and cannot be removed from our culture. Monsters will always be reborn to challenge social norms and push us to change (Calafell *Monstrosity*; Cohen).

Monsters are also in our bodies. If culture is social change, then the body also changes in moments of cultural pain and liminality. Monstrosity is an important theoretical and methodological approach to intersectional analysis because monstrosity demands that we engage our experiences to expose the ways power intersects and operates through us (Calafell *Monstrosity*; "Monstrous"). In my performances, I examine the ways my body makes changes due to the different ways I experience power. In chapter five, I use the Borg from Star Trek universe to anchor my enactment of poiesis. This is my critique of the grand theorist voice. In chapter 6, I monsterize my banana identity, making that a monstrous performance. In the process, I demonstrate how even normal, everyday events are full of resources to practice reflexivity, challenge dominant social scripts, and create a different IR.

### 3.6. Conclusion

In turning away from IR, I look to critical cultural theories to help guide me. I center my IR on the knowledge and wisdom of those who have experience oppression and the need for emancipation. Of those who know what I know: fear is no life. Of those who know what I do not: hope. So, I turn to them. Critical whiteness studies help me expose the ways IR serves hegemonic, white masculinity. Decolonialism tells me I must reject IR in its entirety, that I must find my own IR. Intersectionality warns me that the IR I create will be a different form of oppression if I do not think of emancipation multidimensionally. Theories in the flesh points me to look at my own life experiences to draw out my pain as the path to hope. Queer of color theory guides me in using my experiences to destabilize my identity as way of rejecting IR and a way to create a new IR without an essential center. Finally, monstrosity tells me that being queer in the flesh is living at the borders, a creature of hybridity, both hunted by the old world and hunting for a new one. In the next chapter, I explore how I will act out my destabilized Asian American masculinity.

*To carry on*

*We'll carry on*

*And though you're dead and gone, believe me*

*Your memory will carry on*

## CHAPTER 4: WRITING, ACTING, PERFORMING IR

Queering IR is a performance that reshapes it into openings and gaps for differences, an actualization that is open to interpretation (de Certeau). In this section, I will talk about performance autoethnography as my methodology. I will explain what this method entails, why I chose it, and ethical considerations I should be aware of.

### **4.1. Performance Ethnography**

Performance autoethnography is a critical ethnography that enacts the scholar's own experiences to produce social change (Alexander, Conquergood, Spry).

Autoethnography is ethnographic lens turned onto the self, when the scholar critically interprets her experiences in the hope of gaining self-reflexive knowledge that can lead to change on the inside and in her environment (Adams; Alexander; Jones, S.; Spry). Rather than studying above and detached from society, the scholar, since she is already a part of society, can interrogate and explore the ways social forces work by looking at the ways power flows into, out from, and through her body. If, as I am arguing, IR flows through us, then we need to see that IR is not produced in abstract places as theorists portray, but in our everyday lives.

In this sense, I follow Richard Jones Jr. in seeing autoethnography as connecting subjectivities and culture, revealing and revising the meanings of our world ("Queering the Body" 764-767), rather than an autobiography connecting personal experiences with

cultural issues (Ellis and Bochner). Thus, for me autoethnography is more than interpretive work; it is also epistemic and constitutive (Langellier 128-129), as Calafell demonstrates with her negotiations of her shifting Chicana and Latina identity in North Carolina (“Disrupting”). Autoethnography’s constitutive and epistemic powers come from the scholar’s painful reflexivity.

Performance ethnography can be divided into two kinds, a dramaturgical study of cultural performances and a staged enactment of cultures (Alexander; Madison “Performing Theory”). Cultural performances see humans as homo performan and we perform social scripts that define our roles (Alexander). Conquergood, for example, found that gang life and symbols are filled with performative aesthetics with deep communal meaning (224-263). However, the two actually go together, informing each other, as a study of cultural performances gives us the materials to stage enactments of culture, which allows us to reinterpret the meanings of cultural performances. Autoethnographic performance does just that, enacting the interpretation and interrogation of the scholar’s cultural performances to change them.

In this dissertation, I attempt to interrogate my experiences learning and teaching IR, connecting my subjectivity with hegemonic, white masculinity, showing my complicity with dominant culture and oppressing other voices. The dissertation involves two cases. In the first case, I examine my experiences as a part-time graduate instructor teaching a recitation course for a larger introduction to international relations course. I explore how I silenced a Palestinian student’s voice when he was upset with the way the course and the professor defined Palestinian President Arafat as choosing violence over

peace. In the second case, I explore a moment when I substituted for a woman Chinese graduate student and how the white students in that class viewed me more positively. In both cases, I begin my analysis by writing narrative accounts of my experiences, letting critical cultural theories guide which recollection to narrate and what they mean in terms of my complicity with IR, my ability to perform differently, and how that creates something potentially new. I then take these narratives and rework them into performance scripts to act out my interrogations and interpretations.

These cases begin as poiesis and morph into kinesis (Conquergood). My hope is that through them I can get a better sense of what it means to perform IR, what a reinterpretation of performing IR means, and how I can create spaces for diverse voices. My goal is to be able to imagine a new way of knowing IR.

#### **4.2. IR is Cultural**

Critical performance ethnography requires us to situate performances we are studying within larger social and power structures. Conquergood, for example, situate gang performance within the larger racial and class oppression gang members live in (224-263). He found gang life is a recovery of dignity and love, an act of empowerment in a white supremacist world. I need to consider more than what roles means, but how people construct meanings in their lives through their actions—how people put meanings into the roles they play.

Performance in this sense is meaning making. This requires me to consider how material objects, human interactions, and social institutions function together. What are my roles in IR and what does it mean to perform them? What does it mean for someone

to perform the role of soldiers, politicians, refugees, aid workers, and even teachers, and how are these related to power and oppression?

Studying IR as a theater means my research should not be focused on artifacts, but on the way people act in relations to other humans and objects. For example, I should not see ethics of warfare as only an ethical philosophy; instead, I should connect it to larger social structures and issues, which may mean seeing ethics of warfare as a reproduction of a system of control, enacting a way of knowing the world that has social and political consequences. How does theories of IR discipline some bodies for the benefit of others? How is this performed?

#### 4.2.1 Performing Cultural Change

Autoethnographic performance lets me practice disidentification—resisting and changing dominant ideology by rejecting and changing cultural discourse through our actions (Muñoz). As I argued earlier, IR is an ideology, the dominant way we are supposed to think about how our world works. This ideology works through textualism, the science of studying people from a distance, from a position of superiority, from a white, masculine way of knowing, and from a disembodied position (Conquergood “Performance Studies”). This is important because a place is textual and to strategize is to see the terrain from above, distanced and detached. Here, the way dominant people know the world is imposed on everyone, so that it seems everybody behaves as realism predicts because realists define everyone from white, hegemonic masculine perspective. IR has a habit of defining others, forcing Euro-U.S. histories and standards on them. The power of textualism comes from its ability to use abstract concepts to impose its will on others.

Textualism is a place where knowledge serves the interests of the dominant culture, making them universal, invisible, and powerful. Textualism is state lines, preventing change, blocking off lines of flight. This is what I see when I read how proud realists are when they show how even the ancient Greeks practiced realism. IR does not change; it is a tomb, a gravestone for all the people who died in wars.

This has tragic real-life consequences. For example, many in the U.S. are frustrated and tired from their perception that people in Iraq cannot seem to “get their acts together.” A common bemoaning is that after billions of dollars the U.S. put into Iraq, it is still chaotic, corrupt, and dysfunctional. Left unsaid, however, is this is the actual workings of sovereignty, U.S. Americans have simply forgotten how they took land the wealth from Native Americans, extracted wealth from African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Asian Americans. In the movie *Highlander*, Connor MacLeod is known for saying “there can be only one.” This is IR’s motto. In sovereignty, state, and anarchy, there can be only one power, one authority, one people, one nation, one goal, one strategy, and only one survives. Anything else is wrong and inferior. What is left unsaid is that even in the U.S. today, with the protests against institutional racism and sexism, there is a struggle to see if white, hegemonic masculinity will remain the dominant culture. Sovereignty is a perpetual war to determine who will be the only one. That the struggle for sovereignty in the U.S. is invisible while a place like Iraq’s is highlighted shows how IR is also a strategic rhetoric to keep whiteness invisible.

In contrast to textualism is what Conquergood calls embodied knowledge, which is knowledge that is “located, not transcendent, engaged, not abstracted, and derived from



solidarity with, not separation from the people” (32-63). This is knowledge at the ground level, from experience, knowledge from living with people and in locations (32-46). This kind of knowledge creates space. This is knowledge that seeks change.

Conquergood’s purpose is not to produce a binary of textualism vs. embodied knowledge; rather, he argues that ethnographers need to make text embody the knowledge of the people they work with, at the ground level (58-59). This is performance ethnography, when theory works with the people not on the people, when text is written not from above, but from below.

#### 4.2.2. Performing Potential

This is what Madison calls performance of possibilities: “I see the 'possible' as suggesting a movement culminating in creation and change” (“Performance, Personal Narratives,” 277). Performance of possibilities seeks change through life by bring life to text and creating paths and spaces for all bodies:

It is the active, creative work that weaves the life of the mind with being mindful of life, of 'merging text and world,' of critically traversing the margin *and* the center, and of opening more and different paths for enlivening relations and spaces (277).

I see autoethnographic performance as a performance of possibilities—merging the scholar’s own experiences with text to produce new meanings.

Madison’s possibility is like Muñoz’s potential (*Disidentification*). For clarity sake, I will use potential instead of possibility. Disidentification argues that we need to reject dominant ideology, but we also need to recognize that because ideology is a part of our life, we cannot completely break free of it (472). For us, social change comes from creating moments when we are able to live out a life, even briefest of moments, that is

different from dominant ideology, and this momentary life is the potential for action, a guide for the future (*Disidentification*). For me, this dissertation is a momentary ability to explore a different IR, to help lead me to further way from the world that we know, and to create a different world centered on marginalized and oppressed peoples.

For Madison change occurs when “Others” are presented as meaning-makers, rather than objects of meaning (278). Instead of reasserting dominant meanings, it creates spaces for other meanings to be heard, to affect our understanding of roles and social scripts. Thus, performance of possibilities transforms audience into agents of change by implicating them in the performance—an aesthetic intersubjective link between performer and audience that involves the audience in the larger structure of oppression (281-282).

The goal is to make the audience accountable to the different subjects:

in the performance of possibilities, we understand representation as first and foremost a responsibility. We are responsible for the creation of what and who are being represented; we are representing the represented; and our "representing" most often carries with it political ramifications far beyond the reach of the performance (283).

Being accountable to what we are representing means an honesty about the world we live in: "for the performer, this is not only an endeavor to live in an individual consciousness shaped by the social world, but it is to live in that social world as well" (283). The end goal of performance of possibilities is to produce a dialogue that is always open to subversion and never closing off the conversation (284).

In terms of the dissertation, I see performance of possibilities as moving IR away from states, armies, national leaders, corporations, economies, and anarchy, to people who have been excluded from IR—queer and transgender people, gays and lesbians,

people of color, poor people, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. Instead of states and theories speaking for them, IR should be a space for different peoples to speak for themselves, to tell us what they think IR should be and what their role is.

This performance of possibility requires my recognition that what happens in the classrooms does not stay there or only comes from teacher-student interactions. Rather, the classroom is part of the larger cultural world I exist in. IR is not just in the classroom; it is in me—my life, my actions, and my identity. It is also in you, your life, and your action, and this is the important point I want to stress. The classroom is just one arena where IR plays out. Thus, IR is cultural, not in the way social constructivists theorize it, but in the way IR provides scripts for us to act, it shapes our understanding of our relationship to the world. To see IR culturally means connecting it to my own designer Asian American masculine identity and to interpret what that means to the people around me.

As a queer move, I try to perform IR as a kinesis. I explore ways to perform that will destabilize my own Asian American masculinity. Because IR is cultural, I destabilize IR by destabilizing my identity. If IR is law and theory, it is only so when I perform the scripts IR gives me. When I reject those scripts, when I write new ones to perform, then the hope is that I will be able to perform a new IR, one where the script is centered on the needs of vulnerable, marginalized, impoverished people. One where I need not participate with IR's death machine.

### 4.3. Performative Writing

Instead of a theatrical staged performance, scholars also perform through writing, which is how I will enact my autoethnographic performance. I see performance writing as a form of staged performance with words as enactment and the page as the stage. Like staged performances, performance writing seeks to provoke reflection and reflexivity through embodiment of personal experiences and emotions. In this sense, performance writing operates like staged performances through aesthetics—evoking and provoking reflection. As Pollock notes, performative writing breaks the limits of textuality, where words become evocative, playful, creative, critical, and different (80-86). That is to say, performative writing uses words to enact and embody cultural performances in a performer-audience dialogue that leads to the creation of new cultural meanings.

Pollock believes performative writing is a process of creating intersubjectivity between the writer-subject, writer's subject, and the audience-subject (86). Intersubjectivity also subjects the audience to the writer's reflexivity (Pollock 86). Methodologically, this means articulating the writer or the subject's motives and relations (Pollock 87). The goal is to avoid an empty idea of “we.” Pelias argues that performative writing evokes identification, turning “I” into “we,” by "creating a space where others might see themselves" and making the personal into political (419-420). This is how we bring the audience to live in that world, to share in its injustice and to pursue change.

Performative writing is a discontinuous breaking of text. Pelias argues that performance writing of everyday experience interrupts dominant genealogies: “Everyday experience, then, is not scholarship, but the shaping of everyday experience into telling

and moving tales can be..." (418). Performative writing creates dialogue by using everyday experience to interrupt dominant systems of knowledge. Producing dialogue is how performance writing becomes performance of possibilities, becoming accountable to the writer's subject, the audience, the writer-subject, and the structure that shapes our lives. As Pollock argues, the performative has to be consequential (95). Performativity as possibility means the performative seeks to create an "alternate normativity" through aesthetic implication of audience with writer's subject through embodiment of lived experiences (95).

#### 4.3.1. Co-performative Witnessing

In this sense, performativity is co-performative witnessing. To see everyday life as performance means we are witness to the theater of life: connecting lives, stories, and social/political context is an act of witnessing (Jones, R "Queering" 781). Both audience and performer are witnesses to the ways power operates and resistance is fostered. Witnessing means that autoethnography aims not to produce goal posts, but rather to foster possibility through the production of spaces of "in-between": "Recognize the power of having it 'both ways,' of insisting on the interaction of message and aesthetics, process and product, the individual and the social" (Jones, R "Queering" 784). For Richard Jones Jr. witnessing means seeing life as being in the "in-between" space where change and possibility exists. To see life as goal posts is to see it forever unchanged, dead, essentialized. Witnessing is to create disturbances, to make texts perform in ways that interrupts the flow of power ("Queering" 784).

Thus, one of the frustrating parts of my work here is that I do not offer a definition of what a new IR is, or its components. If it feels murky, it is by design, as I am not interested in defining the parameters of what an IR open to difference. Rather, I am here to create a moment where we can see a potential opening to a new IR, and through this potential, evoke and provoke you to consider creating your own potentially new IR.

In place of markers defining this IR I am trying to create, I rely on witnessing and the heavy ethical responsibility it carries. To witness is to be accountable to what we witness, otherwise we are just staring (Madison “Dangerous Ethnography”). When witnessing is accountable it is co-performative—the ethnographer performs with the community: “Co-performative witnessing is to live in and spend time in the borderlands of contested identities where you speak ‘with’ not ‘to’ others and where your (and their) ethnographic interlocutors are as co-temporal in the report and on stage as they were in the field” (Madison “Co-Performative” 828).

Living with Others in the borderlands means that we discard the label of danger that has been cast onto the marginalized. Instead, we recognize that the ethnographer is dangerous to them, that we witness together the dangers they/we face. Witnessing means digging deeper into the structures that put marginalized people in danger and the ethnographer’s complicity in those structures (“Dangerous Ethnography”). Thus, it is not enough to critically analyze cultural practices—it is necessary to perform with the community to enact change, which Conquergood accomplishes with performances with Hmong refugees. In “Staging Fieldwork,” Madison’s co-performative witnessing is in

both the fieldwork and the staged enactment, where ethnographer, performers and audience together share in the meaning-making process of the Trukese/Trovoxi debate.

For me this means I need to flip the danger away from those who are viewed as threats—Palestinian, Arab, Chinese, women, and other groups—to powers that defines them as threats. IR's power to define is not in textbook alone, it is embodied in my performances, in my identity. Thus, to flip the threat away from the two persons I communicate with in these cases, to live with them in my borderlands, to co-witness with them, I must question my own identity. IR is war, death, and anarchy only when I refuse to change my designer Asian American masculinity. I have to recognize the danger I bring to students and marginalized groups through my teaching and my cultural performances. I also recognize the danger that IR brings to many peoples all over the world. My ethnographic performance aims to de-center IR from a rational, white, masculine academia; instead, I aim to center it on marginalized communities.

#### **4.4. Ethical Performances**

Change then requires an ethics that values other voices. Too often, when we speak, we end up speaking for Others (Alcoff). Whether this is intentional or not is irrelevant. We speak for Others even when we are only speaking about them. Ethical communication that values voices of Others recognizes this dilemma and holds itself accountable to them, meaning we must always be mindful of the consequences of our speech on those who are marginalized and oppressed (Alcoff).

If social change comes from creating spaces for diverse voices to interrupt dominant interpretations, then performance needs to be accountable to what it says about

Others:

The performance paradigm privileges particular, participatory, dynamic, intimate, precarious, embodied experience grounded in historical process, contingency, and ideology. Another way of saying it is that performance-centered research takes as both its subject matter and method the experiencing body situated in time, place, and history. The performance paradigm insists on face-to-face encounters instead of abstractions and reductions (Conquergood 81-103).

This opens performance up to become a dialogue, an ethical move that seeks to bring differences into a dialogue, where the scholar is open to questions and challenges, and is ready to learn and unlearn (65-80). The scholar keeps the conversation open and ongoing, becoming collaborators/partners/equals with Others: “Coevalness is the experience of contemporality, the recognition of actively sharing the same time, the acknowledgement of others as contemporaries” (Conquergood 82-87; see also Madison *Critical Ethnography* 179-189). Dialogical performance is “generative and embodied reciprocity” (Madison “Dialogical Performative” 320), a necessary component of creating a space where other voices can come in and challenge dominant knowledge. Without such challenge, we would be left with no alternatives.

To avoid defining the Palestinian student and the woman Chinese graduate student, I take great care to not attribute motives to their acts. One of the problems of performing from recollection is that I can’t actually engage in dialogue. Yet, I do not imagine what they will say. Since the goal of dialogical performance is to open the self to others, even though I cannot speak directly to them, I can still open myself up to their



actions and being. I interrogate my interactions with them to draw out meanings of my complicity, using theories to justify my interpretations, and I ask questions of them to always be mindful to invite them into the conversation.

Social change can only occur then through ethical performances. Langellier argues we need to resist a binary of the cynic (who silences the performances of Others because of the belief that such performances are inauthentic) and the zealot (who misrepresents the Other because the performer believes she knows the Others better than they know themselves) by including the Others as subject and audience: "*a performance of possibilities...take the stand that performance matters because it does something in the world (245-277)*. And what it 'does' for the audience, the Subjects, and ourselves must be driven by a thoughtful critique of our assumptions and purpose" (Madison "Performance, Personal Narratives" 278). What this means for autoethnographic performance then is that body and experience open up a narrative of alternative possibilities, re-articulated identities, and a refusal to remain silent (Adams; S. Jones; Spry). Just because the site of research is the self does not mean there is no dialogue. Reflexivity means I need to dialogically engage culture and oppression, as Jones says: "I struggle to resist this bracketing off, because I am the field" ("Putting Privilege" 123). Examining IR through my own experiences means I do not excuse myself for my complicity, but link it to the larger culture and hold myself accountable to the people my performances hurt. To be ethical is a constant search: I must constantly question my actions, question my complicity, and never stop trying to be more ethical.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

Performance autoethnography is a method that lets me critique and destabilize IR and my own identity. It forces me to interrogate my own actions to draw out the ways I am complicit in IR's oppression and to imagine potential acts of difference that can create an IR centered on the needs of marginalized and oppressed peoples. Rather than a staged performance, I enact written performance autoethnography, evoking and provoking reader's reactions.

Performance autoethnography carries an ethical burden. I need to make my performance valuable and impactful (Pollock), I need to be reflexive to remain ethical and to open my performance to other voices (Jones). The ethics carries over to those I perform with, even though this is a performance through memory, I am still bound to treat my co-performers as witnesses (Madison) and to engage them and the audience dialogically (Conquergood). Ultimately, writing a performance autoethnography forces me to consider ethics as a primary element of my IR. The world I live in is already unethical—no change can come from that. Only through an ethical engagement can I change the world around me.

## CHAPTER 5: DEAR STUDENT LETTER

One of my favorite lines from *Aliens* is when Sgt. Apone proudly proclaims:

“Another glorious day in the corps! A day in the Marine Corps is like a day on the farm! Every meal is a banquet, every paycheck a fortune, every formation a parade. I love the Corps!” On those days when students seem unmotivated and ask why I never cancel classes, I reply: “I love teaching! Every day I teach is like a day on the farm!”

But, sometimes, teaching is hurting and, in this chapter, I recall a moment when I failed a student. IR silences voices. IR means I wear textualism (Conquergood). It is my designer Asian American male identity (Scott). It got me into graduate school, lets me pass through the halls of academia. But, this identity meant I also had to speak for another, because IR speaks for others (Alcoff). In this chapter, I examine my performance as a graduate teaching assistant who participated in silencing a Palestinian student’s complaints about how the course textbook and the course professor described Palestinian President Arafat and Palestinians in general as “choosing” violence against Israel. Drawing insight from Dwight Conquergood and Linda Alcoff, I interrogate my silencing of this student through what I call a grand theorist’s voice. I show how performing IR meant centering all knowledge, even those that are attributed to others, around white, hegemonic masculinity’s perspectives. When I put on textualism, I put on white,

hegemonic masculinity and I speak for others. In this way, I show how IR, and even academia, produces homo sacer (Agamben).

In this chapter, I write an apology letter to that student, in recognition of the pain I caused and my role as part of a white, hegemonic masculine system that committed me to speak from the position of an academic theorist, defining him in ways that served the theory. This is what I call a grand theorist voice, which I developed from Conquergood's four "ethical pitfalls:" the custodian's rip-off, the enthusiast's infatuation, the curator's exhibitionism, and the skeptic's cop-out (65-80). The custodian's rip-off is cultural appropriation, where ethnographers are interested in items, speech, and acts they can take from a culture as materials to use in their own research (70-71). The enthusiast's infatuation is a quick and shallow love for a culture, focusing only on the things that ethnographers find similar to their own culture without acknowledging differences; instead, glossing over them to show how "we are all alike" (71-72). The curator's exhibitionism is the opposite of the enthusiast's infatuation, focusing too much on differences for the purpose of exoticizing or de-humanizing, to make a show, to "astonish" the audience, rather than understand a culture (73). This is often for the purpose of demonstrating the inferiority of another culture and the superiority of the curator's own culture. If we focus even more on difference, to the point when it prevents communication and understanding, then we reach the skeptic's cop-out (73-75). This is the voice of those who believe others are so different that we cannot put ourselves in their shoes, that humans can never transcend our differences. It is no surprise that

Conquergood calls this the most “morally reprehensible” voice for it refuses to engage others.

Though Conquergood’s warning is for ethnographers and IR is no ethnography, I think his pitfalls apply to anyone who speaks from the voice of the center, like myself. One does not need to be an ethnographer to do ethnography. Take for instance this picture:



I doubt the owners and operators of Navajo Express Inc. are ethnographers, or care for ethnography. But, it seems really hard to argue that there is no ethnography going on here. As atrocious as the picture is, we need to consider the possibility that speaking from the center means doing ethnography. Take a look at the headband, braids, feather at the back, or necklaces being used rhetorically and culturally for profit. Take a look at the blue eyes, lighter skin tone, and facial features like her lips and nose. Maybe this is why my designer identity works: they don’t need to do ethnography on me. I speak like the center, act like the center, and oppress like the center. I am trying to be white.

### **5.1. Prologue: I Wear Textualism**

In the movie *American Psycho*, Patrick Bateman, the main character, details his rigorous morning routine. Carefully, he applies scrubs, moisturizers, and skin protectors

in order. As he peels away one mask, he reveals another, a fresh, smooth, shiny face. But, there is only an illusion of Patrick Bateman.

Am I too an illusion? I wear textualism for IR. In the morning, I use a deep pore positivism. In the shower I use a water-activated gel paradigm, then a honey-almond body parsimony, and on the face an exfoliating gel objectivity. Then, I apply an herb-mint facial rationality, which I leave on for ten minutes while I prepare the rest of my routine. I always use an aftershave lotion with no context, because context makes me look unscientific. Then a-morality, then a disembodied, textualism balm followed by a final moisturizing, protective  $f(x)=ax+b$ .

There is an idea of Charles LuLevitt, some kind of abstraction. I am not supposed to have a real me, only an entity, something illusory, something that doesn't require you to do ethnography. And, although I can hide my Asian skin and you can shake my hand and feel flesh gripping yours, and maybe you can even sense our lifestyles are probably comparable, I simply am dressing white.

On my application letter I wrote of how much I loved theories, mathematical formulations of international politics, and realism vs. liberalism. Dressing my letter in textualism got me into graduate school. Textualism made me a star in the department. I remember being embarrassed when newer graduate students kept visiting my desk to ask to see my first-year paper. They were told to model theirs after mine. Were they all surprised that someone in his first year could attempt a grand unifying theory of IR, joining neorealism, neoliberalism, and social constructivism together?

Faculties talked about me, graduate students talked about me, undergraduates talked about me. “Charles! I’m so jealous!” A fellow graduate student exclaimed as I stare bewildered at him. “When you walk by I heard these girls go ‘ooh’ and ‘aaah.’ You’re like a rock star to them. I want my students to ooh and aaah when I walk by.” I strut through the halls of academia with my chest out, taking large strides. I’m a man! With textualism on I am a stud academic. With textualism on, I can hide my yellow on the outside.

Textualism is my designer identity, and it works because it is authentic (Scott; Dubrofsky and Ryalls). I do not pretend to try to dress white; I just dress white. No everyone can dress white, and it helps to be yellow on the outside. Throughout high school and college I was always asked to help with math and science, even though I wasn’t particularly good with them. I was a member of the computer club even though I didn’t care for computer programming or video games. This is just what it means to be a model minority, to be the hardworking Asian behind the scene. It makes it easier to be seen as someone who is textual, who wears textualism naturally. When I wear textualism, you see it, you instantly recognize the brand, and you accept me in it. It’s just natural for me to be textual, to talk equations, theories, variables, taxonomy. I was made for this role.

Wearing textualism also means that I must see the world as theories do, as white, hegemonic masculine does. I have no choice in this matter. Textualism blinds me to everything that does not serve its needs. This is what it means to wear a designer identity. My identity as an Asian American male is determined by what others consider Asian

American male (Eguchi and Starosta). This is my designer identity: it speaks to what dominant culture expects of me, wants me to be. I am chic and fashionable because I perform what whiteness expects, what IR expects, what faculties expect, and what students expect.

## **5.2. Act I: Intro to IR and Rational Choice**

But, you, student, knew the world differently, saw it differently from what the textbook and theorist said, didn't you? That is why you are so upset. That is why you need to be silenced. I hear Morpheus lecturing Neo:

when you're inside, you look around, what do you see? Businessmen, teachers, lawyers, carpenters. The very minds of the people we are trying to save. But until we do, these people are still a part of that system and that makes them our enemy.

I didn't know it then, but Morpheus was talking about me. I was just too plugged to know. Inert, and hopelessly dependent on textualism and white, hegemonic masculinity, I protected the system. Morpheus was looking at me when he was warning Neo, but I was too blind to see.

I remember that semester so clearly. I was a teaching assistant in introduction to international relations. He was the course professor, a new hotshot statistical hire from another university. I remember that I was given the privilege to be the first to work with him, chosen amongst all the graduate students in the department. But, did he see my jaw drop? My teeth press against each other? Are my face muscles about to explode? "Don't



finch, don't move my face." I tried to keep an open mind about the course, but it was hard when the first words out of his mouth were:

"I hate undergraduates!"

Thus, began my new semester.

"Are you serious?" I couldn't believe that we were going to use Bruce Bueno de Mesquita's textbook: *Principles of International Politics: People's Power, Preferences, and Perception* (2000). This was a different textbook than what I worked with before. Most textbooks offered students a sampling of various theories and approaches they can try out and choose. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita wrote a book selling his theory to freshmen, to you, to the other students. He sells his theory to policy makers, Ted talks, business groups, anyone he can. I didn't want his academic entrepreneurship in my classroom. I didn't want it near you or your classmates. Maybe I was wrong, maybe I shouldn't have tried to shield you from the muck of academia, holding to some nostalgia about you, your classmates, and my role as a teacher, as someone who helps students choose, not someone who imposes a theory. But, I was plugged in, dependent on the system, so I taught his textbook to you.

Bueno de Mesquita's rational choice theory says that all leaders act and think alike. They all choose foreign policies based on which option gives them the most personal benefits. The idea is called expected utility, which argues that leaders should prefer the choice that leads to the greatest utility (a practice known as utility maximization) (42). Bueno de Mesquita defines greatest utility as the option that leaders

believe is most likely to help them stay in power. Thus, the number one goal of any leader is to stay in power.

Choice is an equation:  $EU = p_1(b_1 - c_1) + p_2(b_2 - c_2) + \dots + p_x(b_x - c_x)$ .

Knowledge is decoding: EU = expected utility; p = probability of success;

b = benefits; c = costs.

Teaching is clarifying: The equation reads expected utility is the sum of all probability of each option multiplied by the benefits of each option minus the cost of each option.

I have no option.

Rinse, repeat;

rinse, repeat.

Teaching is no option.

Learning is no option.

Rinse, repeat;

rinse, repeat.

We do not make choices;

choices make us.

No responsibilities, no morals,

no options.

Not all choices have the same probability of success, benefits, or costs. It is therefore possible to choose an option with a lower probability of success that offers

greater reward over another option that has higher probability of success with lower rewards. For instance, suppose I have two choices, one has a 30% chance of success and pays \$10, the other has a 60% chance of success but only pays \$4. So, let's calculate them up:  $p_1(b_1 - c_1) = 0.30(\$10) = \$3$ , and  $p_2(b_2 - c_2) = 0.60(\$2.4) = \$2.4$ . In this instance, we should all choose the first option, even though it has a lower probability of success, because it gives us more benefits. IR becomes economics. We don't make choices; they make us. Realism, neorealism, neoliberalism, they all rely on rationality. Me, you, him, us, IR says we all live in an economic world. Our choices are not our own. Numbers decide who we are.

Though the textbook says Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, I read *Wealth of Nation*, I hear Adam Smith: "By pursuing our own *expected utility*, we frequently promote that of the society more effectually than when we really intend to promote it" (22).<sup>20</sup> IR is a capitalistic occupation (Trujillo), a hegemonic masculine pursuit of personal gains. If we do not obey rational choice, we are only hurting our world and us. Indeed, so powerful is the rational impulse that we see expected utility all around us. For example, when departments recruit undergraduates to their major, they use expected utility (projection of jobs and earnings) instead of ethical, personal, or spiritual enlightenment. We see expected utility in insurance policies, political campaigns, where to live, and a host of other life issues. Expected utility has become and normal way of understanding our

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<sup>20</sup> The original text says: "By pursuing our own interests, we frequently promote that of the society more effectually than when we really intend to promote it." I replaced interests with expected utility.

world. Ideology says we need to pursue self-interests, the aggregate of selfishness = the general good. Adam Smith is an IR scholar.

IR means dressing in textualism, which means I see things according to rationality and rational choice theory. It also means, as I will perform later on, speaking from text and theory, and speaking for others from text and theory. Everyone is an equation. Every desire, every fear, every hope is a probability, a benefit, a cost, and you are a variable.

You say you are not rational?

But, you are, according to theory.

You say you didn't choose that because of expected utility?

But, you did, according to theory.

Do you still not see? You are just numbers, percentages, sums, products, calculations...nothing you say matters except according to theory. You have no choice.

### **5.3. Act II: Dear Student: Resistance is Futile**

*Dear student,*

*I wish you had the chance to read this article, "Mentoring and Love: An Open Letter," by Dr. Bernadette Calafell, so you can see what a caring, compassionate teacher looks like. You can see how far I failed you by seeing how high she climbed in creating a homeplace—a space of love, nurture, and caring for people of color created through acts of kindness, compassion, and love (430-431). I should have given you a safe space, to help you, to hear you, and to see you.*

Do you know what I learned from all of my time in IR? I learned that there is no place in the academy for love. There is only theory, concepts, definitions, experiments, validations, replications, objectivity, but no love.

All of IR is a prison.

A prisoner we cannot trust. A prison we cannot hope.

Why wasn't it called fluffy bunny dilemma?

A name has power, words have meaning  
prisoners are scary.

IR is fear. There is no hope.

I want to bury my head as I read Calafell's article. I want to be so frustrated that I will choke and suffocate. Have you ever felt as if you are shouting to the end of your lungs, but no one can hear you? I wanted that. I deserved that. I remember how every word she wrote ripped at me. I have read the great philosophers: Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Hume, Habermas, Machiavelli, Foucault, Marx, Hegel, Nietzsche, Mill, Arendt, and Sartre. I have read the great IR theorists: Waltz, Morgenthau, Walt, Keohane, Carr, Bull, Nye, Krasner, Wendt, Mearsheimer, and was betrayed. There is no love in their words.

Heart empty

Soul barren,

A social scientist is broken.

Before me is beauty, of broken body, beaten spirit, humiliated and objectified sexuality, a scholar chewed up, chewed on, spitted out. But, a body saved through loving

for and loving from. I can never finish the article in one read. It's not easy staring at how hollow everything you have been taught, trained for is. Calafell put love into her academics. How is this possible? Where did it come from?

I was trained to be objective, to be rational, to be dispassionate. A good social scientist must never be swayed by emotions. Trust my judgment in facts, obligations, structures, and research. Teaching is a job, students were kept at arms' length, or they'll compromise grading. These lessons I learned betrays. And, I betrayed you. I am dispassionate, your utterances I cannot comprehend.

Without compassion,  
words make no noise.

Without kindness,  
ears hear no sound.

So, I put words where your sound should be, spoke when your mouth moved.

This is my designer identity.

*Maybe this will never mean anything, seeing as it's been such a long time, but I am sorry. I don't know if you still remember that time when you came to me angry and upset about how the professor's lecture made it sound like Arafat and the Palestinians chose terrorism because it gave them greater utility. I listened to your complaints, and shared with you my concerns about the lecture. I never liked Rational Choice Theory, or Bruce Bueno de Mesquita's rational research, and I was always very upset about the choice to use this textbook for the introductory course to International Relations.*

My heart sank. I tried to unfurl my eyebrows. “Act natural, act cool, it’s not my class, it’s not for me to complain about textbooks and teaching methods.” I nod when he looks at me, smile when he’s talking to me. His lips move, but I only hear screaming. “What the hell is going on?” I hope no one can hear the pounding in my head. I wipe my hands on my pants, but they can’t seem to dry. “What am I going to do with this semester? How am I going to teach?” And then I catch him say we will be using Bruce Bueno de Mesquita’s textbook.

I feel myself changing. My left arm twists and grind, replaced by rational choice theory. My right eye melts away to reveal expected utility. An armor of probability and tubes of costs and benefits cover me, coursing into and out from my body. I am a drone; I serve the theory, the theorist, the professor, the course, the department, and IR. I speak with one, singular voice. I am a canon fodder. I am assimilated, and I will assimilate. My voice drowns out.

EU = you

p, b, c is all I see

your choice is not your own

you will be assimilated.

I am the Borg.

Resistance is futile.

We will add your biological and technical

distinctiveness to our own.

Your culture will adapt to

service us.

We are the Borg.

The Borg is a species of techno-organic humanoid life from the *Star Trek* universe. They are monsters and monsters often represent society's anxieties and fears (Calafell *Monstrosity*; "Monstrous"; Cohen; Phillips *Dark Directions* and *Projected Fears*; Poole). The Borg represents a social fear of technology/rationality destroying our sense of individuality. They are ants in metal. Monsters are useful analytical devices as they are the limits of social norms, indicating the need to discipline and control potentialities that challenges cultural normativity; thus, they are the liminal creatures that point us to futures that will confront us or liberates us (Calafell *Monstrosity*; "Monstrous"; Cohen; Phillips *Dark Directions* and *Projected Fears*; Poole). Monsters transgress borders (Calafell *Monstrosity*; "Monstrous"; Cohen). Calafell taught me that monsterizing moments are moments when individuals who are different experience oppression and resistance, transforming in response to discrimination, marginalization, and normative assaults, but also to refuse to be "tamed" (*Monstrosity* 9-31; "Monstrous"). They can be considered acts of transgressions, sometimes forced to transgress, sometimes, purposeful acts of transgression (Foust).

The Borg assimilates everything and everyone they find useful. I function to assimilate, you into IR, into our—white, hegemonic masculine—way of knowing the world. This is in spite of my disdain for rational choice theory. I have taught it before, but always as an option along with neorealism, neoliberalism, Marxism, and social constructivism, so students can choose which theory they want to follow. Isn't teaching



about the freedom to choose? This time, there is no choice. Resistance is futile, for both you and me. I feel cold metal and rationalism wrapping around me. I am fading. I can only teach you and them that IR is rational choice theory, no other theories, no other choices. My mind slips away and I am no longer a teacher.

I am becoming Borg.

You will be rational, resistance is futile.

You will not expand your mind, I will narrow it.

You will not think about the theories of IR, it thinks for you.

Then you will go out and assimilate others.

We are the Borg.

Why am I transforming? Textualism is my brand, and I wear it with style. So why should I not assimilate my student? I wonder if I even have a right to refuse. I have never been culturally aware, purposely staying away from any form of cultural studies in case they make my yellow on the outside stands out. I never wanted to be culturally aware growing up, so can I even scream when the wolf is here? I tell myself: "Stop being a whiny little ass! Man up!" I am thrown back to my graduate student orientation: "Being a T.A. is a privilege, not a right." I needed this job. It covered my tuition, gave me the chance to teach students. Things could have been worse.

But, graduate school had shattered my idealism from the first semester, when a fully tenured male faculty used me as a pawn in his harassment of a female lecturer, eventually driving her out of the department. Forcing rational choice theory on my students, however, was particularly bitter and hard to take. I guess even for someone like

me, someone who wears textualism so naturally, some texts are just too much to take. It's one thing for me to dress in text, it's another to force that text onto others. Resistance is futile. At the end of the day,

we are the Borg.

#### **5.4. Act III: Dear Student: What is I without R?**

*I remember talking to the professor after your meeting with him. I remember hearing him say how he can't please everyone and kind of joked his way around your complaints. Most of all, I remember how he said he didn't agree with you anyways and that you were wrong. From the way he acted to the way he talked and joked, I can tell that while he might have acted professional in taking in your complaints, he was patronizing you, and never took your position seriously. I felt really sad for you. You were insulted behind your back by the very people who should be thinking about your wellbeing.*

Because I wear textualism I caused you pain. Textualism blinds me to context. I had to stab my eyes out, to not see race, to not see gender, to not see sexuality, to not see difference, to not see oppression, to not see you. I saw that you had a darker complexion, but you were just another IR student. I decontextualized you (Conquergood). That is how textualism looks so good to/on me.

I became more irritated teaching rational choice theory. My stomach knots every time I planned my class lecture and activities. "I can't believe I'm teaching this stuff!" I grew up in the Cold War, studied peace and justice, and worked for a non-profit that helped removed landmines from post-war countries. IR was a lot of things to me, though

I gave them up to get into graduate school. But, in rational choice theory, I saw the death of IR:

- 1) Leaders are rational decision-makers who are motivated to stay in power (Bueno de Mesquita 2). The choices can be irrational, say for instance the decision to commit genocide. It is the process of choosing that is rational. Leaders are able to make transitive ordering of options and choose the one that is most likely to keep them in power, even if that option is irrational (241-247).
- 2) Diplomacy is a two-level game involving both domestic and international politics (Moravcsik; Putnam). Rational choice, however, takes this further and more cynically, arguing leaders make foreign policy decisions based on their effects on domestic politics, because domestic, not international, politics determine a leader's staying power (Bueno de Mesquita 2).
- 3) Thus, leaders choose foreign policies strategically to influence domestic politics and protect their hold on power (2).

Personal gains, benefits, utility, power...this is I without the R. No love, no hate, no pain, no joy, no peace. Welcome to introduction to international choice and preferences.

I remember that lecture when he drew a chart with arrows showing President Arafat "chose" to reject peace with Israel and, instead, "chose" violence because it gave him greater utility. When you came to me, I didn't know what to say to you, so I referred you to him, to see if there's anything he can do for you.

Standard operating procedure? Check!

Good teacher practice? Check!

Justice, self-determination, equality, right-of-return, were these things important to you? But, didn't you see? The arrows explained why Arafat "chose" war. The theory was validated. The arrows spoke, end of discussion. President Arafat, a Middle-Eastern person, a non-white other from a different part of the world, "chose" violence as predicted. Justice, self-determination, equality, right-of-return? Just more remainders that needs balancing. Irrelevant and irrational; the theory spoke:

your culture will adapt to service us.

Every decision made by any leader is for utility. Hope, hurt, joy, sadness, and pain, all mattered no more. Hatred, genocide, morals, and ethics, all mattered no more. The bodies, the skulls, the corpses, and the rivers of blood, all mattered no more. There is no more accountability, for all is utility. When the rationality of choosing genocide is more relevant than the irrationality of genocide, are we still human? IR is the Borg. I serve the collective. If you do not service us, you will die. If we are not human, can we still ask for justice when no one has agency, when we are all chosen by utility? Rational choice theory kills IR.

#### **5.5. Act IV: Dear Student: IR is a Museum**

I without R is a place without passion, compassion, a place where violence is a choice, and a necessity. The arrows made you a threat.

In the frontier

violence is political profit

Wild lands need

wild beasts

Frontiersman protects

when there are savages to kill.

A theory proven, universalized through other cultures. An Other is constructed—violent, unreasonable. A savage must be tamed. Through our actions we made you the irrational, unreasonable other. Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, writing about their experience at the Buffalo Bill Museum, noted how, without contexts, the images of Native American violence suggested that this was the nature of the West, of Native Americans; yet, with context we remember that Native Americans were defending their homes against white, settler invaders. This is the ill effect of the curator's exhibitionism, which shows others possessing different morals than us (in that they are depicted as being less moral) (Conquergood 75).

Although I was opposed to rational choice theory, I/IR only had abstract notions of life, death, hope, joy, and pain in the world. Wearing textualism meant killing off passion, so I have no compassion. But, you were real, flesh, concrete. I failed to hear you, so I sent you to him. I was already assimilating you. I placed you in a museum, stripped you of context, leaving you open to be molded by rational choice theory.

President Arafat, Palestinians, and you had to be preserved as Palestinians, as the other who can act as an example of how "all" people behave according to rational choice theory. This is the enthusiast's infatuation, where others are shown to be like us (those speaking from the center) and think like us despite your differences (Conquergood 71). The grand theorist voice is an extreme form of detachment, a dispassionate use/abuse of difference to superficially highlight how different cultures all behave according to theory.

This is also known as academic exploitation.

Palestinians were “displayed” as savages, so that we can continue to shun you, attack you, kill you, so that we can continue to be civilized frontiersman forced to defend ourselves. You are a homo sacer

according to theory.

*Even to this day, that feeling of unease never left. I still feel that something wrong happened. Now, years afterwards, and having learned more, I am better able to put my unease into words. I would like to say now that I am sorry I was ignorant of the Palestinian struggle for peace and a homeland, I was ignorant of your feelings and unable to fully empathize with you, and I failed as a teacher. Did I teach you anything except how stupid international relations was, how stupid I was? Did you learn anything besides how Palestinians are stereotyped/constructed as violent savages, or how white, hegemonic masculinity in the U.S. saw the world? Both of which I'm sure you didn't need me to tell you. For what I did, I can't seem to say enough, but can't find words to say. The only thing I can find to say is I'm sorry.*

When I assimilate you, I am using a grand theorist's voice. This voice recognizes something distinct about others, and need to preserve the distinctiveness so that they can glorify his theory.

Ethnocentrism is the tyranny of Western aesthetics. An Indian mask in an American museum is transposed into an alien aesthetic system where what is missing is the presence of power invoked through performance ritual. It

has become a conquered thing, a dead “thing” separated from nature and, therefore, its power (Anzaldúa, 90).

Textbook/theory becomes a museum.

Western aesthetics is

arrows, numbers, letters, symbols.

Transposed onto pages

you were

defined, measured, abstracted

you were

without your performance ritual

you were

spoken for.

You left angry and frustrated

did we leave you a “conquered” thing?

a “dead” thing?

I am he who brings death to difference.

I am textualism.

And, I am sorry.

To say a theory has universal appeal requires the presence of others. Nothing can be universal without someone different. Placed inside a theory, a textbook, others are without context, without their performance ritual. Stripped naked before power, the grand

theorist molds, distorts, contorts, disfigure, deface, spoil, scour, and scar others until they fit his theories, his vision. All hail the glory of the grand theorist.

President Arafat “chose” violence and rejected peace because it gave him the greatest utility, says the theorist. Leaders “choose” policies that maximize domestic support, so Palestinians must support violence, says the grand theorist. The grand theorist makes savages of others—a frontiersman needs to kill—and I sustain white, hegemonic masculinity.

### **3.6. Epilogue**

I dress in textualism because text is how I am supposed to be. It means going to graduate school, getting to teach, feeling really smart, being accepted as American. But, wearing textualism also means I must also center white, hegemonic masculinity. Teaching in my designer Asian American masculine identity also means teaching from a racist, sexist, and other oppressive positions. In this performance, I looked into the ways my designer identity meant silencing a Palestinian student, replacing his voice with rational choice theory, a grand theorist’s voice that reinforced the dominance of a white, hegemonic masculine way of knowing IR. I participated in the construction of a Palestinian student as an Other. By “othering” the Palestinian student, I reinforced the image of myself as U.S. American, and secure my place in this country. My designer identity works when I sacrifice others.

Anzaldúa, however, leads me to reconsider my role as an academic:

I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existence. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent’s tongue—my



woman's voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence (81).

I no longer want to shame you; I want to give you your voice. What can I do, what can IR do, to give students, to give others their voices? For most of my academic life, I was taught to be a theorist, a researcher, a validator, and a replicator of theories. Yet, being those things also meant silencing other voices and then speaking for them. It wasn't culture, it wasn't performance, and it wasn't the need to fight oppression that led me to graduate school. Although I cared deeply for these things, and the people of this world—refugees, hungry people, poor people, injured victims of wars and violence, to name just a few—it was  $x$  that I was looking for.  $f(x)=ax+b$  was my holy grail. I wanted to save the world, but I did not want to get dirty in it. I was going to save the world by being above it, distanced from it. Yet, the more I studied IR, the further I got from saving it. The more it didn't make sense to me. I began to feel like I wasn't helping anyone at all, just theories and theorists. Then, one day I couldn't do IR anymore.

past guilt                      Future Hope  
you left angry  
that was the last              I saw of you  
what paths did you    *choose?*

PD    blinds              imprisons              traps              me

I like to think you are *Free*

No prison for your mind

you left angry

did you reject our textual explanations?

did you hold on to your knowledge?

did you *reject assimilation?*

I don't remember anything about you after that

dust to the wind you vanished except for that

moment

because you left angry

I am forever grateful

Thank You.

Alcoff expresses the problems with my textual understanding of the world: "As philosophers and social theorists we are authorized by virtue of our academic positions to develop theories that express and encompass the ideas, needs, and goals of others. However, we must begin to ask ourselves whether this is a legitimate authority" (7).

Textbook authorizes

An edifice of truth

silencing voices.

It's clear to me now that no such authority exists. Instead of authority, we must seek permission (Conquergood). If, however, someone feels the need for such an authority, then it can only exist in reflexivity (Alcoff; Calafell "(I)dentities"; Conquergood, 98-102; Madison *Critical Ethnography* and "Performance Studies"; Jones). Alcoff clarifies: it is not enough to interrogate one's reason for wanting to speak for others, and still not enough to question the location one speaks from, the location others hear from, and the

power/social inequality involved; to be truly ethical, we must hold ourselves accountable by considering the effects of our speech and where it will lead to (24-27). We must be sensitive in our speech to the past, the present, and the future.

So, how does someone like myself, a person privileged with access to text, who speaks from the center, hold myself accountable? Conquergood tells me that I must learn to speak with a dialogical voice (75-78). To do this, I will end where I started, with the article that Calafell wrote to/for her students of color (“Mentoring”). It was opposite of everything I learned: it was personal, subjective, and emotional. Every word of love she expressed was sharper than knives, cutting deeper into my rational shell. Every expression of compassion a healing touch, a warm embrace. Yet, as Alcoff and Conquergood suggests, holding myself accountable means I must consider the effects of my speech, which means I need to make sure everyone I speak with and about are cared for, safe, and given their power to speak. Instead of a grand theorist’s voice, I need to develop a voice that will leave those I speak with as co-performers (Madison “Dialogic Performance”), to leave them in a position where others can love them. I have an obligation to ensure that I leave the persons I speak to more loved at the end than when we started.

But, what is love without context? Theory and texts should not be museums, where oppressed and vulnerable people are stripped of power, ready to be spoken for. I take inspiration from Conquergood, who was able to show, by preserving their communication contexts, gangs of Chicago as humans trying to survive in a society that fears them, hates them, neglects, them, and attacks them, and understand it is not the

people that is the problem, but the social, political, and economic structures that are wrong (224-263).

If anyone is foolish enough to ask for my thoughts, I will ask them to take insights from Alcoff, Anzaldúa, Calafell, Conquergood, and Madison, and center their theories on people who need to be loved the most. Alcoff and Conquergood for others, Anzaldúa for Mestiza, Calafell for students and people of difference, and Madison for Black and oppressed voices. If we are able to rethink IR with the people who need love, or even the people we love, then we can begin to rethink of IR as an invitation to voices other than theorists in ivory towers and comfortable armchairs, as an invitation to voices from people who have been hurt by wars, poverty, slavery, exploitation, ethnic cleansing, colonialism, and social oppression. IR should be about giving contexts back to oppressed bodies so they can have the power to speak for their needs, so they can have the power to give us their ideas and knowledge, and to demand for equality and justice. If we can put R back into IR, then maybe, just maybe we can stop studying war and violence and make IR the beginning of making peace.

*A time to gain, a time to lose*

*A time to rend, a time to sew*

*A time for love, a time for hate*

*A time for peace, I swear it's not too late<sup>21</sup>*

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<sup>21</sup> From the song *Turn! Turn! Turn!* by the Byrds.

## CHAPTER 6: PRODUCING HOMO SACER

Choo Choo!

I've been working on the railroad

All the live long day...

Man, it's hot today!

Swing my pick ax up and rest if on my shoulder.

Thumb up! Flash a big smile, cheek to cheek.

I'm proud to be an Asian American!

All of my life friends, family, and teachers, have told me I should be proud of being an Asian American. After all, we built the railroad!

There is no thrill in me.

Our greatest accomplishment as a people, our contribution to the great U.S.

American enterprise...

Excuse me if I don't feel any pride.

Chinese immigrants were to first ones the U.S government recruited to provide cheap labor for the railroad corporations. They completed most of the central pacific rails. Asian American immigration has been central to the development of American capitalism (Lowe). But, it can also be argued that U.S. capitalism has been connected to East Asia even longer, when, in 1854, Commodore Perry forced the Japanese government

to sign the Kanagawa Convention, opening its economy up to the U.S. and European interests, and, in 1899, President Theodore Roosevelt's involvement in the international invasion of China to put down the Chinese uprising against European colonial carving and, same year, the Open Door Policy pushing for U.S. trading access to all parts of China, especially those controlled by European states and Japan. Asia inside and outside of the U.S. has been an important part of the search for surplus capital.

However, anti-Chinese racism led to laws ending Chinese immigration and subsequent racial riots attacking Chinese immigrants forced many to leave the U.S. Short of cheap labor, the U.S. and Japanese government struck an agreement to import Japanese workers to complete the railroad at the beginning of the 1900s.

Would they still build it if they only knew

40 years later

it would ship other Japanese immigrants

their children

their friends and family

to concentration camps all over the West?

The camps remain the borderlands of my soul.

### **6.1. Prologue: Sovereignty is Camps**

Spread across the Western U.S., west of the Mississippi River, are the remains of internment camps where from 1942 to 1946, 120,700 Japanese Americans were imprisoned (qtd. LuLevitt, Calafell). Little remains of the camps.

Washed away by dust and time

Spirit footholds on scarred lands

Memories lost, but never forgotten...

Sadly, those camps still remain within me and live on in our politics. I am far removed from the camps. I was born in 1974, long after the camps closed, in a faraway island called Taiwan. I am part Chinese and part Japanese, but I am not related to those who were imprisoned. Yet, the camps live on in me.

“The body remembers and the body feels the pain and trauma inflicted upon our people”

–Calafell, 85.

To be Asian American is to feel the pain and trauma inflicted upon us. To be Asian America is not the pride of railroads, pick axes, labor gangs; it is the round-ups, discriminations, hate, and violence inflicted upon us. It is the riots that kill us and drive us away (LuLevitt and Calafell 56). It is the way whiteness disciplines us, and the ways we resist it, redefining who we are. Lowe reminds me that Asian American immigration is centrally tied to U.S. capitalism, and disciplining Asian bodies switch from domesticating us as the model minority to attacking us as the yellow peril when it suits whiteness (*Immigrant Acts*). My body always remembers the pain inflicted from disciplining.

The camps are more than just prisons.

Barbed wires and guard towers are borders.

Boundary between the U.S. and a foreign land.

The yellow peril is in the camps.

The model minority is in the U.S.

I live in fear of deportation.<sup>22</sup>

“Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary”

–Anzaldúa, 25.

It is no surprise then that in the post 9-11 world, the camps have been brought back into discourse as a “solution” to Muslim-Americans. The camps exist and will continue to exist as a means to identifying, punishing, and segregating those deemed as threats, those who are seen as not belonging to U.S. America. The camps are a part of sovereignty: they denote a foreign land where the regular rules do not apply, where sovereignty is free to exert its power without limit. This is why, for example, the U.S. placed prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where it was possible to torture them. This is why the Nazis created camps to exterminate Jews. This is why Japanese Americans were placed in camps, to be treated as foreign enemies. The camps quarantine those deemed to be on the wrong side of the border.

It is not wrong that the borders are within the U.S. As alluded to, a borderland is not just some designated physical space, like the physical line between Mexico and the U.S.; a borderland exists wherever people feel the boundaries between us and them,

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<sup>22</sup> As an immigrant, my citizenship is given by legal decree. Thus, when I received my citizenship, it came with an implicit condition: if I should ever behave in ways unexpected by sovereignty, it can be removed. I live in perpetual probation period.



between who is and who is not U.S. American (Anzaldúa 25). I am always aware of the borders of the U.S.

Borders are not lines on grounds or maps

Borders are in my actions.

Borders cut across my body in the ways I perform my Asian-American masculinity, navigating whiteness, and interrogating my own complicity in the hope of producing a different way to perform my identity (LuLevitt and Calafell 56).

## **6.2. Act I: Hello Class!**

“Can you be our teacher?” I was all smiles when I heard that.

“You’re so much better than our teacher.”

I was a graduate part-time teaching instructor (GPTI) that semester, teaching recitation sections for a large lecture course, introduction to comparative politics. One day an email went out to all the GPTIs from the course professor looking for someone to volunteer to cover another GPTI’s class. I volunteered.

Hello class! I didn’t know what to expect of them. “I’m Charles, just Charles, and I’m your sub today. I teach one of the other sections for this course, so I know where we’re supposed to be with the lecture and the book.” I was not told much about the section, so I figured I would go and present what I had taught in my own sections. Then, news came out about the CU Boulder football team’s culture of rape and sexual assault. It was the only thing anyone was talking about.

“I’m sure by now all of you have heard about the sexual assault and rape culture involving the football program. If anyone wants to talk this before we start class, that’s fine with me.”

Hands go up, questions come, comments follow. It was a lively discussion. Then maybe 20 minutes in, the conversation starts to fade. Students asked what they wanted to ask, said what they wanted to say. I’m still searching.

Suddenly, I hear it. The comment I was waiting for. The hook I needed. I switch, bring lecture and course materials back into the classroom. Their comments and questions...I made a bridge...link abstract concepts to their lives. Click! It connected. I feel the energy in the air. Gasps! Ah-ha! Their eyes lit up, wide, alive. Click! They understood the topic; they liked what I did. It was a great class. They told me they learned more from me.

First the praises came: “When do you teach? Can I come to your class?” Then came the comments: “We can’t understand what she says.” “Why did they hire her?” It wasn’t just the comments; it was the implied messages. The unspoken hurt. I’ve felt this before. I know this pain. Without trying, I inflicted it on another GPTI. I wasn’t just teaching; I was doing my designer Asian American masculinity.

I accepted their praises, but I didn’t come to her defense.

If I had, would you still think I’m cool?

If I had, would I still be white on the inside?

If I had, would I just be Asian to you?

I teach what I am supposed to teach about comparative politics, about international relations. Yet, teaching these knowledges only reinforces the way sovereignty, state, and anarchy wants us to think about our world. My teaching reinforced the way white, hegemonic masculinity wants us to think about the world. This is the performance of my designer Asian American masculinity, a concept I developed from Julie Ann Scott's description of her own designer disability, which is just the right amount of disability: enough to benefit dominant culture and not too much to inconvenience or challenge it. That is to say it triggers enough affect to gain support, but not so much as to turn people off.

Eguchi observed that the category of Asian American is a response to the demands of whiteness, for Asian American is a white conception of Asian immigrants ("Revisiting"; "Uncultural"; Eguchi and Starosta). The Asian American category discursively constructs Orientalism, homogenizing a complex, diverse population to construct a Western notion of the East (Eguchi "Revisiting"; Eguchi and Starosta). Asian American is a domesticated image, but never fully U.S. American, a condition of "almost white" (Eguchi "Uncultural"; Lowe). Since Asian American is a performance script written by whiteness, and performing according to it makes me a model minority, my sense of myself as Asian American is already someone who has been domesticated for the capitalist needs of white people, I am already biopolitical/necropolitical body (Agamben; Lowe). The model minority provides surplus for whites, but still gets privileges and benefits from whiteness, while those who cannot assimilate are left to die. But, for people to see how well I behave, following the script may require me to produce

a homo sacer, someone that I can show is less assimilated, which is necessary to highlight how assimilated I am. Thus, my Asian American masculine performance requires me to construct a foreigner, to mark my assimilation visible, to demonstrate that I can stay in the U.S. and not be deported to camps. Someone has to go to the camps, so I do not.

### **6.3. Act II: Banana is a Monster**

Yet, I am never white enough. For all of my designer performances, I am still Asian. My designer Asian American masculine performance is a banana. You may not know it or see it, but I am a monster. I am a Banana. I am yellow on the outside, white on the inside. I am not a chameleon, for they are quite adorable for changing their camouflage to hide in their environment. There are times I wish I was a chameleon.

I am always

yellow on the outside, white on the inside.

Calafell taught me that monsters change, adapt, morph, and never stable, responding to both the pain of being disciplined and the need to resist (*Monstrosity*; “Monstrous Femininity”).

I know I am a banana. I know it because I am not Asian enough and I can never be white enough. I know I am a banana because my world is white. Almost all of my friends are middle/upper class whites and the activities I enjoy are upper class white. I know I am a banana because Asians tell me I'm not Asian enough. I have been called an ABC (American-born Chinese) even though I was born in Taiwan. I can see their disappointing looks and hear their whispers that I've lost my roots. My pastime involves

niche white activities (code for middle and upper-class white) like volleyball, mountain biking, rock climbing, inline hockey, and other sports.

But being a banana is not simply being alienated from my heritage. Being white on the inside gives me privileges. For instance, I move through white spaces naturally. With a sports coat, jeans, and white, buttoned shirt, I am corporate casual. In my performance running shorts, Altra zero-drop, trail running shoes, and a performance dry-fit, white t-shirt; I am the cool trail runner. In my laid-back white t-shirt, red plastic cup in hand, I'm all set to hangout. In my short sleeve, white, button, hiking shirt and hiking pants, I am the cool teacher.

See how white goes with everything?

Indeed, my white inside allows me to go to places of white ambition and desires. I was a Congressional intern, working for a Representative in the Rayburn Representative office building. I worked for non-profits assisting "developing countries" democratize and another removing landmines from war-ravaged countries. I am now an academic. My whiteness earns me your acceptance as a legitimate source of knowledge, praise for my skills, and respect.

If I wasn't white on the inside, will you still think I'm a good teacher?

If I wasn't white on the inside, will I sound inadequate? Unintelligent?

If I wasn't white on the inside, will I be teaching?

It's so much easier teaching white

Any part of me white

I can never be white enough.

Because I am a banana and not a chameleon, there is a limit to the privileges I can enjoy through my performance of White masculinity. My yellow outside will always mark me as Asian, as non-white. I am never allowed to forget there are limits to the privileges I enjoy and my place in U.S. American society. Lowe's observation that the law tries to smooth over, colorblind us to racism, the contradiction between liberal democracy and capitalist exploitation by domesticating Asian immigrants reminds me that my yellow and white switches based on the situation. Because Asian American identity is a response to whiteness, sometimes I am forced to switch.

“Pearl Harbor, motherfucker!”

When I close my eyes

I can still see the flow of their yellowy hair

I see them stand in the bed of their truck

their fingers flipping me off.

yelling screaming laughing pointing

Glass bottle hurling toward me

A bolt of lightning

shattering in front of my feet

Glass breaking, shrieking

FOREIGNER!

Am I yellow on the outside right now? I thought I was being white on the inside.

Asian features overtake my white performance. Not model enough minority.

Did you see my yellow on the outside? Even though I'm wearing a white shirt?

Sometimes, when I am too almost white, I am reminded that I need to be domesticated. I need to stay almost white.

Did you see the scars on my face? Did they repulse you? Is that why you attack me?

Can you see my big Asian nose? I was told it needs its own zip code.

Perhaps you can't see my chin. I was told real men have chins.

Is it my eyes? Someone said I was slanty. It's a wonder I can see.

Is it because I'm short? I guess I should only date short Asian women.

This is my true face. It is just scars.

Whiteness forces me to morph, to change. A monster is a cultural creature, a liminal being, a hybrid creature that symbolize social fears and taboo desires, a need to control and prevent a possible becoming (Calafell *Monstrosity*; "Monstrous"; Cohen; Phillips *Dark Directions*; *Projected Fears*; Poole). Whenever I am too almost white, I need to be reminded that I am Asian. The banana is a disciplined creature. Forced to perform white, forced to only be almost white.

I am never allowed to forget that I am a danger to this country—the hideous Asian foreigner. That was my first truly vivid experience as an Asian. My yellow skin means I experience discipline in many different ways. People scold me by telling me this is America, not Taiwan or Tokyo. Angry whites confront me by acting like I can't speak English, demanding me to speak up. When my answers fail to satisfy them, they tell me to go back to China. Even when I do well, I am reminded that I am a hideous foreigner. The first words a professor in political science said to me upon our initial meeting was

"Chinese is a beautiful language" even though I spoke English to him. At least I thought I did. My body changes from white on the inside to yellow on the outside. Older white men always seem to try to impress me with how beautiful China is. When I excel in school, it is because Asians are smart, not because I worked hard. I was always expected to be good with math and science even though I wasn't. Whether I do good or bad, I am always disciplined. I am always the foreigner, the one who doesn't belong.

I have to be almost white, but never too almost white.

The first time I taught introductory international relations (a large introductory lecture course), the white female students in the class ranked the male teaching assistants on looks, from one to five.

But, there were six of us.

I was the only

non-white.

I would have been so happy to be last. It's been made clear to me all my life that I am not much to look at, a hideously scarred creature. Do you think I'm silly for feeling this way? It's such a stupid little thing...right? Asian American males are always unmanly in white culture (Eguchi "Uncultural"; Eguchi and Starosta; Nakayama "Shown/Down"). But, more painful than being demasculated, was the feeling of being left out. In one of my nonprofit jobs, I had a boss who rarely spoke to me. One day, he took the new intern, a blonde, blue-eyed girl who all the guys thought was "hot" to a meeting. I guess having worked for him for half-a-year and having positive reviews from different supervisors didn't matter.



My yellow on the outside means I get left out.

Kept out

of the border.

#### **6.4. Act III: I am Never Neo**

Whenever I teach, I know that I am also being interviewed. Can you see that I'm just like you? I'm just a down right folk who's teaching you IR (comparative politics in this case). I interviewed for my green card. I interviewed for my citizenship. I remember practicing for anticipated questions. I remember double-checking to make sure everything I say matches what my Mom and brother said. I remember the stupid things we had to do to take pictures that show us like families. I remember Calafell's experiences of sponsoring someone for permanent residency, the toll it takes, the endless process, and the embarrassing things we do, like getting pictures taken ("Performing the Responsible Sponsor"). Performing my designer Asian American masculinity means I pass those stupid things.

Being interviewed is common control strategy in the U.S. There is a scene in the movie *The Matrix* that sums up my life. Here, Thomas Anderson, before he awoke to being Neo, was interrogated by Agent Smith.

Agent Smith speaks to me:

"It seems that you have been living two lives. One life, you're Thomas A. Anderson. You have a social security number, pay your taxes, and you help your neighbor shovel snow. The other life you are Asian. One of

these lives has a future. One of them does not” (qtd. in LuLevitt and Calafell 57).

I pay taxes, obey the law, speak English, and eat “American” food, but I am still not safe, for I am always being interrogated (LuLevitt and Calafell 58). I have been living in the U.S. since age six, and have been practicing for my interrogation every day, trying to look and sound safe so I can pass, so I can enjoy the privileges of being a U.S. American (LuLevitt and Calafell 58). I get interrogated quite often: “No, I mean, where did you come from originally?” Some things I can practice for, “I’m from San Jose, or California, or here, just here, man,” and some things I cannot practice for, but can still get by (LuLevitt and Calafell 58). One day my retired, white woman neighbor demands to know, when I refused to accept her argument: “Where are you from originally?” (LuLevitt and Calafell 58). I am interrogated when someone yells: “Go back to China,” in the first day of class when my students are uncomfortable because they never had an Asian teacher before, or if some of them think they are in the wrong class because they were expecting a white teacher (LuLevitt and Calafell 58). I am being interrogated even as I write for this chapter. I wonder if I should write that I interviewed for my green card. I wonder if I should write that I interviewed for my citizenship. I wonder if anyone reading this will use that to hurt me. I wonder if anyone, especially white readers, will doubt my claim to life here. I wonder if anyone of them will deport me to the camps. As I write, I wonder if I have done anything politically wrong.

I am always Mr. Anderson, but never Neo.

Being an Asian American is not building railroads; it is always being interrogated. I can only do what whiteness says, I can never be free, be unplugged from the system, be a hero in my own story (.

There are, however, questions that no one can ever prepare for and can never slip by. How do I prepare for when soldiers come to take me away? When confronted with that possibility, I go to sleep some nights praying that one of my white friends will be willing to hide me.

You may not know this,

but I came into this country

armed

and

dangerous.

black hair

brown eyes

yellow skin.

In me is the blood of contagion.

Whiteness seeks to e-race me. Anyone can perform whiteness as long as they purge their non-white affects (Ross 201). To be a good scholar, I have to erase that I am Asian. To be a good teacher,

Did you guys see me?

Or did you just see a person?

Maybe someone white on the inside?

Or did you see my yellow on the outside?

I have to erase that I am Asian.

To be a good U.S. American, I have to erase that I am Asian. An Asian is a danger, a threat to white America. If I am Japanese, I am responsible for Pearl Harbor, for Toyotas and Hondas, for white factory workers losing their jobs, for yakuzas and the yellow terror. If I am Chinese; I am a chicomm (Chinese Communist); I am ching chong ding dong king kong ling long, and other white people's ridicule of Chinese language and accent, I need to go back to China, I am a railroad worker.<sup>23</sup>

When I successfully pass my interrogation, I am seen as U.S. American, I am embraced and e-raced (LuLevitt and Calafell 58). This requires an authentic whiteness, when performing my white on the inside looks natural, normal, and lacking non-white affects (qtd. in LuLevitt and Calafell 58). I am U.S. American when people see that I am not pretending to be white, I just am white on the inside, naturally belonging on the U.S. side of the border (LuLevitt and Calafell 58). No need for deportation here. I'm almost white.

Authentic whiteness is an idealized performance, as one can be too white (for example a redneck). This performance is often the one that is privileged in media, re-centering it as the proper behavior that society rewards (Dubrofsky and Ryalls). Media

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<sup>23</sup> Whiteness, however, means that whites are not the only ones to attack me when they fail to see my white on the inside. One day I was walking my beloved dog at a park. A young voice started laughing at me. Such a young child, such a mean tone. He started imitating Chinese accents and laughing at me. Why was a child with a dark brown skin attacking me like this? I quickly took my dog into my car, went home, and cried. Whiteness is a culture, and anyone in this culture can learn to attack me the way white people have.

portrayal of Asian American men affirms the strategic invisibility of whiteness by strategically color blinding racism (Eguchi “*Uncultural*”).

Do I look designer Asian enough to you? My performance of authentic whiteness is a designer Asian-American male identity: it is just almost white to pass as a straight, U.S. American male, and just enough Asian that my white friends benefit from my presence as being diverse and socially just (LuLevitt and Calafell 59). If I was more Asian, I would not be able to hang out with them. I am white on the inside. I am appealing and likeable. My yellow on the outside is hidden. I am just enough Asian that it can be erased, so that I can perform the model minority student, the model minority instructor, the model minority athlete, the model minority...

And, models are beautiful, so they can stay.

This is how I am able to pass my interrogations and continue to live in the US. This is how I disarm my Asian features enough to be considered safe and U.S. American. This is my white on the inside.

#### **6.5 Act IV: Hello Afong Moy**

She was a Chinese student who was studying for her doctorate. She spoke with a heavier accent than mine and wasn't as fluent with cool U.S. American mannerisms than I was. She could not perform authentic white femininity. She was no model.

What is critical about my story is that my designer Asian-American male is not benign: it requires a constant production of other Asians who do not belong, who are not U.S. American, and not safe (LuLevitt and Calafell 60). I am able to pass in white society only because I make sure others cannot, and my privileges come at their expense.

Julia Foochee ching-chang king, daughter of Hong wang tzang tzee king, was supposedly her actual name, according to the *New York Daily Advertiser* in 1934 (Haddad 6). She would live a tragic life: “she became a part of P.T. Barnum’s exhibits and was eventually replaced by a younger, more ‘reputable’ Chinese woman when she great too old” (qtd. in LuLevitt and Calafell 60). Nathaniel and Frederick Carne, brothers and traders looking for opportunity in China, brought/bought her to New York City for display, named her Afong Moy to make it easier for whites, and placed her in a display that mimicked her “natural environment,” where visitors can watch her “natural” behavior, such as speaking Chinese, eating with chopsticks, and walking with her small, bound feet (qtd. in LuLevitt and Calafell 60).

Come one, come all!

See the amazing Chinese princess!

This is your lucky day! You’ve never seen a Chinese woman before!

You’ll be impressed; you’ll be astounded!

It is hard to imagine this was entertainment.

No one knows how the brothers “obtained” her, or what happened to her after the show ended. Afong Moy was exotic: a small Chinese princess (no one knows if she is an actual princess) with her strange “oriental” habits. The Carnes are curators, exhibiting difference for money, white exploiters of a woman of color, and possibly a child. Conquergood noted that the curator’s exhibition emphasize difference to demonstrate the inferiority of other cultures (71-72). Indeed, the exhibition served to highlight how odd, how silly, how foolish “oriental” customs and habits were. Visitors paid money to hear

her speak in her native tongue, to have her do “oriental” things. When the Carne brothers advertised her, they explicitly concocted stories emphasizing how different she was. For example, they announced that she laughed when she first met a left-handed person because no such thing existed in China (qtd. in LuLevitt and Calafell 60).

My designer Asian-American male identity made it possible for students to appreciate my teaching skills. Yet, this identity was only possible because I am forced to sacrifice others to IR’s need for foreign enemies, to sovereignty’s need for homo sacer, to the state’s need for deportation.

Did I sell you out? A fellow GPTI, a graduate student

A Chinese woman—sadly, I saw you

above all else,

as only a Chinese woman.

I am white on the inside

when they see your yellow on the outside.

I saw you as IR wanted me to see you. A member of a rival state.

I saw you as the state wanted me to see you. A foreigner to be  
watched.

I saw you as sovereignty me wanted to see you. A homo sacer.

I saw you as anarchy wanted me to see you.

Were you contained?

I acted like almost white. You were not.

Did I see anything except a homo sacer?

We never talked much, I do not know what her students said, what her students did after the class was over. At the end of the semester, the course professor came down to the graduate student office to see me. I thought maybe there was something wrong. Instead, he shook my hands. "I always thought of myself as someone who cared deeply about pedagogy. I heard great things about you from a lot of students, so I wanted to shake your hand." The other graduate students were all impressed. Stunned smiles. That felt odd.

I turn whiter on the inside, my yellow on the outside fading.

Is there such a thing as a white banana?

This moment of approval was not what I wanted.

What happened? I can't stop thinking. Did the students in your section turn you over to the professor? I have never had a professor come and shake my hand for being a good teacher. What happened?

I wonder what students thought?

Did her foreignness secure my place?

Were we both on display? To be Asian American is always on display  
Display loyalty, display model minority, display no-threatening, display...

Did you see a graduate teacher, or were you like me?

Did you see a Chinese woman?

Did my designer identity impress you enough?

Will I pass my exam now?



I did nothing unusual, or special. I simply performed my designer Asian American masculinity, and that is the point (LuLevitt and Calafell 60-61). Disciplining others was in the script white, hegemonic masculinity gave. To be almost white, is to discipline others who are less so. Through my designer Asian-American male performance I simultaneously elevated myself to the status of cool, straight, U.S. American man by reducing the Chinese graduate student instructor into a foreign object. Like the crowd that came to see Afong Moy, the students seemed only to see the differences between us and rejected her for them.

I am the third Carne brother.

She is not the only person I reduce to a foreign alien, a threat to the sanctity of white America; I do that to many who cannot perform in ways that reaffirm the centrality of ideal white bodies whenever I accept praises and privileges for performing my designer Asian American male identity (LuLevitt and Calafell 60). I am able to pass my interrogations, to remain on the U.S. American side of the border, and to avoid deportation to camps because I make sure others fail their interrogation. Jeopardizing the lives of others so I can look almost white is the model minority, my designer identity.

When I take comfort in what students say, when I do not correct their judgments, when I gain from a colleague's race and gender, I play into the dominant binary of foreign vs. U.S. American (LuLevitt and Calafell 61). To be seen as safe and welcomed to stay, there must be those who are dangerous and need to be deported.

But, always remember

I am yellow on the outside

I am armed and dangerous

I am forced to be almost white

But I cannot be too white.

## **6.6. Epilogue**

IR, state, sovereignty, anarchy, biopolitics/necropolitics, and white, hegemonic masculinity...these are in my designer Asian American masculine identity. When I perform this identity, I am the model minority, almost white, allowed to exist and excel in this white, hegemonic masculine place. Yet, this performance is only possible because I am able to mark how white I am on the inside. To do this I produce a foreign object, someone who whiteness can see does not belong, a homo sacer to save my position, a standard for judging who belongs inside and who needs to be deported outside of the border. Sadly, for standards to work, someone must fail. Did the difference between us make you a Chinese woman and me the cool, Asian American man?

Did I transform a brilliant scholar into a foreign Chinese woman?

Did you ever feel I did?

Part of me want to apologize, but another part knows there is no forgiveness.

I do not reduce others into foreign objects  
purposely.

I do it

naturally

authentically

it is my designer identity.

For me to perform me, I let students see you as an exhibition.

There is pain, guilt, shame, and anger in me

I want to keep them

reminding me

within a model minority, my designer identity,

is a need to capture, contain, destroy a foreign other.

I am IR.

As I finish this chapter, I reflect back on the inclusion of Eguchi's and Lowe's work and shudder. If my Asian American performance is a script to domesticate Asian immigrants, then the obvious ethical path is to reject this performance. But, what will I perform then? If my performance is an unethical oppression to begin with, is there anything about me, my performance, worth saving? If Asian American is responding to the demands of whiteness, then why am I trying to change my Asian American performance? Should I not instead focus on changing whiteness? Won't that reaffirm the centrality of whiteness? Can I really create an IR free from state, sovereignty, and anarchy, free from white, hegemonic masculinity, if my identity is key to new knowledge? Will it taint everything I try? There is a scene from *The Matrix Reloaded*, when Neo meets the Oracle.

*Neo:* You're not human, are you?

*The Oracle:* Well it's tough to get any more obvious than that.

*Neo:* If I had to guess, I'd say you're a program from the machine world.

So is he.

*The Oracle:* So far, so good.

*Neo:* But if that's true, that can mean you are a part of this system, another kind of control.

*The Oracle:* Keep going.

*Neo:* I suppose the most obvious question is how can I trust you?

*The Oracle:* Bingo! It is a pickle, no doubt about it. The bad news is there's no way if you can really know whether I'm here to help you or not. So, it's really up to you. You just have to make up your own damn mind to either accept what I'm going to tell you, or reject it. Candy?

Will whiteness be able to reclaim my actions then? Will this dissertation serve white, hegemonic masculinity? Am I just another system of control? I am shaken without answers.

Though I am never Neo, we both can only keep moving forward. I turn to Conquergood for guidance. Focusing on questions of what my identity is or what it means is an essentializing act. It is what IR wants. Instead, I remember that I am homo performan (Conquergood p.27). There is no meaning without action; definitions alone are abstract textualism. I am what I do. Though I am more uncertain of what it means to be Asian American male, I will continue to perform Conquergood's dialogic performance:

“More than a definite position, the dialogical stance is situated in the space between competing ideologies. It brings self and other together even while it holds them apart. It is more like a hyphen than a period” (75).

Performing IR is to see a world without definite objects. Whereas IR as we know it starts and ends with state, sovereignty, and anarchy, performing IR see the world as endless engagement of acceptance. Rather than consuming or imposing itself on everything, I seek to create an IR where we do not destroy each other’s difference, where we continue to engage each other, helping to maintain each other’s differences, and co-exist as equal partners.

I am encouraged by my reading of Conquergood, Anzaldúa, Madison, Muñoz, and Calafell to continue to see performance as subversions. Just because I am handed a script does not mean I have to read it as it says. I can “misread,” “forget,” “ad-lib,” or “alter” scripts, altering how I am supposed to play Asian American masculinity, changing the meaning of that identity. This does not resolve the tension I spoke of earlier, but it allows me to continue to use my performances to create new ways for us to understand the world.

So, I end this chapter with what I am thinking about—the politics of responsible sponsor, for as Calafell recalls, being a responsible sponsor is an ethical act and choice, one with a heavy ethical shouldering (“Performing the Responsible Sponsor”). Just as Calafell complicated her life to shield another from the threats of state power, to help another person stay in this side of the border, an IR based on dialogical performance necessitates that we also practice responsible sponsoring. I do not mean that we should all

marry immigrants (though that is the reader's prerogative), I do mean that when we encounter difference, it is upon us to help sustain it, to help maintain its difference, and to help it remain safe inside the border. We can create a new IR by refusing to turn homo sacer over to the state. Challenging state, sovereignty, and anarchy, war, and death, is to sponsor difference. Foust argues that transgression values agency over agents, so we should turn our attention away from knowing the world based on agents—sovereignty, states, and anarchy, and toward the agency we possess to transform it. Maybe, just maybe when we do that, we can transform international anarchy from structural constraint to spaces for social change (Foust *Transgression*).

*Time may change me,  
But I can't trace time.  
I said that time may change me,  
But I can't trace time.*<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> From David Bowie's song *Changes*.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

It was my second semester as an adjunct instructor at Metropolitan State University of Denver. She was a non-traditional student, mother of three fully-grown children, entrepreneur, struggling to improve her relationship with her daughter. We worked long hours developing her presentation—interesting contents, use of concept words, building slides, stance, hand gesturing, voice, and eye contact—and developing her term paper—grammar (which is not my strength), organization, concepts, and structure. We remained friends after the course ended. One day, she texts that she is terrified of a presentation for another class. I reply:

You have got to be kidding. You gave birth to three children, raised them to adulthood, worked your way up from house cleaning to owning your own business...you have already passed the hardest tests. This speech is nothing. In you is all the strength you will ever need to succeed. Seriously, I know students like attention, but you need to think of a better way to get it.

Just like what I said to her, I should say to you: in you is all the wisdom you need to form your own theory of IR. No hypotheses, no Xs, Ys, Rs, or Ts, no concepts, no hierarchies, no taxonomies, no equations, and no case studies can replace the pain you

have felt disciplining others, being disciplined, trying to survive. This is IR from the bottom up, of the street, tactical.

Taking a cue from Persaud and Sajed (*Race, Gender, Culture*) and Seth (*Postcolonialism*), culture and identity is central to IR; therefore, we should see the absence of race as the strategic rhetoric of whiteness, centering and normalizing Eurocentric knowledge. While IR sees itself as timeless, centering on abstract concepts, its origin is really with colonialism and imperialism, and that history has more relevance to the existence of the vast majority of the Earth's population (Persaud and Sajed; Seth). And, it is not just race: gender is also critical to understanding colonialism and its legacy (Persaud and Sajed).

Like Seth, I too believe we cannot simply use existing IR epistemology and genealogy to build a new theory (Postcolonialism). Seth builds an IR theory with anti-colonialism as its genealogy (Postcolonialism). I also seek to build different IR, with a different center. It was asked what my goals are in relation to IR. I can say strongly and I am not trying to reform, save, modify, expand, or sustain the current theories, ideas, or practices of IR. Rather, I want to build a new IR, one that is embodied, open to differences, and centered on each person's own experiences and critical cultural theories. My argument has been that the IR we have now sustains and needs wars and deaths, and that there is little hope of peace as long as we continue to operate from its existing genealogy, epistemology, and theories. Operating from existing IR also sustains social oppression within countries, limiting social changes. If we are to think of our world in ways that are open to difference, compassionate for marginalized people, open to change



and growth, then we need to center our understanding of the world on intersectional, queer, performance, and embodied theories. Thus, I sought to create an IR with them at its core.

Disturbingly, sovereignty is a system of control, total control. As Charles Tilly noted, this control is also about resource extraction, reinforcing each other (*Coercion*). However, this system of control and extraction is not equal or benign. Sovereignty is about life and death of communities—the use of monopoly of power to extract resources from many neglected communities and cultures to nourish a chosen few. While once I was enamored with state and sovereignty, I have come to see sovereignty as a social evil and hope to replace it with something more ethical.

Yet, how are we to fight such a power, such a structure? Rather than fighting it directly, or forming a counter theory, I tried to explore performing a potentially different way of understanding our world. Rather than an alternative theory of IR, I simply hope that reading this will inspire other to try to create their own theories of IR that will disrupt their connections to state, sovereignty, and anarchy. Following the guidance of Anzaldúa and Muñoz, I have tried to understand how I can subvert and alter social structure by destabilizing my Asian American masculine identity, by exploring possible avenues to alter my identity performance. The argument I am making is that if we want to develop a different way of knowing our world, then we need to be ready to change our identities, to cross the borders that define who we think we are and how we are supposed to act. If we do not alter our social and structural connections, then how can we start building a new world?

Nevertheless, this dissertation's aim is rather limited: the IR that I am creating in this dissertation is not some new grand theory; instead, I am only interested in a theory of IR that will allow me to see, for one moment, a potentially new way for me to relate to the world I live in (Muñoz *Disidentification*). Following Conquergood's dialogic performance, this dissertation is not an end; it is the beginning of a dialogue with others about our world (*Cultural Struggles*). If reading this dissertation makes you rethink your own connection to state, sovereignty, and anarchy, if it leads you to create your own theory and see a potential world of difference, compassion, and emancipation, then that is all I can ask for.

If it is still unclear what performing IR is, imagine Morpheus is in front of you. He pulls his hands up toward you and shows you two pills, one in each hand. He says: "You take the blue pill, the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe." IR goes on as it always has: state, sovereignty, anarchy, war, and deaths. You continue to see and know the world the way white, hegemonic masculinity wants to you. Marginalized communities continue to be sacrificed for a chosen few.

If you take the red pill, you will see the world differently, not as the way IR theories and practices have wanted you to see it. You will see a world centered on your own pain and experiences, using knowledge that you have gained from your own life. To help you build your theory of IR, you will use embodied, experiential theories from oppressed and marginalized scholars. You have no guarantee, but you hope that you will build a theory that puts accepting difference, emancipating oppressed people, and caring for life at the center.

Morpheus gives you a choice. Which pill will you choose?

This is performing IR.

*I don't feel any shame;*

*I won't apologize*

*when there ain't nowhere you can go.*

*Running away from pain*

*when you've been victimized,*

*tales from another broken home<sup>25</sup>*

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<sup>25</sup> From Green Day's *Jesus of Suburbia*.

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