

TINA CHEN

**A SPECULATIVE
HANDBOOK OF
ACADEMIC
LABOR**

**ALIEN
FORMS &
MINOR
GENRES**

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A SPECULATIVE HANDBOOK OF ACADEMIC LABOR

TINA CHEN

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For Sean, Nora, and Emma—
and in loving memory of my mother, Sophie Chen

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Contents

ix *Acknowledgments*

I Unlikely Propositions: A Trio of Introductions

- 3 Introduction 1 || Book Proposal
- 18 Introduction 2 || A (Speculative) Faculty Activity Report
- 44 Introduction 3 || Lesson Plans

II Minor Genres and the Shadow Archive

- 67 Freer Agents? || Statement of Purpose
- 70 Minor Genres of Academic Writing and the Shadow
Archive || PowerPoint Presentation
- 84 Working As/Through Alien Form || An Annotated
Bibliography
- 127 Global Asias: Method, Architecture, Praxis ||
An Annotated Essay
- 151 What If, If Only, and If This Goes On: Reimagining
Scholarly Activity Through Global Asias Practice ||
Statement of Endeavors

III **Alien Abduction, Alien Form**

159	Alien Abduction, Alien Form Conference Paper
165	Syllabus 1 AlieNation: Asian American Literatures
169	Syllabus 2 Speculative Fictions: Worldbreaking, Worldtaking, Worldmaking
177	Syllabus 3 Contemporary Ethnic American Literatures: Reading Beyond Race
186	Alien Abduction, Alien Form Research Essay
211	Coda Editorial Dossier
245	<i>Appendix: Text of PowerPoint Slides</i>
253	<i>References</i>
263	<i>Index</i>

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I

UNLIKELY PROPOSITIONS

A TRIO OF INTRODUCTIONS

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Introduction 1

BOOK PROPOSAL

Keywords

GLOBAL ASIAS | ACADEMIC LABOR | SPECULATIVE FICTIONS | GENRE | ASIAN STUDIES | ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES | ASIAN DIASPORA STUDIES | STRUCTURAL DISSONANCE | MINOR GENRES | TRS

Overview

Alien Forms and Minor Genres: A Speculative Handbook of Academic Labor questions the ways in which academic labor is parsed into the categories of teaching, research, and service (TRS) and argues for a more expansive notion of scholarly work. It is motivated by two simple questions: How might acknowledging the diversity of scholarly labor critical to the profession transform the genre of the academic monograph? What happens if we treat field formation and alternative genres of academic writing as speculative fictions, forms through which to reflect and reimagine the possibilities and value of scholarly labor?

Drawing on the diverse kinds of intellectual work I've undertaken over the last ten years—founding and editing an award-winning journal, foregrounding the significance of pedagogical principles and practices in scholarly spaces beyond the classroom, establishing and directing the Global Asias Initiative at Penn State as a research enterprise for collaborative knowledge production, creating and directing mentoring programs for graduate students and early-career colleagues, and developing research and scholarly expertise in the multidisciplinary field of Global Asias—the book proposes that we treat the genres of academia with the same nuance and critical insight that we deploy when we study literary and other cultural genres. Even though embracing more capaciously imagined ideas about

the diverse genres of academic labor may not move us entirely away from unequal distributions of labor and a system that shunts devalued forms of such labor into the category of “service,” doing so can help us conceptualize new models for how questions of distribution and value might be reapproached. Leveraging genre criticism’s attentiveness to issues of form and the representational conventions that undergird how we communicate, and inspired by the imaginative energies of speculative fiction, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* draws theory, literature, and labor into disjunctive relation to speculate about how and why academic work matters.

In highlighting different genres of academic labor and, equally importantly, encouraging us to be more open to imagining the connectedness of the varied kinds of work we do as intellectuals, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* advances three interrelated goals: to interrogate the inadequate schematics that organize the work of academia; to explore the ways in which theories and concepts of genre and form can be usefully applied in order to reassess the priorities of the profession; and to imagine how a scholarly project that embraces diverse professional activities as part of a connected, differentially coherent practice might simultaneously engender new forms of knowledge and recognize undervalued knowledge practices. To make these arguments, this project reflects upon the diversity of academic labor involved in creating Global Asias as a field and method of knowledge production and indexes a praxis of engaging institutional imperatives through a dual approach that combines tactical skepticism with speculative worldmaking. Such a dual approach produces uneven and sometimes idiosyncratic results but can also generate new modes of professional practice—and alternative ways of being in the profession. In my case, this combination of tactical skepticism and speculative worldmaking was catalyzed by a late-stage cancer diagnosis and manifested as a series of “unwise” professional decisions guided by refusing to value research more than mentoring; embracing administrative and program-building work as “impure” genres of academic labor that combine pedagogical, scholarly, and service orientations; and choosing editorial work to advance the profession at the expense of individual professional advancement. In writing a book—*this* book—not solely as a primary research and professional goal but as a record of scholarly labors that are often devalued or underrecognized, I trace an inverted trajectory of research creation, one that transforms the hierarchies and priorities that structure the valuation of academic knowledge production and suggests the critical importance of imagining different forms of scholarly labor as equally valuable.

Calls to recognize that scholarly work takes a variety of forms are not new. As Ernest Boyer argued in his influential *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990), professors are often caught between competing obligations within a reward system that does not accurately assess or value the full spectrum of scholarly activity. The US system of higher education has evolved around the principle of stratification, and the triad is a structural feature reflecting a strategy of combining competing interests that evidences the overlapping and uneven priorities of temporally distinct approaches to the university and its role in civic life. Although David F. Labaree (2017) has argued that such stratification and willingness to keep competing priorities in dynamic tension results in American higher education's distinctive "organizational complexity," the TRS model of assessing scholarly labor often functions disingenuously by suggesting that the institution (equally) values different forms of academic work but consequentially privileging some forms over others—particularly when it comes to recognizing the contributions of teaching and contingent faculty, or evaluating people for tenure and promotion.

Arguing that the traditional academic monograph is a genre that inadequately represents the diversity of scholarly accomplishment—and, indeed, may even contribute to the impoverishment of intellectual life through its narrow focus and constraining of what is legible as scholarly research practice—this project has a generic hybridity that reflects an expansive approach to recording and advancing scholarship and intellectual endeavor. My professional efforts over the last decade have focused on imagining and promoting a more capacious conception of scholarly practice, a praxis that moves me beyond the rhetorical lip service often paid to various types of scholarly labor to a daily enactment that creates its own conceptual energies. This volume is an effort to compose the academic monograph in such a way that it encompasses not just research publication but also the scholarly labors of pedagogy, editing, mentorship, program-building, and administration to which I have been devoted, and upon which the academic profession and the field of the humanities are built. Given that research activity and publication are often disarticulated from the labors of pedagogy and service, this book imagines an alternative future by speculating about how the hierarchies of value assigned to different forms of academic labor might change if the genres in which we write were to evolve.

Alien Forms and Minor Genres is thus a book about genre, speculation, and worldbuilding. It asks us to think about the varied genres of academic labor and to rethink how they operate synergistically to advance knowledge

production and the humanities. In approaching teaching, research, and service as in/distinct forms of academic labor, how might the hermeneutic practices of literary criticism and formalist reading enable us to reimagine the hierarchies of value that determine scholarly merit? If, as Caroline Levine (2015) has argued, a careful attentiveness to the forms and genres in which we work challenges the ways we have separated literary forms from social forms, how can we reconceptualize scholarly labor through the varied genres in which we write and think? More specifically, how would leveraging the simultaneous dissonances and resonances between prosaic, pedagogical, administrative, and research forms enable us to generate more encompassing, and possibly more energizing, models of scholarly labor? Is it possible to create and celebrate alternative genres through which to register and engineer intellectual inquiry while not discounting or devaluing the importance and significance of scholarly expertise and research publication?

Argument

Alien Forms and Minor Genres makes two major arguments that exist in non-aligned relation. The first argument focuses on professional practice and assessment, exploring how the categories through which we assess scholarly work—teaching, research, and service—should be analyzed with the same attentiveness we pay to literary genres, to complicate what we understand as the nature of such work and to recognize in more meaningful ways that we create scholarship through diverse practices. The second argument is epistemological and disciplinary in orientation, focusing on the processes of field formation and highlighting the emergence of Global Asias as a multidisciplinary field of academic inquiry that cross-pollinates knowledge from three distinct interdisciplines—Asian studies, Asian American studies, and Asian diaspora studies—to reimagine scholarly knowledge production about the fundamentally transnational and global nature of Asia-focused worlds and epistemologies.

Shaped by frustration with the ways in which the complex diversity of academic labor is underrecognized by assessment practices based on reductive categorization and misvalued through increasingly specialized notions of “research” and “expertise,” this project assumes that much of the work that I’ve done over the last decade which has been categorized as “service” or “pedagogy” is also scholarly and critical to advancing new research. I have approached conceptualizing and editing *Verge: Studies in*

Global Asias as both a research endeavor and a pedagogical opportunity, not just a service obligation. I have devoted significant time and energy to creating and leading mentoring programs and workshops, and this act of centering mentorship constitutes an implicit argument about how collaborative knowledge production can generate new research forms and practices. I have spearheaded the creation of the Global Asias Initiative (GAI), a research enterprise that advances Global Asias as an increasingly legible field and method of studying Asia in relation to its multiple diasporas, in the process acknowledging but also disrupting the divides between area studies, ethnic studies, and diaspora studies. And while all these projects—journal, mentoring programs, GAI—are ostensibly counted as “service” on my annual faculty activity report, they have been fundamentally and instrumentally a part of the development of Global Asias as a field of scholarly research, operating in tandem with the essays, proposals, descriptions, introductions, and myriad other types of writing I have generated about field formation over the last decade. In recognizing how my “research activity” around Global Asias has advanced not simply through a commitment to the scholarly labors of pedagogy and service, but through a praxis that refuses to prioritize research activity over teaching, editing, program-building, and mentoring, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* endeavors to provide a more nuanced and accurate depiction of how we create scholarly knowledge.

While the book’s two main arguments are different in nature and scope, both are *institutional* insofar as they are meant to cast light on how academia cultivates, manages, and rewards scholarly labor. Even as critical attention has been paid to the policing of knowledge in the imperial university in conversations about academic freedom, political dissent, and the relationship between protest and pedagogy (Chatterjee and Maira 2014), the spectacular moments of such enforcement (evidenced via tenure denial, coordinated attacks on scholars, or public protest and censorship) have drawn more analysis than the decidedly unspectacular infrastructures of assessment that powerfully determine the legibility of knowledge and the legitimacy of supported knowledge practices. Focusing on the routinized labor through which we enact daily academic practice, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* encourages us to appreciate cross-pollination between prosaic genres of administrative, editorial, and pedagogical writing (faculty activity reports, lesson plans, reader reports, project proposals, annotations, PowerPoint presentations, and editorial headnotes) and research activity in order to more accurately account for the nature, function, and impact of the intellectual work that we do as scholars.

In other words, even though these arguments look as if they belong in two different books, partly because they are differently oriented and partly because they manifest through and as different genres, one of *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*' goals is to argue—and to exemplify through its formal constitution—that embracing their incongruity, and understanding their distinctions as distinctions of form rather than always as distinctions of content, enables us to reconceptualize the nature, function, and praxis of scholarly work. Simply put, the formal differences between the book's two arguments make visible how a holistic approach to academic labor, one that recognizes service, teaching, and research as equally important, has been critical to the development and advancement of Global Asia as a multidisciplinary and multigeneric collective knowledge formation. Even as the book's arguments about the diverse genres of academic labor are bolstered by examples drawn from the work of building varied platforms (journal, book and conference series, research initiative, summer institute, and institutional partnerships) supporting the development of Global Asia's scholarly practice, the arguments about the methods, epistemology, and praxis of Global Asia are shown to emerge from a series of unlikely locations: the *minor genres of academic writing*, a term I use to describe the peripheralization and undervaluation of the many types of writing we do as academics, and the *shadow archive*, the repository that houses the plethora of unseen documents—many of them composed using minor genres of academic writing—that an expansively conceptualized scholarly praxis generates. Instead of bracketing different genres of academic labor and writing from each other, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* creates a record of activity that embraces the multifaceted nature of scholarship, in the process imagining how scholarship is continually remade not just through our research publications but also through our teaching and service commitments.

Methodology

According to Ranjana Khanna (2018), speculative praxis is often disciplinarily specific. In philosophy, speculation is about logic and conjecture and posed against practice. In finance, speculation involves planning to heighten gain and/or reduce risk. In literary studies, speculation is investigative, anticipatory, and imaginatively demanding, a modality of reading and writing that acknowledges how what is not yet visible determines the shape of interpretation. Fundamental to *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*'

efforts to make legible and credential the diversity of scholarly practice is its embrace of literary speculation. More specifically, the project's speculative praxis operates both as a reading strategy that makes visible alternative interpretations and futures and as a methodology that recognizes the critical ways that generic conventions shape the forms in which we write so as to write into possibility new modes of knowledge production. As I have argued elsewhere, "Global Asias as a speculative endeavor makes imaginable alternative conceptual topographies and alternative circuits of relation, not just for the study of Asia but for ourselves as thinkers, writers, teachers, and collaborators" (T. Chen and Eubanks 2025, 46). Correspondingly, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*' speculative efforts focus not just on conceptualizing Global Asias as an approach that maps alternatives to the siloed institutional fields of area studies, ethnic studies, and diaspora studies but also on the power of generic friction to imaginatively conjecture alternative conditions and ambits for the academic labors we perform.

Fundamental to *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*' theorization of Global Asias and the book's method of composition is the embrace of *structural dissonance*. While my earliest efforts to conceptualize the incompatibilities undergirding the imaginable ageography of Global Asias utilized "structural incoherence" (T. Chen 2018) to name the infrastructural conditions out of which Global Asias knowledge production emerges, witnessing and orchestrating the possibilities of collaborative nonconsensus integral to this emerging scholarly field has encouraged me to focus more systematically on dissonance as method and praxis for such work. Given the totalizing impulse inherent in the concept of Global Asias, the critical import of attending to the disagreements, disjunctures, and discordances between interlocutors and collaborators, and between genres of labor and genres of writing, cannot be overstated. Accordingly, as editor of *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*, I have emphasized the importance of creating genres designed to enable scholars working from different positions and vantage points to engage productively. Recognizing both the possibilities and the limits of the thirty-page academic essay, in my editing I have encouraged the development of the journal's *Convergence* features, which provide opportunities for scholars to engage across differences, to collaborate through scholarly debate, and to generate scholarship using generic conventions not traditionally associated with academic writing. The journal's juxtapositional ethic—allowing different authors, genres, fields, disciplines, geographies, and forms of scholarship to coexist in nonaligned relation—reflects the structural dissonance at the heart of Global Asias as method, which

“embrac[es] dissensus and creat[es] space for agreement and contention to be equally valued forms of collective engagement” (T. Chen 2021a, 1004).

Alien Forms and Minor Genres is a singular collection of scholarly, pedagogical, and bureaucratic genres. Moreover, the book’s structurally dissonant form results from its assembly of an idiosyncratic archive of critical and primary texts for its arguments. Inspired by Jenny Rice’s conceptualization of archives as inventional, this project embraces what she characterizes as a “gargoylian method” of assembling the texts that make its arguments legible. Noting the incongruities of chimeric creatures, Rice notes that “something new is made from strange juxtaposition” (2020, 26). Indeed, the “strange juxtaposition[s]” powering *Verge’s* advancement of Global Asias as a knowledge formation repeat in the formal composition of this book. Despite being authored by a single individual, the book embraces polyvocality and generic friction, which manifest formally in its use of “nonresearch” genres to advance its scholarly arguments. Eschewing the genre of “the chapter,” the book engages the possibilities of generic friction not only by articulating its arguments through forms not usually considered research genres but also by allowing its different argumentative strands to remain entangled yet distinct.

Dissonance manifests differently in each of the book’s three sections. Part I—“Unlikely Propositions”—offers three different introductions to the project. Using the genres of the book proposal, the (speculative) faculty activity report, and the lesson plan, the introductions included in this section emphasize the simultaneous disjunction and reinforcement between the genres in which we write and the arguments we make. Part II—“Minor Genres and the Shadow Archive”—questions the assumed disjunction between minor genres of academic writing and the major work of academic field creation. Embracing the project’s use of the many types of writing we produce as academics, this section of the book is written using a constellation of genres—statement of purpose, PowerPoint presentation, annotated bibliography, keyword essay, and statement of endeavors—that are traditionally not considered effective vehicles for making research arguments. As examples of what I am describing as “minor genres,” these forms of academic writing are often relegated to the shadow archive, the repository that houses the plethora of (generally unseen and often undervalued) documents that an expansively conceptualized scholarly praxis generates. Part III—“Alien Abduction, Alien Form”—captures the multigenre realities of scholarly knowledge production by taking a single idea and tracking how it is developed through, and develops across, different genres: the

symposium, the conference paper, the syllabus, and the academic research essay. By focusing on the resonances and dissonances between two different literary genres (ethnic fiction and speculative fiction) and the diverse genres of academic labor, the varied forms in this section draw attention to how scholarly arguments build and evolve as they are worked through the distinctive conventions of research and pedagogical writing.

Critical Contexts and Relationship to Recent Scholarship

Reflecting the project's embrace of structural dissonance, generic friction, and relational nonalignment, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* is informed by and engages several different critical conversations, albeit in distinct ways. In terms of its form and the arguments it is making about the genres in which we write, the book imagines itself in dynamic engagement with a diverse group of critical texts authored within the last decade by women working in, against, and alongside academia and its practices. Focused on topics ranging from Black diasporic visual culture, Indigenous science, autoethnography, consumerism, and Asian American mental health to breast cancer, fugitivity, archival impossibility, mushrooms, and creativity (among many other things), these texts are not unified by subject matter or research area. Rather, they are all experimental in form, written in ways that challenge the narrowness of the genres we use to create, publish, and share academic knowledge. Like this project, these texts are *alien forms*, books that recognize that academic knowledge can (and should) take many forms, even if those forms are strange and estranging. Including Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016), Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (2013), Elizabeth Chin's *My Life with Things: The Consumer Diaries* (2016), Julietta Singh's *No Archive Will Restore You* (2018), Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals* (2019), Mimi Khúc's *Open in Emergency: A Special Issue on Asian American Mental Health* ([2016] 2019), Anne Boyer's *The Undying: Pain, Vulnerability, Mortality, Medicine, Art, Time, Dreams, Data, Exhaustion, Cancer, and Care* (2019), Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart's *The Hundreds* (2019), Avery F. Gordon's *The Hawthorn Archive: Letters from the Utopian Margins* (2017), and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (2015), these unconventional volumes of scholarship explore the potential of scholarly

writing by embracing multiple genres, situating knowledge production both within and beyond academic contexts, locating authorial expertise in bodily as well as intellectual sites, and cross-pollinating knowledge across disciplinary and field boundaries through writing that is both critical and creative.

This exploration of speculative genres of academic writing/labor also responds to ongoing discussions about the ways in which disciplinarity structures the forms in which we write, think, and create. In part catalyzed by Christina Sharpe's (2016) exhortation that "we must become undisciplined," questions about what it might mean to "undiscipline" academic work have percolated over the last decade, most notably in the work of feminist, decolonial, Indigenous, and queer critics such as Duane Champagne, Mel Chen, Susan Squier, Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang, Chris Andersen, and Tiffany Lethabo King. Leaning into the possibilities of what undisciplining entails—self-reflexive examination of the conditions under which we produce academic knowledge; the refusal to prioritize academic forms and practices over local ways of knowing; a willingness to migrate across different conceptual and epistemic borders; being comfortable with states of flux, becoming, and argumentative unraveling; and an insistence on the role of the personal in countering the epistemic violence of abstraction—the diverse group of scholars assembled by Heather Houser and Stephanie LeMenager (2022) for a recent forum of *ASAP/Journal* utilize the short-form response to collectively explore the possibilities and limits of what it means to work within and without disciplinary forms and structures. Although *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*' tactical skepticism extends to whether or not undisciplining is truly possible within academia, it makes its modest contribution to this conversation by dwelling with nonspectacular genres of academic writing to imagine how our engagements with different scholarly, pedagogical, and bureaucratic forms are quotidian opportunities to think, write, and enact a broadly conceptualized scholarly practice, one that is perhaps not so much undisciplined as it is willing to experiment with different forms of discipline to push against the institutional regulation and authority to which we are all subject.

In its efforts to explore the processes of field formation and to trace the emergence of Global Asias as a scholarly field/method, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* builds on earlier and ongoing critical engagements with globalization manifested in the increasing attention over the last twenty-five years to "inter-Asian" connections in area studies, the "transnational turn" in American studies of the 1990s onward, the surfacing of what Prasenjit

Duara (2021b) calls “circulatory histories” in interdisciplinary fields like transpacific studies and Indian Ocean studies, and emerging critical approaches focalized through the movement of populations such as migration studies, diaspora studies, and critical refugee studies. Additionally, the book responds to previous efforts to reimagine Asia as an interlinked set of formations stretching beyond national, territorial, or cultural boundaries, by showing how the imaginable ageographies of other conceptual paradigms—“Inter-Asia,” “Other Asias,” “Global Asia,” “InterAsia,” and “Transnational Asia”—have been developed not only through critical studies (authored by Kuan-hsing Chen, Chua Beng Huat, Gayatri Spivak, Eng-seng Ho, and others) but also through institutional initiatives (like Penn State’s GAI, Duke University’s Global Asia Initiative, and NYU’s Center for Global Asia).

While theorizing the speculative genres of academic labor through the multifaceted work required to develop Global Asias as a new field/method is distinctive to *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*, some of the questions, arguments, and forms of the project, and the project’s general concern with the inequitable assessment of varied forms of scholarly labor, respond to the progressively shrill but by no means new conversations about “the crisis in the humanities.” When J. H. Plumb published *Crisis in the Humanities* in 1964, the sense that humanities work was increasingly specialized, insular, and irrelevant was already part of the conversation about the uses and mission of humanists. According to David Arndt (2007), this crisis must be understood in relation to the genealogy of the university whose four main historical iterations—the Christian university, the liberal arts college, the research university, and the commercial university—have different goals, assumptions, and definitions about the nature of scholarly labor. More precisely, the subsumption of the liberal arts college by the research university pressured humanistic disciplines into adopting the assumptions and forms promoted by the modern sciences. Accordingly, the “crisis in the humanities” stems in part because there exists a dissonance between the contemporary genres of humanities research and the traditional goals of a liberal arts education. Although not initially conceptualized as a direct response to this particular type of discordance, structural dissonance as form and method to argue that the valorization of research over teaching and service prevents us from recognizing the multifaceted practices and multigeneric forms through which we advance scholarly knowledge in the humanities can offer humanists some useful ways of reapproaching their academic labors.

Audience

Alien Forms and Minor Genres addresses a wide variety of audiences. Even as I imagine several different cohorts of readership for the volume, these potential readers fall into two main groups: those whose areas of research expertise aligns with the book's a/geographical preoccupations and (multi) disciplinary investments, and those who are interested in issues of labor, the academic profession, and the development of more inclusive scholarly practices. While there is overlap between these two readerships, the book's two main arguments will draw somewhat distinct audiences; the commitment to keep the arguments operating in nonaligned relation means that the project is constructed to encourage different kinds of readers to be in conversation without necessarily being converted, or having to declare allegiance, to a singularly defined field of academic study.

Readers from the first group will be those working in the fields of area studies, ethnic studies, and literary and cultural studies. The burgeoning scholarly community invested in Global Asias as a field and method of studying Asia in relation to its multiple diasporas will welcome the book's effort to map the evolution of Global Asias as an architecture designed to generate provocative conversations that redefine what it means to work in, at, for, and around Global Asias, not as a settled object of knowledge but as a dynamic praxis of engagement. Scholars in Asian studies, Asian American studies, and Asian diaspora studies will appreciate the ways in which the varied genres included in this volume make visible the overlaps and discontinuities between these different interdisciplines. Critics interested in genre, speculative fictions, literary criticism, and critical ethnic studies should find the book's attentiveness to the interrelation between social forms and literary forms illuminating.

Readers from the second group will approach their shared interests in academia, professionalization, and the nature of scholarly labor from a diverse set of vantage points. For graduate students and early-career scholars, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres'* arguments and formal experimentation serve to make transparent the diversity of scholarly praxis and the myriad genres through which scholarship is enacted. This volume reflects my ongoing commitments to training graduate students (for positions both within and beyond academia) and centering mentorship as a critical scholarly praxis; indeed, it is designed to complement my pedagogical and mentoring work by making more transparent the varied kinds of labor that make the profession possible. For mid-career colleagues, whether contingent, newly tenured, or

those who, like me, have not “progressed” in ways expected by our institutions, this book is written to make legible some of the reasons why we should undertake the work of reimagining the professional activities that contribute to scholarly knowledge production, and to sketch an alternative path for career advancement—one not overdetermined by the university’s reliance on assessing our work by using the TRS triad in determinative ways. For senior colleagues and administrators, this book is written as a rejoinder to “business as usual” and encourages us to reassess how we value our work, and to speculate about the possibility of creating multiple pathways for professional advancement by embracing the full spectrum of scholarly activity we undertake.

Compositional Form: A Conceptual Topography

Alien Forms and Minor Genres is a hybrid mix of academic and professional genres. Its mongrel composition is an attempt to capture the diverse natures of scholarly labor—and recognizes that, as Jacques Derrida has famously argued, the genres in which we write, think, and imagine ourselves into being are always mixed. To explore the hybrid character of the genres we use, the book systematically asks readers to think about the relationship between form and function by putting research, pedagogical, editorial, and administrative genres of writing in nonaligned, proximal relation. In other words, the project mixes genres not only to show that the genres in which we write are always mixed but also to speculate about how they exceed the TRS taxonomy in enabling capaciously imagined forms of scholarly work.

PART I

UNLIKELY PROPOSITIONS: A TRIO OF INTRODUCTIONS

INTRODUCTION 1 || BOOK PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION 2 || A (SPECULATIVE) FACULTY ACTIVITY REPORT

INTRODUCTION 3 || LESSON PLANS

PART II

MINOR GENRES AND THE SHADOW ARCHIVE

FREER AGENTS? || STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

MINOR GENRES OF ACADEMIC WRITING AND THE SHADOW ARCHIVE ||

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

WORKING AS/THROUGH ALIEN FORM || AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY
GLOBAL ASIAs: METHOD, ARCHITECTURE, PRAXIS || AN ANNOTATED ESSAY
WHAT IF, IF ONLY, AND IF THIS GOES ON: REIMAGINING SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY
THROUGH GLOBAL ASIAs PRACTICE || STATEMENT OF ENDEAVORS

PART III

ALIEN ABDUCTION, ALIEN FORM

ALIEN ABDUCTION, ALIEN FORM || CONFERENCE PAPER

SYLLABUS 1 || ALIENATION

SYLLABUS 2 || SPECULATIVE FICTIONS

SYLLABUS 3 || CONTEMPORARY ETHNIC AMERICAN LITERATURES

ALIEN ABDUCTION, ALIEN FORM || RESEARCH ESSAY

CODA || EDITORIAL DOSSIER

Making arguments through admixture leads to uneven results. There are logics but they are not always logical; insight comes from juxtaposition and friction (or sometimes combustion). In its embrace of the alien—the unfamiliar, the unvalued, the unrequited, the unowned, and the unimagined—this project chooses to make its points through constellation, recursion, and dissonance. Due to its strangeness, a table of contents may not be especially useful in helping a reader navigate its terrain. So perhaps the conceptual topography I offer here may help.

As scholars, we have so many forms at our disposal. While academic monographs and research articles are valuable genres for advancing scholarship, they are not the only genres that can be used for such purpose. And the other forms of scholarly labor and writing that we undertake are not necessarily less important than the research we pursue. This book utilizes some of the many genres in which I regularly write—editorial headnotes, book proposals, comments, faculty activity reports, abstracts, lesson plans, keyword essays, PowerPoint presentations, syllabi, conference papers, annotations, narrative statements, and reader reports—and constellates them to make visible the ways in which I have developed *Global Asias* as a differentially coherent scholarly endeavor, one that values varied forms of academic labor equally. The proliferation of forms is thus one distinctive feature of the project, a formal manifestation of the broader arguments

Alien Forms and Minor Genres makes in support of acknowledging the diversity of academic labor and the dimensionality of scholarly practice.

To return to one of the questions opening this proposal: What happens if we treat field formation and alternative genres of academic writing as speculative fictions, forms through which to reflect and reimagine the possibilities and value of scholarly labor? Speculative fictions help us to imagine different outcomes for current action and to visualize alternative futures through the inventional act of worldbuilding. Writing the introductions to this book using the genres of the book proposal, the faculty activity report, and the lesson plan is a speculative praxis that makes visible how my ongoing scholarly work of editing, teaching, and administration is simultaneously distinct from, but also a form of, the intellectual labor that I perform as a scholar committed to building Global Asias as a multidisciplinary, multigeneric, and collaborative field of knowledge production. The book's speculative praxis operates through two specific practices—dissonance and constellation—which generate new opportunities to imagine the variegated social and literary forms that collectively compose scholarly endeavor.

In refusing the conventions of the academic monograph and the orderly evenness of chapters, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* offers proliferation and juxtaposition in place of linearity and teleology. Although the book is arranged in three sections, the sections can be read in varied order. There is both resonance and friction between sections and within sections, which means not only that the book imagines different ways of enacting scholarly work—it imagines a different kind of reader. The book is written for readers looking for alternative ways of thinking, of writing, and of enacting scholarly practice, collaborators interested in contributing to the project of reimagining the conditions under which we labor. More specifically, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* imagines a reader who is willing to be alienated, to be refused comfort or clarity. Even as the book mobilizes certain genres in the interest of transparency, these forms are deployed as speculative fictions, which means that they are sometimes unreliable—and occasionally disingenuous. There are no certainties here beyond an insistence that scholarly work must be capaciously imagined and that the field of Global Asias is worth building. Uncertainty is not the register in which I have been trained to demonstrate scholarly expertise, but it is a register that has led me to different ways of conceptualizing and enacting my scholarly praxis. *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* is built in ways that invite its readers to share in that uncertainty and use it to reimagine what work we can and should be doing.

Introduction 2

A (SPECULATIVE) FACULTY ACTIVITY REPORT

Name:	Tina Chen
Department:	Liberal Arts—English, Asian Studies
Title:	Associate Professor of English and Asian American Studies
Administrative Assignments:	Director, Global Asias Initiative Director, English Department Mentoring Program Interim Director, Humanities Institute

AD35 Attestation:

I have reviewed the records in my possession and attest that they are in compliance with University Administrative Policy—AD35 University Archives and Records Management, and the General Retention Schedules (formerly Appendices 18 and 21).

CHECKLIST

- ☐ The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
- ☐ The Scholarship of Research and Creative Accomplishments
- ☐ Service, and the Scholarship of Service to the University, Society, and the Profession

Please slot the following activities into one of the three categories listed above. Activities should not be double-counted. If you have questions about where to put each of your activities, please note that even as this system is set up for the names of each category to assist you in determining this, each campus has the ability to customize Faculty Success to meet its own specific needs. As a result, many have created their own custom materials to provide guidance in response to this question. We encourage you to contact

your Faculty Success Administrator to inquire if such a document is available, or with any specific questions you may have.

- Write and publish peer-reviewed articles
- Write books published by a press noted on my department's "assessment indicator" list
- Create and direct multiple mentoring programs (for the English department, for professional organizations, for the GAI)
- Found *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*
- Establish the PSU Global Asias Initiative (GAI) as a multidisciplinary research center
- Edit a journal
- Direct a research center
- Serve on the PSU Humanities Institute Faculty Advisory Board
- Serve on the PSU Humanities Institute Executive Board
- Serve as the interim director of the PSU Humanities Institute
- Read and evaluate applications for the National Endowment for the Humanities
- Write recommendation letters for undergraduate students
- Write recommendation letters for graduate students
- Write recommendation letters for junior colleagues
- Write recommendation letters for senior colleagues
- Train graduate research assistants
- Organize the Global Asias conference series (every other year)
- Organize the Global Asias Summer Institute (every year)
- Codirect the Global Asias Summer Institute (repeatedly)
- Design, organize, and serve as senior faculty mentor for Junior Faculty Development workshops hosted by the East of California caucus and the Association for Asian American Studies
- Develop "On the Road" partnerships
- Serve as manuscript mentor for the CALS First Book Institute
- Orchestrate manuscript mentoring workshops for junior colleagues in the English department
- Participate in manuscript mentoring workshops for colleagues based at other universities
- Advise minority and underrepresented students
- Undertake community engagement
- Write tenure file assessments
- Review book manuscripts
- Review journal articles

- Serve on the advisory board for *American Literature*
- Write editorial headnotes
- Create networking opportunities for scholars interested in being part of a Global Asias community
- Serve as the Site Committee Chair for major national conference
- Serve on Modern Language Association (MLA) executive forum committees, both Asian American LLC and GS Speculative Fiction
- Undertake committee work at all levels (department, college, university, national), which includes faculty advisory cmte, personnel cmte, administrative cmte, graduate cmte, search cmtes, conference organizing cmtes, awards cmtes, cmte on writing, creative writing and essay prize cmtes, undergraduate cmte, faculty senate, advisory councils, steering cmte, curriculum cmte, social and organizational informatics review cmte, head review cmte, head search cmte, research and graduate studies awards cmte, ad hoc cmtes, mentoring working group, and nominating cmte, among others
- Mentor junior colleagues through the Woodrow Wilson Foundation program
- Consult on “diversity” issues
- Chair dissertation committees
- Ghost advising
- Organize professionalization workshops for graduate students and junior faculty
- Serve on comprehensive and prospectus committees
- Advocate for colleagues who have been denied tenure
- Advocate for colleagues who are not supported by the university
- Launch a Global Asias book series
- Coedit the Global Asias: Method, Architecture, Praxis book series
- Meet with prospective authors for the Global Asias MAP book series
- Orchestrate project development workshops for prospective authors
- Apply for grants
- Administer grants
- Give invited talks and keynotes
- Perform the “invisible labor” of being a “mentor, inspiration, and guide”
- Edit book projects designed to showcase the collaborative ethos animating Global Asias
- Run publishing workshops across the country
- Consult with institutions interested in building Global Asias programs
- Serve on prize/award committees (for AAAS, MLA, CELI)
- Participate on publishing panels
- Mentor postdoctoral fellows

- Serve as job placement director
- Serve as faculty adviser for undergraduate student interest organizations
- Coordinate the Global Asias LISTSERV
- Mentor new editors
- Run professional development events
- Build platforms for cultivating Global Asias scholars

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Narrative for (Perennial) Review: Capaciously Imagined Forms of Academic Work

As studies have shown, faculty service loads are not distributed equitably in academia. Unsurprisingly, women faculty perform significantly more service than men. Minority faculty are often tasked with the “invisible labor” of being “mentors, inspirations, and guides,” asked to serve as “the racial conscience of their institutions while not ruffling too many of the wrong feathers” (Matthew 2016). Much of this work centers on providing the various kinds of support—affective, logistical, emotional, editorial, pedagogical, political, ethical, and administrative—necessary to keep the academic profession running smoothly so that the “more important” work of research (or teaching) can be undertaken. Rather than argue that service should not be disproportionately shouldered by women and minorities (although it shouldn’t!), I encourage a rethinking of the ways in which academic labor is categorized into the genres of “teaching,” “research,” and “service” (TRS) and propose that we move beyond utilizing this triad in determinative ways. By suggesting that we treat the genres of academic labor with the same nuance and critical insight that we deploy when we study literary and social genres, I hope to open up a conceptual space for thinking about how we can approach the diverse genres of academic labor—which are broadly encompassed by the activities of teaching, research, and service, albeit in ways that often exceed the taxonomic approach embraced by institutional bureaucracies—in more speculative fashion. While more capaciously imagined ideas about the diverse genres of academic labor will not move us entirely away from unequal distributions of labor and a system that shunts devalued forms of such labor into the category of service, they can help us conceptualize new models for how questions of enactment, distribution, and value might be reapproached.

A genre designed to track productivity and assign value to the different kinds of labor we undertake as scholars, the faculty activity report is

a yearly record and assessment of how one's time and energies have been directed. Although the specific questions and formats of such reports vary, the faculty activity report is a genre designed not simply to create a record of what we do but rather to reinforce the divisions that determine the value of various types of academic labor. At my current university, the report consists of a "narrative for annual review" (suggested word count: 1,000) and a checklist of different activities that are roughly slotted into the three main categories of TRS. The report limits how we understand the nature, function, and possibilities of academic labor, by insisting that such labor be placed into specific categories, by strategically refusing to acknowledge the complexity of academic work that spans the bureaucratic divisions governing its meaning and impact, and by rendering invisible much labor that cannot be identified through the preconstructed checklist of options.

The report's function in generating legibility for certain types of academic work at the expense of other types is a fundamental characteristic of how institutions utilize genre to credential, legitimate, and stabilize. Specifically, genre's ability to bring into interrelation form and function mirrors and reinforces the institutional forms and functions that create value in academia. As such, we must ask ourselves: Why are some genres of academic writing—namely, research publication in the form of the academic monograph and peer-reviewed research article—prioritized so significantly over all other forms of academic writing? By approaching with critical skepticism the process through which academic labor is rendered intelligible through classificatory value systems, how does the non-neutral nature of our work become visible and more open to interrogation? How might our profession be enriched by a more expansive understanding of the scholarship of teaching and the scholarship of service—and how might that, in turn, transform our notions of how the scholarship of research manifests? What happens if we imagine all these genres in ways that exceed taxonomy, focusing on their speculative potential in catalyzing a praxis that actually recognizes how scholarly knowledge production can, and should, combine TRS orientations?

To begin addressing these questions, this introduction uses the genre of the faculty activity report in divergent ways, simultaneously to expose the limits of institutional understandings of scholarly genres and to leverage the critical energies of generic frictions, the structural dissonance produced when different genres rub against each other, to imagine alternative ways of conceptualizing our academic labors. Using the bureaucratic genre of the faculty activity report to introduce the book's arguments is meant

to encourage readers to think about how the prosaic genres in which we regularly write—lesson plans, memos, editorial headnotes, reader reports, proposals, annotations—are forms through which multifaceted scholarly engagement can also be advanced. Identifying this introduction as a (speculative) faculty activity report directs critical attention to how we can choose to approach the TRS triad conjecturally to begin reimagining ways of making the complexity of our scholarly praxis legible and establishing critical frames and contexts for assessing and recognizing this work.

Interestingly, the three types of work tracked by the faculty activity report are all understood as forms of *scholarship*—even if they are not, in fact, regularly treated as such when it comes to recognizing and rewarding the labor that makes academia possible. This terminology seems directly inspired by Ernest Boyer’s *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990), a special report produced by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Boyer’s report identifies a fundamental disjunction between academic reward systems and the spectrum of academic work—and suggests that a “restricted view of scholarship, one that limits it to a hierarchy of functions” and views basic research as “the first and most essential form of scholarly activity, with other functions flowing from it,” produces a distorted understanding of knowledge production, which “is not necessarily developed in such a linear manner” (E. Boyer 1990, 80). Although Boyer’s questioning of “the assumptive world of the academic professional” (R. Rice 1984) was significant enough to produce the rhetorical change noted on the faculty activity report used by my university (and many others), his provocation has been perhaps more influential in theory than in practice. As Moser and Ream (2015, 21) note in the expanded edition of Boyer’s study published twenty-five years later, “published research is still the dominant lens through which scholarship is understood. Academic disciplines are still siloed, and research that pushes the boundaries of traditional department structures is still discouraged.”

The subtitle of Boyer’s study is “Priorities of the Professoriate” and his response to the ways in which research publication is prioritized argues that scholarship includes a broad range of activity and function. According to Boyer, scholarship involves faculty expertise, peer review, and measurable impact, and should be understood to involve four functions: “the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching” (1990, 81). While research publication primarily promotes the investigative aspects of discovering knowledge, Boyer advocates for a more inclusive notion of

scholarship, one that recognizes as equally important the need to contextualize and synthesize such findings (integration), to engage with and use knowledge to solve consequential problems (application), and to transform knowledge through pedagogy (teaching).

The humanities can play an important role in developing a more expansive notion of scholarship by asking questions about the genres in which we work and by unapologetically creating spaces for the cultivation of alternative forms of scholarly praxis within the institutional structure known as the research university. The modern research university is premised on the ideals of scientific research and advanced graduate education as pioneered by the German model. This transformation involved prioritizing scientific methods, assumptions, and priorities; embracing stratification and its resulting hierarchies of practice and form; and establishing the university's role in professional credentialization. David F. Labaree (2017, 71) argues that even as the system of American higher education adopted many of the structures and priorities of the research university, it did so in a distinctive way: by adding the research university to the liberal arts college, it "not only refuses to resolve its contradictions one way or the other but also embraces the tensions that arise from working at cross purposes." What Labaree describes is a form of what I, in working to develop the multidisciplinary field of Global Asias, have called structural incoherence (T. Chen 2021b). Crucially, while structural incoherence names the contradictory conditions of multidisciplinary knowledge production, structural dissonance—which describes the collaborative, nonconsensus nature of "new and exciting knowledge forms and practices . . . [that] operate in anomalous interrelationship" (T. Chen 2021a, 1004)—can usefully make visible how the humanities can generate a scholarly praxis that overlaps with, but remains distinct from, the model developed in the sciences. Rather than assuming that humanities research must always manifest as the discovery of new knowledge and be measured as product (both assumptions that are driven by scientific praxis), what happens if we embrace the distinctive character of humanities scholarship as that which focuses on studying the dimensionality of human experience, involves imaginative effort, and values processes (of close reading, analysis, and critical thinking) as much as outcome? As Anna Wierzbicka notes, "one key feature of the explication of *the humanities* which distinguishes it from that of *science* is the use of the word *can*. . . . According to the concept behind the word *humanities*, it is good for people to know how someone **can** think, feel, speak, live, what kinds of things **can** happen to someone, and what kinds of things someone **can** do. This use of the modal

can makes the concept of ‘the humanities’ unempirical (in the sense in which the word *empirical* is usually used): people can’t study by observation or experiment how someone else *can* think, feel, speak, or live. This ‘can’ points to a necessary effort of the imagination, which cannot be fully replicated and empirically verified” (Wierzbicka 2011, 38, emphasis original).

Like Boyer and Wierzbicka, professional organizations for humanities disciplines have recognized the need to define scholarship in more expansive ways. The December 2006 “Report of the MLA Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion” was drafted in response to concerns about “the narrowing definitions of what constitutes scholarship for tenure and promotion, about the exclusion of new, alternative forms of scholarship, and about the failure to take account of the full range of practices that now constitute the system of scholarly exchange” (Stanton et al. 2007, 13). The Modern Language Association’s report focuses on the problems inherent in and generated by privileging the academic monograph as the most valued measure of scholarly research excellence. Making a series of twenty recommendations—which include advocating for transparency; aligning the expectations for promotion with institutional mission; and promoting scholarship, teaching, and service as “the three criteria” for tenure—the report exhorts “the profession as a whole [to] develop a more capacious conception of scholarship by rethinking the dominance of the monograph, promoting the scholarly essay, establishing multiple pathways to tenure, and using scholarly portfolios” (11). Even as many welcomed the report’s frank assessments and its extensive set of recommendations, colleagues were quick to raise concerns about the difficulty of creating practical “buy in” (as opposed to rhetorical support) from faculty and administrators (Parish 2008, 13); the “unintended consequences” of reinforcing the influence of research universities on other types of institutions and creating a system that actively devalues academic service (Kress 2008, 46); and the complex difficulties of determining the “optimal balance” between scholarly activities, especially in light of the “profession’s ambivalence and uncertainty about the relations among the academic triad [of TRS]” (Ringuette 2008, 7). Significantly, the report noted that despite recommending that the profession’s valuation system be recalibrated to recognize scholarship in more capaciously conceptualized ways, department heads were, by their own accounting, relatively satisfied with the prominence accorded the academic monograph in assessing and rewarding scholarly accomplishment.

Recognizing the variety of work that historians do, the American Historical Association (AHA) has published a series of statements and guidelines

over the last fifteen years aimed at encouraging departments to diversify their methods of evaluation. Encouraging the discipline to recognize the value of “publicly engaged and collaborative scholarship” (2017), digital scholarship (2015), and the scholarship of teaching and learning (2019), the AHA is actively questioning the ways in which the discipline has followed the lead of the sciences in “valu[ing] the creation of ‘new knowledge’ as the primary (if not singular) aspect of that conversation worthy of consideration in personnel decisions” and advocating for a more expansive scholarly mission: “the increase and diffusion of knowledge” (2023a). Indeed, its most recent statement—“Guidelines for Broadening the Definition of Historical Scholarship” (2023a)—pushes back against the ways in which “essential forms of scholarship—from textbooks and reference works to documentary and journal editing, op-eds, expert witness testimony, and more—have traditionally been relegated to the category of ‘service’ within the triad of research, teaching, and service on which academic promotion rests”; argues that scholarship manifests through a variety of genres; and proposes that the profession undertake the work of adapting existing measures of review and evaluation to this “wider range of formats.” In claiming that “history departments benefit from bigger tents in which many different forms of scholarship coexist and are mutually invigorating,” the AHA report essentially argues that humanities scholarship should be developed in richly diverse ways and that it is incumbent upon humanities scholars to make their practices legible.

As the reports by these two professional associations make evident, we have known for many years that the humanities have been defining scholarship in increasingly narrow ways, elevating research and the monograph in an effort to model the priorities and practices of the natural and physical sciences without perhaps fully accounting for the significant distinctions between these fields.¹ While such reports helpfully identify this as a problem, and usefully offer us language for how to discuss it and recommendations for how to address it, the disjunction between their rhetorical and material impacts signals the lack of an effective praxis. To be as explicit as possible: Given institutional complacencies, bureaucratic inertia, hierarchical proclivities, and professional conservatism, (1) more capaciously imagined forms of scholarship and assessment will not likely be invented by the very institutional architectures that currently maintain the status quo; (2) the challenges of how to imagine scholarship in more expansive ways must be, indeed can only be, addressed through our practices; (3) the work of such expansion and reinvention is already happening organically;

and (4) there must be more of us (at the administrative level, as senior or mid-career colleagues, working at research institutions) who are willing to invest our time and energies in this effort if legibility, acceptance, and transformation are to be made possible.

With this in mind, and taking a different approach to the problems these reports identify, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* suggests that work on literary genres and social forms might enable us to utilize the TRS triad differently; it endeavors to extrapolate from the work of building Global Asias as a multidisciplinary knowledge formation to demonstrate how a more capacious scholarly praxis results from approaching academic genres and forms in speculative fashion. While institutions rely on TRS to assign value and legibility to different types of academic labor, this reliance almost always operates in a deterministic way; work is slotted into a category which, by virtue of its assumed clarity, then determines the merit and decipherability of the labor that it includes. While this approach offers a neat solution to the problem of identifying types of academic work, its very neatness contributes to its inadequacy as a way of accurately assessing the multifaceted nature of academic knowledge production or of empowering faculty to reimagine the nature of scholarly praxis. Rather than following the institutional norm of relying on TRS to make taxonomic distinctions, we could instead conceptualize teaching, research, and service as speculative genres of academic labor whose generic porosity enables both cross-pollination across categorical distinctions and an attentiveness to the varied uses genre makes possible. Put differently, speculative genres of academic labor can function both to imagine how the scholarly work we perform exceeds the narrow constraints of categorization and to enact a more inclusive scholarly practice that might, in turn, transform our ideas about what “counts” as intellectual labor.

This move from taxonomy to speculation tracks alongside one of the key developments in the field of genre criticism—a trajectory that moves roughly from definition to classification to historicization to usage—and builds on critical work recognizing the ways in which genre should be thought of alongside social contexts and social forms. As Heather Dubrow (1982, 107) and others have argued, viewing genre too deterministically always leads to oversimplification, and we need to recognize that “the process of reacting to generic signals is seldom a simple and linear one.” While there has been much important scholarly criticism on (the impossibility of) defining genre, on how texts should be classified, and on theorizing genre in relation to historical processes, critics over the last thirty years have been equally if not more attentive to the ways in which we *use* genre.

Jacques Derrida (1980), Thomas Beebee (1994), and John Frow (2005) helpfully direct attention to thinking about genre in terms that exceed belonging. Derrida encourages us to recognize that texts do not *belong* to particular genres so much as they *participate* in them; Beebee asks us to understand that genre classifications concern the *use value* of the texts being classified; and John Frow argues that “the relationship [between text and genre] is one of productive elaboration rather than of derivation or determination” (2005, 25). Collectively, these critics suggest that we pivot away from concerns about belonging and toward questions of relation, enactment, and functionality when thinking about genre, a critical and conceptual move that can help us shift from the kind of deterministic understanding of genre currently demonstrated by the university’s use of TRS to assess and value academic labor.

Complementing this work in genre criticism, Caroline Levine makes a transformative argument about the social and political energies that can be generated when we differentiate genre from form. According to Levine, forms—which she defines as “patternings, shapes, and arrangements” (2015, 13)—operate expansively across materials and contexts; their combination of repetition and portability enables us to think about the ways in which institutions use a variety of forms—social, political, and bureaucratic—to preserve themselves. Her insights are crucial in two respects: (1) They encourage us to recognize that institutional forms should be subject to analysis in the same ways literary genres are, and (2) they demonstrate that scholarly knowledge makes its claims through specific forms which can be either maintained or transfigured. Indeed, she argues that even as “it has become routine to take the forms of institutions for granted as singular, coordinated, and monolithic while carefully exploring the most elusive and subtle structures that organize literary texts[, i]t is time to acknowledge that social experience, too, is composed of subtle and conflicting temporal organizing patterns, and to address directly the relations between aesthetic and social tempos” (2015, 68). The (non)equivalence Levine identifies between genre and form thus operates to make possible the “productive elaboration” that Frow encourages.

Exempla: Global Asias As/Through Alien Form

Alien Forms and Minor Genres argues that productive elaboration entails reapproaching the genres of academic labor as speculative forms, patterns of practice and expectation that give shape to academic priorities whose

performance might also become the grounds from which to imagine a new set of shapes and priorities for institutional life. If institutions approach TRS deterministically by understanding teaching, research, and service as distinct genres of academic labor whose categorical clarity determines the merit and decipherability of our scholarly work, how can we, as practicing scholars and academics, enact this work in ways that make the conceptual praxis of teaching, research, and service as speculative forms more visible? Put differently, since academic genres and forms are “categories wielded by communities of practice” (Rieder 2017, 206), what does the practice of our community make visible about the ways in which genres of academic labor can and should be imagined?

This introduction uses the genre of the faculty activity report not only to make an argument (through a checklist and a narrative summary) about shifting from deterministic to speculative approaches to academic labor but also to document how the methods, architectures, and engagements of Global Asias as a multidisciplinary field of academic knowledge production result from an ongoing effort to reimagine scholarly praxis more holistically and capaciously. As developed through my editing of *Verge* and the other collaborative GAI projects, Global Asias is a conceptual approach that draws on the methods, vocabularies, and priorities of critical race and ethnic studies to unsettle the assumptions of Asian studies while, in parallel, leveraging Asian studies’ attentiveness to questions of place, regional awareness, and linguistic expertise to discomfit Asian American studies’ tendency to reinforce the US-centrism of concepts governing the Asian diaspora. It is an endeavor that actively tries to imagine new ways of approaching Asia and its diasporas as subjects and objects of knowledge. By drawing on work from three distinct interdisciplines—Asian studies, Asian American studies, and Asian diaspora studies—to stage intellectual exchanges between and across disciplines and fields, Global Asias is an opportunity to reimagine scholarly knowledge production about Asia-focused worlds and epistemologies. Concomitantly, it is part of an effort to imagine and enact a scholarly praxis that does not prioritize research activity over editing, program-building, mentoring, and pedagogy; indeed, it resists such prioritization, in part by troubling the presumed clarity between these ostensibly different genres of academic labor. Accordingly, its speculative fictions—conceptual, methodological, and generic—operate at different scales and in synergistic fashion to make the work of its building legible and to make possible more work of this nature.

The arguments outlined here are the result of an effort to distill, conceptualize, and share the methods, architectures, and praxes that I have used not only to advance Global Asias as an emergent research field but to rethink the function and valuation of my scholarly labors, which operate holistically in supporting this academic work. While these labors are being presented, by virtue of the literary genre in which I am writing, as distinct forms of scholarly praxis, the neatness of their presentation obscures the speculative, and infinitely messier, circumstances, conditions, and characteristics of their evolving enactment. Acknowledging this disjunction between presentation and practice allows me to remind myself that enacting a more capaciously imagined scholarly praxis has been a process whose organic unfolding was made possible by approaching the institutional genres of TRS as *alien forms*, forms of writing and professional enactment that (1) engage the genres in which they are working speculatively, (2) leverage the conceptual possibilities of generic frictions to create structural dissonance, (3) challenge the distinctions that disarticulate research, teaching, and service orientations, (4) embrace the synergistic possibilities of cross-pollinating epistemologies and practices across institutional taxonomies of scholarly labor, and (5) support the formation of new assemblages of scholarly labor whose value isn't overdetermined by existing institutional definitions of TRS.

In an effort to provide a finer-grained and more comprehensive depiction of how I have worked collaboratively with others to create Global Asias as a multidisciplinary field studying Asia and its multiple diasporas in ways that the conventional faculty activity report is not designed to record or assess, I share here a few examples of the projects I have created, situating them in relation to three genres of scholarly activity—editing, primarily, but also program-building and mentoring—that map somewhat incongruently onto the more familiar TRS triad. Such incongruency has been important in helping to visualize (and make visible) a scholarly praxis that offers an alternative to the institutional taxonomies which usually determine legibility and value. These scholarly activities can be (and sometimes are) loosely equated with TRS—with editing as a form of research activity (although not one that persuasively demonstrates why someone working at a research-heavy R1 institution as designated by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education should be tenured or promoted), program-building a form of (administrative) service, and mentoring a form of pedagogy (although, again, not one that is fully valued or understood in relation to the genre to which it ostensibly belongs). But even this exercise in provisional assignment immediately raises questions and concerns.

Editing is research oriented . . . except for when it is (quite often) counted by the institution as service. Program-building is obviously service . . . except it also involves research knowledges (either in their creation or in their dissemination through the design of institutional structures) and teaching (in the form of courses or training). Mentoring can be pedagogical insofar as one is instructing others about the profession, but this form of engagement can also involve collaboration and publication, or be considered academic service. There is a flexibility built into the institution's determinative approach to TRS that theoretically can, but usually doesn't, operate in support of a more capacious approach to scholarly activity. All of which is to say that the excessive dimensions of each of these scholarly labors might perhaps be fruitful grounds from which to reimagine the narrowly defined genres of research, teaching, and service as the three main criteria determining what kinds of scholarly work matter.

Given the fundamental importance of editing to the research economy upon which contemporary higher education is built, it is somewhat surprising how little attention we pay to discussing its critical role in producing scholarship or assessing it as an intellectual practice. While editors debate this among themselves—the Council of Editors of Learned Journals (CELJ) *LISTSERV* regularly hosts lively conversations that demonstrate how an academic editor's logistical practices are inextricably entangled with their/the journal's scholarly mission—the research-oriented dimensions of editing are often overlooked when editors are asked to share their knowledge and expertise about publishing at the ubiquitous “how to publish” panels and roundtables populating the academic conferencing landscape. Sharing this type of information as part of a broader commitment to transparency is of vital importance, but the near exclusive focus on the prosaic aspects of the publication process in such forums is both a product of and a contributor to understanding editing according to the dictates of a deterministic approach to TRS. One exception to this is the dossier of materials presented in a special section of *Profession* on “The Profession of Journal Editing and the Intellectual Life of the Academy,” curated by Jana Argersinger and Michael Cornett. The diverse collection of essays and responses included in this dossier collectively make a pointed argument in support of recognizing editing as “intellectual, field shaping work” (2009, 106). As a number of the contributors to the forum suggest, editors work collaboratively with authors to identify research questions and critical assumptions, make arguments and interventions, and expand scholarly engagement. In short, editors “influence the direction of a field or the emergence or death

of a new way of looking at a discipline” (Luey 2009, 115) and this work of disciplinary shaping is, by its nature, an expansively meaningful type of scholarly activity that combines TRS orientations. While it seems relatively straightforward (and perhaps too obvious) to argue that editing involves a mix of pedagogical, intellectual, and administrative work which makes slotting it neatly into a single category of academic labor quite problematic, how to make those alien forms of scholarly labor accessible/assessable is considerably more difficult, for varied reasons—because a more expansive conceptualization of this type of labor doesn’t map neatly onto TRS, because our profession does not tend to devote much critical attention to how this manifests as scholarly praxis, and because determinative approaches to TRS confuse the form and function of teaching, research, and service as academic genres of labor.

Writing studies is one field that has made a distinct effort to discuss the work of editing in relation to research and teaching as well as to service. In a special issue of *College English* on “Scholarly Editing: History, Performance, Future,” editor Melissa Ianetta notes that the field’s “anxieties about its intellectual prestige” and writing program administrators’ “concern with communicating the intellectual nature of their labor” (2019, 268) result in opportunities to be self-reflexive about how editorial work in writing studies encompasses a broad range of intellectual, pedagogical, and service activity. As part of a concerted effort to treat editorial work as labor that spans all three genres used to assess academic accomplishment, *Behind the Curtain of Scholarly Publishing: Editors in Writing Studies* (Giberson et al. 2022) foregrounds the perspectives of journal and book editors in the field and devotes space to inviting them to expound on the intellectual aspects of their editorial activity, including the role of editing in building new scholarly fields (Matsuda), developing new writing genres (Eyman and Ball), establishing professional and epistemological networks (Hawk), promoting scholarly communities (Bazerman), and expanding the opportunities for more diverse approaches to knowledge-making (Powell).

One of the contributors to that volume, Cheryl Ball, has elaborated elsewhere on the ways in which her scholarly praxis, understood holistically, stems from a professional philosophy that she terms *editorial pedagogy*. Senior coeditor of *Kairos* and executive director of CELJ, Ball realized that “I had hit a point in my career where everything I worked on could be witnessed through the lens of my editorial work” (Eyman and Ball 2022, 169). Fundamental to editorial pedagogy, which Ball (2012) defines as a praxis that “builds on the recursive and reciprocal nature of professionalization

through editing, writing, mentoring, and teaching,” is a recognition that editing can generate the momentum for an expansive scholarly praxis, one which includes research activity, pedagogy, and service. This acknowledgment runs counter to the institutional use of TRS, and Ball’s example of working simultaneously within and outside of academic spaces—she left the tenure track to become a library publisher and now has her own consulting business while continuing to operate in academic spaces like the journal *Kairos* and *CELJ*—makes visible both the costs of academia’s inflexible usage of TRS in assessing academic activity and the possibilities of embracing a more commodious conceptualization of the nature, impact, and evolution of scholarly labor.

Working within academic spaces and institutions, I have tried to enact a more capacious scholarly practice through Global Asias by focusing on three keywords: method, architecture, and praxis. The varied GAI projects—including journal, biennial conference series, summer institute, Cyber Chats, book series, and writing program—all operate synergistically to advance the development of Global Asias by collaboratively developing methodological approaches (which, as Carlos Rojas [2019] reminds us, are always both programmatic and oppositional in nature) to the study of Asia in relation to its multiple diasporas; building material and conceptual infrastructure to bring scholars into discussion and debate; and devising a diverse set of tactics and theories for collegial engagement, productive disagreement, and communal knowledge-making. These manifold projects are structures created to challenge existing institutional practices that separate scholars working on “Asian” topics from those working on “diasporic” topics and to create new conditions of possibility for exploring how Global Asias can destabilize or transform existing methodologies. Through a scholarly praxis that is rooted in an embrace of editing as an alien form of academic labor—by which I mean a form whose incongruency with existing determinative definitions of TRS opens up new possibilities for utilizing it in speculative, worldmaking ways—I believe this work engenders alternative ways of making the multifaceted dimensions of scholarly knowledge production legible beyond the narrow definitions that our institutions currently make available to us.

The journal *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* began as and remains a speculative proposition: Despite the historical antagonisms between area studies and ethnic studies, how might crafting an architecture that allows a cacophony of scholars from these distinct interdisciplines to occupy shared space without pressuring them to be in alignment or even sympathy

produce Global Asias as a multidisciplinary, transfield knowledge formation? Creating the journal involves a commitment to editing, of course, but such editing encompasses so many diverse forms of scholarly work that it seems disingenuous to try and fit this labor into only one of the boxes—service, teaching, research—that the institution uses to determine legibility and value. Conceptualizing the journal as an alien form of academic labor means leaning into the incongruencies inherent in its editorial mission of bringing into nonaligned relation area studies, ethnic studies, and diaspora studies and working to build it as an infrastructure designed to enable the discontinuous outcomes of multidisciplinary and transfield encounters that exist in juxtapositional and disjunctive possibility without necessarily moving toward consolidation or resolution. This commitment to open-ended engagement that is not meant to concretize into singular form or expression, bolstered by the invention of genres and practices designed to resist the drive toward critical consolidation that underlies much academic paradigm work, encourages those working in and with Global Asias methods to embrace the possibilities of an *alienizing praxis* that is, at its heart, the labor of transforming (our work, the genres in which we write, ourselves) into alien form. If “strangeness is a method” (J. Rice 2020, 26), a praxis that reminds us to keep making strange the forms in which we work might be inordinately useful in helping us to push back against the accepted understandings of both routinized and fetishized academic labor.

Appreciating the journal as an architectural platform through which to engineer simultaneously Global Asias as a collaborative multidisciplinary knowledge formation and the elasticity of scholarly praxis generates my/ the journal’s investment in diversifying the academic genres in which we write, think, teach, and engage. As the earlier analysis of TRS reveals, altering the profession’s understanding of the forms and values of scholarly activity requires more than new ways of talking about such activity; it requires the building of actual structures that make alternative forms of scholarly practice legible. To that end, *Verge* has committed itself to making space for and promoting nontraditional genres of scholarly writing in an effort both to diversify the genres in which academics write and to provide ways of recognizing the diversity of academic work. The journal’s most distinctive feature is an opening section called *Convergence*, where we curate a rotating series of rubrics that emphasize cooperative intellectual engagement and interchange. These formats include *A&Q*, a responsive dialogue, in either interview or roundtable format, inspired by a set of questions; *Codex*, a collaborative discussion and assessment of books, films, and events;

Translation, for texts, primary or secondary, not yet available in English; *Field Trip*, reports from various subfields of the disciplines that are cast into relief through in-person encounters in classrooms, workshops, and conferences; *Portfolio*, commentaries on visual images; *Interface*, texts exploring the resources of the print-digital world and highlighting the unique affordances of digital humanities projects; and *Cross Talk*, an orchestrated conversation between scholars and texts that highlights dialogue and annotation as critical genres of scholarly engagement. These nontraditional rubrics are often collaborative (in both conceptualization and execution), reflecting the dynamic exchanges that make knowledge production possible. They also acknowledge and make institutionally legible diverse kinds of academic work (in symposia and conferences, in classrooms and public humanities events, online, and via myriad forms of technological mediation). *Convergence* features are thus also alien forms, genres imagined into being to document and enable the collaborative dynamism of scholars working across and between fields and disciplines, ranks and geographies, and institutional realities and imagined communities.

Do alien forms beget alien forms? In the case of *Verge* and its *Convergence* features, the answer is yes. The journal's success has made possible, both conceptually and materially, a whole host of other projects. While these other projects—including a conference series, a summer institute that mentors early-career colleagues, a Global Asias Cyber Chats program, an “On the Road” program for transinstitutional partnerships, the Global Asias: Method, Architecture, Praxis (Global Asias MAP) book series, and a writing program—each work within and against their generic constraints, they all share the journal's alienizing praxis. In practical terms, this means that they each approach their particular genre of enactment as a speculative form, an opportunity for remaking the scholarly worlds in which we operate, by drawing on the repertoire of Global Asias tactics and theories cultivated by the community of practice brought into being by the journal and related GAI projects.

As a case in point, *Global Asias: Tactics & Theories* is a collaborative project published as the inaugural volume of the Global Asias MAP book series, itself made possible through the GAI's systematic cultivation of Global Asias' varied forms of capaciously and speculatively imagined scholarly praxis. The project brings together a diverse group of scholars to work across ranks, disciplines, fields, geographies, and languages on a set of critical concerns animating the possibilities and problems of Global Asias scholarship. Focusing on a set of keywords that highlight both potential overlaps

and points of disagreement between area studies and ethnic studies—*transits, indigeneity, epistemology, language, and a/geography*—this enterprise challenges the silos of academic knowledge formation that currently make legible and organize the study of Asia and its multiple diasporas. Critically, even as the edited volume will make Global Asias more lucid as a vibrant, multidisciplinary field of academic knowledge production and inaugurate a new wave of scholarly and pedagogical interest in Global Asias methods and topics, my coeditor/collaborator Charlotte Eubanks and I are equally focused on how such a project can reimagine the conditions of possibility animating scholarly research and lay the groundwork for sustainable and sustaining intellectual exchange across disciplinary, institutional, and field boundaries. In both design and execution, then, the project is an example of how the collaborative ethos of Global Asias scholarship can create innovative models of academic knowledge production, as well as serve as a catalyst for generating new approaches to Global Asias scholarship and pedagogy. The volume's multipronged approach to the composition of content—which includes research forums modeled on the *Convergence* features that *Verge* has pioneered and pedagogical materials—reflects a broad understanding of scholarly work and promotes an intellectual approach that resists mastery by building and investing in structures of intellectual engagement and experimentation that embrace disagreement and differences. As a form of scholarly engagement, *Global Asias: Tactics & Theories* alienizes through its commitment to enacting the central tenets of the field—a distinctive embrace of multidisciplinary, collaborative knowledge production that is not consensus driven, and self-reflexivity—to create an opportunity for different kinds of scholars and different kinds of scholarship to be in dialogue without collapsing them into a unified set of perspectives and approaches.

The GAR's latest project—the Global Asias Writing the Profession (GAWP) program—is another example of how alien forms approach academic genres speculatively to reimagine the conditions in which we work. As should be clear by now, Global Asias is not only an opportunity to rethink area studies, ethnic studies, and diaspora studies as disarticulated institutional forms of knowledge production about Asia and its multiple diasporas. It is also an opportunity to reimagine the mentoring and professional development structures that make Global Asias scholarship and institutional legibility (im)possible. By putting into practice some of the principles developed through Global Asias epistemologies—namely, nonaligned relation, structural dissonance, reimagined community, and

speculative imagination—GAWP operates as a platform that cultivates cross-disciplinary and transfield collaboration, creates extra-institutional professional networks to support colleagues, connects scholars to professional development opportunities, and constructs new modes of intellectual engagement. The program alienizes writing's role in creating both scholars and scholarship and understands "writing the profession" as a means of recalibrating the role that writing (in and through) communities plays in creating academia itself. Instead of allowing the profession to dictate genres of academic writing and their value, GAWP inverts this dynamic to generate a Global Asias writing community that can rewrite how we study Asia and reimagine the role of writing in creating both scholarly community and research. Practically speaking, this means that for some of our participants, traditionally defined research publication will be a desired outcome while others might be motivated by the opportunity to write outside of the constraints of academic genres and conventions and dialogue with others to envision new forms of collaborative knowledge-making. GAWP welcomes such diversity and exists to encourage us—as scholars, thinkers, teachers, and colleagues—to explore multiple avenues for writing ourselves, and our profession, into being.

Do alien forms beget alien forms? In writing about Global Asias and these GAI projects as alien forms, it must no doubt be clear that the GAI itself exists as an alien form. For many years, its alien nature was both hidden and nurtured by its institutional illegibility. To build it in ways that would support Global Asias' dual form as collaborative research field and alienizing praxis required inhabiting the peculiar space of institutional unknowing. This space can be tricky to navigate: Lack of institutional recognition means that much of your labor, time, and energy is uncompensated and there is less support (of all kinds) for the work you are doing. But one of the great privileges of being a tenured faculty member is the ability to make the choice to work differently. Such choices may lead to inventing new genres of academic labor. Or maybe they lead to approaching the genres of academic labor differently. You may not be promoted for making these choices, but they are still choices you can make—which means that those of us who have the luxury of making such choices should not only make them but also work on creating opportunities for others to be able to make these choices as well.

Making the choice to build the GAI by assembling the various Global Asias projects into a formation that was not officially sanctioned by the university meant more control over the vision and execution of the GAI's investments and mission. The GAI existed in this unsanctioned form for

the first eight years of its existence, a time during which much of the labor that went into building it was overlooked, unrecognized, and not materially compensated, noted yearly on my faculty activity report as a form of service that might be appreciated but would not be rewarded through promotion. Through this initial incarnation as alien form, I worked to create the GAI as a scholarly initiative that is as invested in mentoring and building structures for collaborative engagement as it is in developing research methods and practices, welcoming those interested to be part of its differentially coherent praxis. The GAI's second incarnation as alien form involves engendering its institutional transformation while maintaining its original commitments to an alienizing praxis, a metamorphosis driven by the need to create GAI as a durable structure so that *Verge* and the other GAI projects will continue to exist once I step down from editing and directing.

To understand and build these projects as alien forms required my own willingness to be made alien, to move outside of the comfortable arena of my primary area of scholarly research expertise—Asian American studies—into the vastness of an imaginable ageography called Global Asias that itself refuses categorical clarity. The pressures against that move into foreign territory are intense: As academics, we are trained to specialize, encouraged to develop expertise, and rewarded for focusing our scholarly activity through the disciplines and forms that the profession deems valuable and legible. I do not think I would have really considered what it means to work as/through alien form, or how to develop Global Asias as/through alien form, if I had not been diagnosed with late-stage breast cancer and experienced its awful power to “liberate [someone] from what she once thought of as herself” (A. Boyer 2019, 14). In *The Undying*, Anne Boyer observes that “when you have cancer, you have to learn to understand what is growing inside you as that which is both yourself and not yourself, as yourself and a thing that, if all goes well, will be taken out of you, too. Self-love under these conditions appears to require you to love the cancer in yourself and to hate it as a threat to yourself, too” (78). Ironically, having no choice about the cancerous alien within can mean more choices for how to exist in a state of alien form.

I might have founded and edited *Verge* even without being diagnosed with cancer. But I think I would have approached that work in a very different way. I think I would not have questioned the hierarchy of generic forms through which scholarship is produced. I think I would have thought of editing as important and interesting work that despite its importance and interest should still be subordinated to the book I was (obviously) writing.

I think I would have continued thinking of there being overlaps in my teaching, research, and service activity but not thinking of them as activities that exceed the generic forms that the profession had provided me ready-made. And I think I would have done some very solid work without ever realizing the potential of what my scholarly praxis could accomplish.

Working as/through alien form, and developing Global Asias as/through alien form, has meant engaging the genres in which I think, write, teach, and create speculatively. It has meant learning to coexist with contradiction, to be comfortable with irresolution. It has meant understanding that the structural dissonances of generic frictions can help us reimagine the genres of scholarly labor even as they paradoxically operate to remake generic distinctions as we know them. It has meant recognizing that the ambivalence of loving/hating what is you/alien can be the generative conditions of worldmaking.

Coda: From a Politics of Refusal to a Praxis of Permission

Alien Forms and Minor Genres is a book that I never intended to write—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that I had decided that writing another academic monograph was not something I wanted to do. After being diagnosed with cancer in 2011, the reasons for not writing another book—terminal illness, the recalibration of personal and professional goals, an unwillingness to accept the narrow notions governing the value of my academic labor—seemed dispositive. In choosing deliberately to not write the next book, then, I instead looked for alternative ways of enacting scholarship, which I understood capaciously to combine TRS orientations. Over the last decade, such enactment has manifested as/through a series of different academic forms and genres whose dissonances and synergies are made differentially coherent through the Global Asias Initiative.

Crucially, while the varied academic genres I work with/in—journal, mentoring programs, summer institutes, a conference series, syllabi, collaborative projects, a book series, grant proposals, conference papers, editorial headnotes, articles—are not unfamiliar academic forms, approaching them as speculative fictions through which I could reimagine the possibilities of scholarly labor and scholarly value allowed me to manifest and use them differently than I would have if my priorities had not been transformed by illness. While my reasons for not wanting to write a monograph remain—my professional goals have been irrevocably altered by

my experience with illness and my commitment to approaching scholarly labor speculatively and comprehensively—recording the nature, approach, and possibilities of the work I have been doing is an attempt to provide others, both early-career colleagues who are trying to enter the profession and more experienced peers who are trying to reimagine their professional activity so that what we choose to do reshapes the forms and values of academia, an example of how one person is trying to enact a scholarly praxis that responds to the seemingly intractable problems identified by Ernest Boyer and others within the academy.

Global Asias as a multidisciplinary field of knowledge production and the GAI projects that advance its development have been powered by a commitment to speculative genres of academic labor. By recognizing the importance of teaching, research, and service but also questioning the ways in which they have been so narrowly defined, I have instead worked to enact a more expansive scholarly praxis by embracing editing, mentoring, and program-building as forms of academic labor whose incongruent mapping onto TRS opens up spaces, both conceptual and material, from which to reimagine the nature and function of academic work. In offering an alternative to the institution's deterministic approach to TRS, I am not suggesting that the profession has been wrong to prioritize teaching, research, and service as the primary criteria for acknowledging and assessing academic accomplishment. Neither am I suggesting that editing, mentoring, and program-building are the specific genres through which we should all reimagine our work as academics. Instead, what I propose is this: that we look to the ways in which our scholarly praxis may already exceed the institutional taxonomies we have inherited; that we become more willing to remake taxonomies so that genre's uses shift our critical attention away from belonging and toward enactment; and that we disarticulate form from genre through a praxis that conceptualizes TRS such that rather than understanding service, teaching, and research as forms of academic labor that manifest through particular genres of writing and performance, we instead understand research, teaching, and service as specific types of academic praxis that can manifest in and through a variety of genres. In other words, focusing on scholarly praxis as/through alien form might enable us to imagine TRS not so much or not simply as a taxonomy but as a schema that makes speculative border crossings both visible and possible. All the alien forms I've created to advance Global Asias as a method, architecture, and praxis encompass research activity, pedagogy, and service work. While these forms of scholarly praxis are not equivalent, they are

more deeply interconnected than a deterministic approach to TRS recognizes. Perhaps an openness to embracing the nonsingular expressions of the work we do as scholars can make these alternative forms of academic praxis more legible.

After hearing me describe the Global Asias Initiative and how it operates, a colleague remarked upon its lab-like qualities. Although this was not how I initially conceptualized the initiative, his trenchant observation gives me another way to articulate the arguments I have been making about diversifying the genres of academic labor, working as/through alien form, and recognizing the role of the humanities in developing a more expansively conceptualized scholarly praxis. As an institutional form, the laboratory could be a useful way of focalizing some of the conditions to which the GAI responds and the dynamics that it cultivates: a “research problem” whose size and complexity require collaborative effort, the commitment to developing a pipeline of diverse activity leading to publication, a space for experimentation and innovation. While characterizing the GAI as a humanities lab might bring to the fore some of these issues, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* argues that we must additionally explore how the work we do in the humanities might transform how we conceptualize the lab itself as part of an interrogation of scholarly praxis. Arguing that those of us working in the humanities should develop more capaciously imagined genres of academic writing and academic labor, in part by insisting on the distinctiveness of our scholarly praxis and resisting the temptation to model our genres of academic labor on the ones developed by the sciences, means that the GAI would necessarily approach the institutional form of the lab in a speculative manner. In the sciences, a laboratory is a space for research, and its success is often measured by metrics that in and of themselves do not seem open to question: research publications, graduate students, grant funding. If it is a laboratory, the GAI is more than a place to work or generate research; it is an opportunity to question the processes and products that we are generating as research—and to reimagine the forms of scholarly engagement that we undertake, both within the university and in the wider world.

This speculative approach draws attention to the architectures, both conceptual and material, that we design to enable multidisciplinary collaboration and encourages the kinds of productive elaboration that non-deterministic uses of genre to understand academic labor makes possible. These efforts complement but do not conform to the parameters of the scientific laboratory. Notably, all of these terms—collaboration, elaboration, laboratory—share the Latin root word *labor*, which means “work,” and the

argument I am making here is simple: that the complexities of academic work cannot be assessed through the deterministic approach to TRS that predominates in academia and that we might look to the complexity of our existing scholarly praxis to reimagine the alien forms of academic labor and academic labor as an alien form. Understanding the constraints and hierarchies that govern academic labor, my ambitions are modest—this is not so much a call for eliminating the genres through which certain forms of intellectual labor are promoted and made legible as it is an effort to recognize the diversity of genres that already operate to advance the intellectual work we do as academics and to suggest that more fully embracing these diverse genres will draw attention to underacknowledged forms of academic labor.

While some of the ideas and practices discussed here began as a politics of refusal, I'd like to conclude this (speculative) faculty activity report by suggesting that we imagine a praxis of permission alongside a politics of refusal. Even as critics have usefully theorized the possibilities of a politics of refusal (Simpson 2007, 2014) and noted that “refusal is not a prohibition but a generative form” (Tuck and Yang 2014, 241), refusal can also be an exhausting and unsustainable way to exist in the profession. As Carla Nappi notes, “when it [working in academia] depends on a methodology of disobedience and rebellion in order for people to live, for them to be able to attempt to bring their full selves to the work that asks such a huge portion of their waking lives, when we accept and celebrate that as part of an institution, we’re often asking the most vulnerable members of a system to offer themselves up for a kind of energetic slaughter” (2025, 192), then we must change the system. Thus it seems important to say here that the work of creating Global Asias as/through alien form that I’ve undertaken over the last decade has evolved from refusing to allow institutional dictates to determine scholarly value and the forms of scholarly labor to permitting myself (and hopefully others) to imagine other ways of working and being, to imagine into possibility alien forms of collective praxis that welcome, nurture, and appreciate a diversity of scholarly engagement and accomplishment.

Note

- 1 While my argument in *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* is focused on the humanities, the push to recognize scholarship more capaciously is not unique to the humanities. For example, the Computing Research Association

published a “best practices” memo arguing that “relying on journal publications as the sole demonstration of scholarly achievement, especially counting such publications to determine whether they exceed a prescribed threshold, ignores significant evidence of accomplishment in computer science and engineering.” Indeed, the report goes on to say that “obligating faculty to be evaluated by this traditional standard handicaps their careers, and indirectly harms the field.”

Introduction 3

LESSON PLANS

Overview

Scholarly praxis is messy, complex, and evolving. Even though most academics do conceptualize their efforts through the genres of teaching, research, and service (TRS) used by institutions of higher education to assess faculty activity, institutional reliance on TRS almost always operates deterministically—that is, work is slotted into a category which, by virtue of its assumed clarity, then determines the merit and decipherability of the labor that it includes. While this approach neatly identifies different types of academic work, its emphasis on legibility, categorization, and rigid formulas for calculating scholarly merit makes it insufficient as a way of accurately assessing the multifaceted nature of academic knowledge production or empowering faculty to develop more capaciously imagined forms of scholarship.

Encouraging academics to pivot their thinking about TRS genres away from concerns about belonging and toward questions of relation, enactment, and functionality lays the groundwork for approaching genres of academic labor speculatively. More pointedly, speculative genres of academic labor can function both to imagine how the scholarly work we perform exceeds the narrow constraints of categorization and to enact a more inclusive scholarly practice that might, in turn, transform our ideas about what “counts” as intellectual labor. To that end, this lesson plan introduces readers to what it means to work as/through *alien form*, forms of writing, scholarship, and enactment whose embrace of the excessive dimensions of scholarly labor and its incongruency with existing definitions of TRS may operate to reconceptualize the narrowly defined genres of research, teaching, and service as the three main criteria determining what kinds of scholarly work matter.

This lesson plan outlines some key conceptual paradigms, developed over the last decade by working on Global Asias as a capacious scholarly praxis,

that might be useful in rethinking the genres of academic labor. In addition to introducing readers to the main concepts and arguments informing *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* as a book project, this lesson plan invites them to consider how to develop a more expansive scholarly praxis or how existing forms of their scholarly practice can be rendered legible by approaching TRS as alien forms. To that end, it includes a series of activities and assignments designed to help readers understand the difference between using TRS deterministically and approaching TRS speculatively, and to assess their existing scholarly praxis with this new understanding in mind.

Objectives

- Introduce readers to key concepts developed through building Global Asias as a multidisciplinary and transfield approach to scholarly knowledge production
- Demonstrate the varied uses of genre in conceptualizing forms of academic labor by guiding readers through two different approaches (deterministic and speculative) to using the genres of TRS in academia
- Encourage readers to explore how their work may map incongruently onto determinative TRS categories and to use that dissonance to reimagine the possibilities of how to enact a more capacious scholarly praxis
- Invite readers to experiment with building their own alien forms of scholarly praxis

Lesson Outline

- **PART 1—CONCEPTS (IN THEORY)**

Students should begin by looking at the definitions provided for the key concepts motivating the book / this lesson. Read through these definitions to understand the concepts. Take note of their (frustrating) levels of abstraction. Consider the gap between theory and practice.

- **PART 2—CONCEPTS (IN PRACTICE)**

Students can begin working through the first set of exercises—“TRS: Determinative, Indeterminate, Speculative”—to create an inventory of their existing scholarly praxis and to establish how the TRS genres

of academic labor can be approached deterministically or speculatively. Revisit the concepts from Part 1 in light of these activities to see if/how existing scholarly practice illustrates and/or challenges these paradigms.

- **PART 3—PRACTICE (AS THEORY)**

To better understand the relationship between theory and practice, students will take up an issue of *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* as a case study and work on tracing how four concepts closely associated with Global Asias knowledge production—relational nonalignment, generic friction, structural dissonance, and critical consolidation—are emblemized or challenged by the journal's structure and content.

- **PART 4—PRAXIS**

Students will have an opportunity to define and create their scholarly praxis as alien forms by working through a set of exercises and assignments designed to envision the alienness of their existing scholarly practice, to identify ways in which their academic labors map incongruently onto the TRS taxonomy, and to speculate about creating forms of scholarly praxis that combine the teaching, research, and service orientations of academic labor. They will work with the definitions of alien form offered by the book; they will revise those definitions on the basis of their own scholarly practices; they will use keywords to track ways in which academic knowledge is consolidated or unconsolidated; they will experiment with “regenreing” their academic labor; and they will create their scholarly praxis in the form of chimeric creatures.

Vocabulary

- **CRITICAL CONSOLIDATION**—describes the process/outcome by which academic knowledge production becomes decipherable and institutionally valued. Whether through scholarly analysis, paradigm development, fieldwork, or field-building, the scholarly genres through which knowledge generated by and in academia is shared tend to prioritize legibility and institutional concerns. Reflecting the process by which academic fields, and academics as professionals, credential themselves, institutionalization—the establishing of conventions, rules, and procedures in organizations and culture—thus tends to lead to expected forms of ossification. This process of disciplining is standard operating

procedure, and those invested in producing unconsolidated forms of knowledge and practice must make a special effort to design structures that support such goals.

- **STRUCTURAL INCOHERENCE**—a way of naming the systemic incompatibilities informing the conditions out of which Global Asias operates. More specifically, structural incoherence gestures to (a) the multiple, overlapping, and embedded contradictions undergirding the cultural, social, political, and economic dynamics of a “place” both real and imagined (which contains valences of the really imagined, the imagined as real, and the real as imaginary); (b) the use of varied representational structures to produce nonunified ways of reading and critical thought; and (c) the coexistence of a singular manifestation (of place or identity) and the multiplicities of which it is made.
- **RELATIONAL NONALIGNMENT**—a principle for embracing the coalitional possibilities of incommensurability. By creating opportunities to dialogue across differences, and by welcoming disciplinary and field dissensus as critical to troubling the critical consolidation of institutionalization and academic paradigm work, relational nonalignment enables the paradox of constructing institutionally legible knowledge projects that are nonetheless designed to resist the urge to consolidate themselves as new (and dominant) institutional forms.
- **GENERIC FRICTION**—a type of incongruency generated by the juxtaposition or overlaying of two or more genres. Commonly used by writers to cast into relief the conventions that govern reading practice, it can also be used by academics to make visible the discrepancies between different forms of academic labor. Generic friction can be extremely useful in allowing forms of knowledge to exist in nonaligned relation—that is, to remain unconsolidated.
- **STRUCTURAL DISSONANCE**—a concept that draws attention to the fact that the incongruities encompassed by Global Asias often operate in productive relation. Dissonance is thus a way of registering the speculative possibilities of incompatible forms—generic, academic, and social. Structural dissonance can be used variously: (1) to describe the different types of generic frictions academics encounter as researchers, teachers, editors, administrators, program builders, community advocates, et cetera; (2) to create conceptual space for thinking about the incongruencies that keep speculative forms like Global Asias open-ended;

(3) to build and engineer alternative infrastructures that support the paradoxical goals of enabling Global Asias to achieve legibility while remaining resistant to ossification and critical consolidation; and (4) to calibrate different types of scholarly praxis not only so they operate in nonaligned relation but also so they constellate into alternative forms of scholarly labor that challenge the taxonomy of research, teaching, and service that academia currently uses so deterministically.

- **SPECULATIVE GENRES OF ACADEMIC LABOR**—patterns of academic practice and expectation that give shape to alternative (illegible, unsanctioned, disregarded, fugitive, undervalued) scholarly priorities whose performance might also become the grounds from which to imagine a new set of shapes and priorities for institutional life.
- **MINOR GENRES**—forms of academic writing that are usually considered quotidian, prosaic, instrumental, or bureaucratic in nature but which could also perhaps be utilized to advance scholarly arguments. Such genres embrace the generative possibilities of peripherality and undervaluation without suggesting that minorness, which has been variously imagined as theory, mode, affective response, method, or praxis, necessarily leads to transformation. Sometimes minor genres are minor in purpose, aspiration, and execution, forms of writing that are inextricable products of academic life but localized expressions of limited scholarly ambition. But sometimes they can also be *alien forms*, forms of writing that challenge the distinctions that disarticulate TRS orientations.
- **ALIEN FORMS**—
 - 1 Unconventional volumes of scholarship that explore the possibilities of scholarly writing by embracing multiple genres, situating knowledge production both within and beyond academic contexts, locating authorial expertise in bodily as well as intellectual sites, and cross-pollinating knowledge across disciplinary and field boundaries through writing that is both critical and creative.
 - 2 Forms of writing and professional enactment that (1) engage the genres in which they are working speculatively, (2) leverage the conceptual possibilities of generic frictions to create structural dissonance, (3) challenge the distinctions that disarticulate research, teaching, and service orientations, (4) embrace the

synergistic possibilities of cross-pollinating epistemologies and practices across institutional taxonomies of scholarly labor, and (5) support the formation of new assemblages of scholarly labor whose value isn't overdetermined by existing institutional definitions of TRS.

- 3 A form of academic labor whose incongruency with existing determinative definitions of TRS opens up new possibilities for utilizing it in speculative, worldmaking ways.

Activities

TRS: Determinative, Indeterminate, Speculative

This exercise is designed to help readers understand that there can be different approaches to the genres of teaching, research, and service that are widely used to assess scholarly labor.

- Begin by using worksheet A1 to track all the different types of TRS you are doing. Note that each specific type of work must be placed into only one category; you cannot list the same work in multiple boxes. In assigning each type of work to the three categories of scholarly labor used to assess academic praxis, readers should develop a clear sense of (1) how a deterministic understanding of genre focuses on defining and taxonomizing academic work; (2) how institutions render scholarly praxis intelligible through classificatory value systems; and (3) how there are many forms of academic labor that exceed the singular assignments that a deterministic approach to TRS encourages.
- Using worksheet A2, create a list of all the things you do as a scholar. This list should include any/all work that you find personally meaningful, even if it is not especially valued or supported by your employer. Take special note of the things included in this list that you did not / could not include in the previous assignment.
- Conclude by answering the questions on worksheet A3. By revisiting the information recorded on the other worksheets and thinking about the kinds of worldbuilding we can do through our scholarly praxis, how can we approach TRS as speculative genres of academic labor?

Concept Mapping—*Verge: Studies in Global Asias*

The journal *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* began as and remains a speculative proposition: Despite the historical antagonisms between area studies and ethnic studies, how might creating an architecture that allows a cacophony of scholars from these distinct interdisciplines to occupy shared space, without pressuring them to be in alignment or even sympathy, produce Global Asias as a multidisciplinary, transfield knowledge formation? Designed to reflect and respect the incongruencies inherent in its editorial mission of bringing into nonaligned relation area studies, ethnic studies, and diaspora studies, the journal is a platform through which Global Asias as both theory and tactic has been developed.

To visualize the concepts generated by the building of Global Asias, it may be helpful to consider how the paradigms manifest in the journal and through its juxtapositional ethos. For this assignment, choose an issue of *Verge* or a *Convergence* feature and, using the concept map provided (worksheet B1), note how the concepts of relational nonalignment, generic friction, structural dissonance, and critical consolidation are instantiated or challenged by the journal's structure and content. If this exercise is repeated with different *Verge* issues or *Convergence* features, readers may produce somewhat distinct maps. This is OK, as unconsolidation is something that the journal actively works toward, which means that its enactment of Global Asias principles is in constant evolution.

Building Alien Forms

Alien Forms and Minor Genres offers the multidisciplinary field of Global Asias as one example of alien form. It argues that building Global Asias requires us to imagine and enact a scholarly praxis that does not prioritize research activity over editing, program-building, mentoring, and pedagogy; indeed, collaboratively building Global Asias encourages us to resist such prioritization, in part by troubling the presumed clarity between these putatively different genres of academic labor.

This lesson begins with several definitions of alien form, suggesting that these forms of writing and enactment can usefully index scholarly praxis that exceeds the taxonomies and hierarchies used by institutions to assess value and impact. While alien forms take many shapes, they are all dissonant in nature; whether manifesting as writing or enactment, their

conceptual energies derive from their hybrid character. Therefore, alien forms operate to keep knowledge unconsolidated.

This unit includes several activities, exercises, and assignments that will encourage readers to envision the alienness of their existing scholarly practice, to identify ways in which their academic labors map incongruently onto the TRS taxonomy, and to speculate about creating forms of scholarly praxis that combine the TRS orientations of academic labor. Students can use the accompanying worksheet (C2) to begin visualizing their scholarly activity as alien forms and work through different forms of critical and imaginative engagement (using keywords, regenreing, and creating a chimera) to build their own alien forms of scholarly praxis.

WORKSHEET A1

The Scholarship of Teaching,
Research, and Service (TRS):
A Determinative Approach

Use this worksheet to track all the different types of TRS you are doing. Each specific type of work must be placed into only one category; you cannot list the same work in multiple boxes.

If you have questions about where to put each of your activities, please base your determination on which assignment generates the greatest amount of institutional legibility. Keep track of the moments when this question of assignment and legibility feels frustrating.

Teaching

Research

Service

WORKSHEET A2

The Scholarship of Teaching,
Research, and Service (TRS):
An Indeterminate Approach

Using this numbered list, note all the work you do as a scholar. Be sure to include any work that is personally meaningful, even if it is not especially valued or supported by your employer. Feel free to use another sheet of paper if (when) you need more space to record your activities. Take special note of the things included in this list that you did not / could not include in the previous assignment.

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WORKSHEET A3

The Scholarship of Teaching, Research, and Service (TRS): A Speculative Approach

SPECULATIVE GENRES OF ACADEMIC LABOR—*patterns of academic practice and expectation that give shape to alternative (illegible, unsanctioned, disregarded, fugitive, undervalued) scholarly priorities whose performance might also become the grounds from which to imagine a new set of shapes and priorities for institutional life.*

Using the above definition and drawing on your own scholarly praxis, provide provisional answers to the following questions:

- 1 What are your scholarly priorities? How do they align or not align with, or exist in oblique relation to, the institutional priorities used in assessing your work?

.....

- 2 What kinds of work do you want to do that you haven't done because you are afraid that they won't be valued, legible, or supported by your colleagues, discipline, or institution?

.....

- 3 Revisit your responses recorded on worksheet A1. If you could place specific types of work in more than one category, which types of scholarly praxis would you put into multiple boxes? Why?

.....

- 4 Revisit your responses recorded on worksheet A1. Pick one type of work from each genre (teaching, research, service). Put each type of work in a different box and explain how/why that work could be / is also a form of that genre of academic labor.

.....

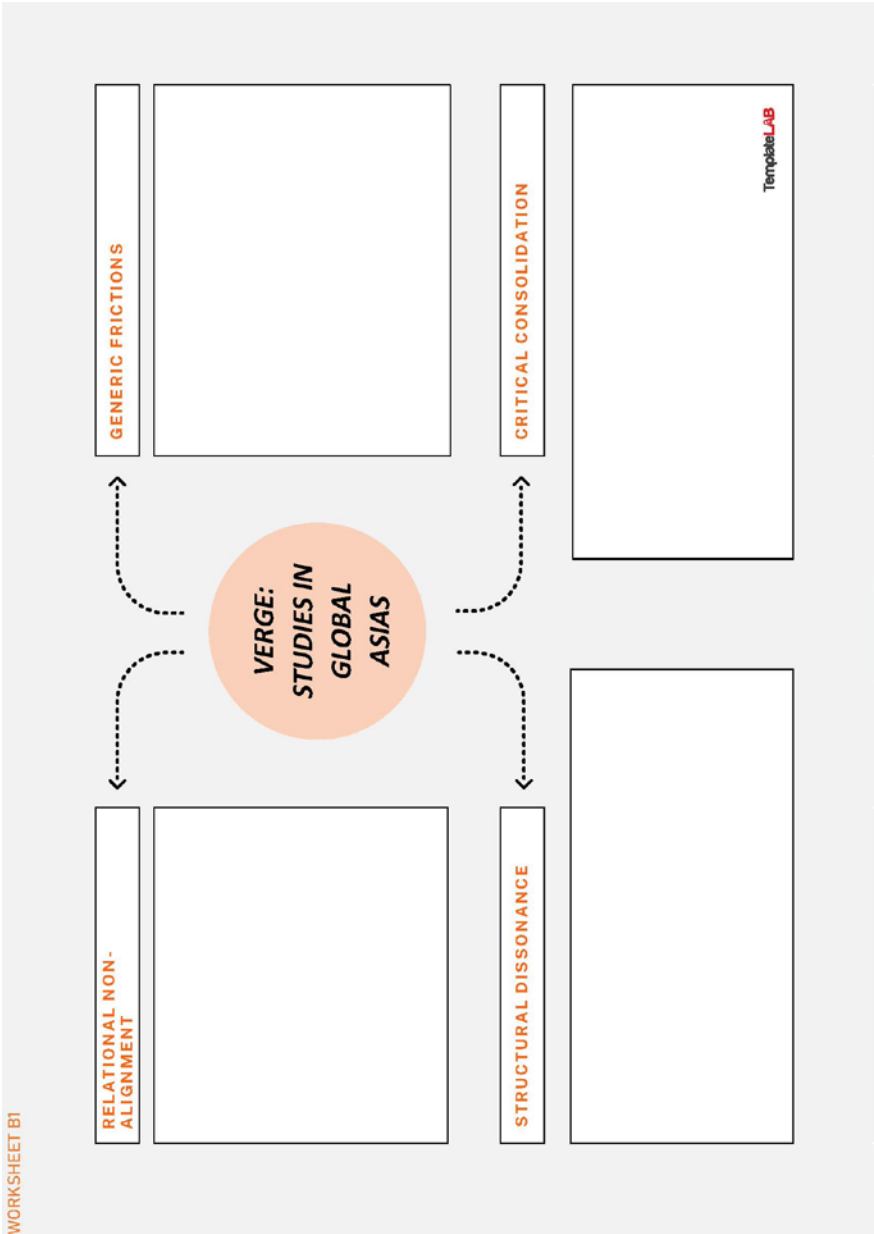
- 5 Looking at your responses on worksheet A2, identify an especially meaningful scholarly practice and consider how you can use it to approach the genres of TRS in speculative fashion. More specifically, are there ways in which your existing scholarly practice can help us rethink the forms through which we teach, research, and serve?

.....

- 6 Approaching TRS speculatively is a means of worldbuilding. What kind(s) of world(s) do you want to build through your scholarly praxis?

.....

Concept Mapping



WORKSHEET C1

Building Alien Forms— Activities Overview

ALIEN FORMS—

- 1 Unconventional volumes of scholarship that explore the possibilities of scholarly writing by embracing multiple genres, situating knowledge production both within and beyond academic contexts, locating authorial expertise in bodily as well as intellectual sites, and cross-pollinating knowledge across disciplinary and field boundaries through writing that is both critical and creative.
- 2 Forms of writing and professional enactment that (1) engage the genres in which they are working speculatively, (2) leverage the conceptual possibilities of generic frictions to create structural dissonance, (3) challenge the distinctions that disarticulate research, teaching, and service orientations, (4) embrace the synergistic possibilities of cross-pollinating epistemologies and practices across institutional taxonomies of scholarly labor, and (5) support the formation of new assemblages of scholarly labor whose value isn't overdetermined by existing institutional definitions of TRS.
- 3 A form of academic labor whose incongruency with existing determinative definitions of TRS opens up new possibilities for utilizing it in speculative, worldmaking ways.

Visualizing the Alienness of Scholarly Praxis

- Read through the definitions of alien forms provided at the top of this handout. Then, using worksheet C2, provide examples from your current scholarly practice for each of the approaches to creating alien form outlined. Feel free to tweak the definitions to more accurately reflect

the examples of your scholarly practice. Assess whether this exercise helps you to visualize the alienness of your scholarly praxis and how that visualization remaps or unmaps the TRS taxonomy through which institutions measure and evaluate academic work.

Keywords Assignment

One of the ways in which this book builds its understanding of alien form is through the strategic use of keywords—not only to trace genealogies of usage but to track the tensions between consolidated knowledge forms and unconsolidating knowledge practices as they manifest through field formation. As Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (2020) usefully suggest, we begin to see the utility of using keywords to organize scholarly thinking when we consider the following introductory questions:

- 1 What are the critical genealogies of the term and how do they affect its use today?
 - 2 Are there ways of thinking that are occluded by the use of this term?
 - 3 What other keywords constellate around it?
- Keywords can help make visible the disjunctions and discontinuities that undergird moments of field emergence or field consolidation. To trace how this works, analyze one of the following essays and write a 500-word response examining how the keyword in question—*agency*, *alienation*, *asymmetry*, *architecture*, *ageography*, or *sympathy*—operates to index both consolidated knowledge forms and unconsolidating knowledge practices.
- Chen, Tina. 2014. “Agency/Asiancy.” In *The Routledge Companion to Asian American and Pacific Islander Literature*, edited by Rachel Lee, 56–67. New York: Routledge. (Keyword: *agency*)
 - Chen, Tina. 2017. “The ‘Comfort’ of Critical Consolidation: Pedagogy, Ethical Alienation, and Asian American Literary Studies.” *American Literature* 89 (2): 331–54. (Keyword: *alienation*)
 - Chen, Tina. 2020. “(The) Transpacific Turns.” In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Asian American Literature and Culture*, edited by Josephine Lee. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093>

(Keyword: *asymmetry*)

- Chen, Tina. 2021a. “Global Asias: Method, Architecture, Praxis.” *Journal of Asian Studies* 80 (4): 997–1009. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911821001595>. (Keyword: *architecture*)
- Chen, Tina. 2021b. “Global Asias: On the Structural Incoherence of Imaginable Ageography.” In *Asian American Literature in Transition, 1996–2020*, edited by Betsy Huang and Victor Román Mendoza, 4:311–30. Asian American Literature in Transition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108914109.017>. (Keyword: *ageography*)
- Chen, Tina. 2024. “The Asian American Novel.” In *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, vol. 8, edited by Cyrus R. K. Patell and Deborah Williams, 324–41. New York: Oxford University Press. (Keyword: *sympathy*)

Regenreing

Alien Forms and Minor Genres proposes that we disarticulate form and genre to see how the genres of academic labor—broadly conceptualized as teaching, research, and service (TRS)—can be expressed in and through a variety of forms. To make this argument, it examines the dissonances between different forms of writing and different genres of academic labor, using pedagogical or bureaucratic forms (e.g., lesson plans, faculty activity reports) to make scholarly arguments and using research forms (e.g., the academic monograph, the research essay) to advance pedagogical and programmatic goals.

- Experiment with regenreing (i.e., using a different genre to write or enact) your academic work. Take an essay and rewrite it using the genre of the lesson plan. Take an institutional mission statement and rewrite it as a position paper. Extrapolate a key component of an existing course and present it as a conference paper. Consider one idea or finding and experiment with how working in and through different genres of academic writing and labor might help you disseminate it. Revisit your answers to question 4 on worksheet A3 if you are finding it difficult to figure out how to tackle the regenreing process.

Creating a Chimera

In *Awful Archives* (2020), rhetorician Jenny Rice proposes that we understand archives not as things but as actions. She suggests that archives are important not solely or strictly in terms of their evidentiary or documentary functions but also because they are inventional; in the process of creating and accessing them, we create ourselves and the questions that matter. She describes her method of composition as “gargoylian” in nature, arguing that the gargoyle chimera’s strange incongruities help us to see how “something new is made from strange juxtaposition” (J. Rice 2020, 26).

- Much of the work of the previous exercises has generated material and information about your existing scholarly praxis. It has also created opportunities to identify ways in which your academic labors map incongruently onto the TRS taxonomy and to speculate about creating forms of scholarly praxis that combine the TRS orientations of academic labor. Using that material and drawing inspiration from Rice’s description of the gargoyle chimera—“a previously unimagined and unseen creature who only exists through strange incongruities: lion body with human head, cat with bat wings, human body with bird head” (26)—create a chimera that emblemizes the incongruities and juxtapositions that constellate and animate your scholarly praxis. You can either draw or describe this creature. How does its hybrid composition make its alien nature manifest?

Building Alien Forms– Template

Building Alien Forms worksheet

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II

**MINOR
GENRES AND
THE SHADOW
ARCHIVE**

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Freer Agents?

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The narrative statement is a ubiquitous genre of writing that marks both the steady pursuit of professional advancement and the spectacular transformations that index important milestones in academic life. One writes versions of this document when contemplating more schooling, explaining one's accomplishments during the yearly review process, petitioning for tenure and promotion, submitting applications for awards or scholarly programs, or applying for external funding. Although the genre encompasses several variants (the personal statement, the statement of purpose, and what my first institution called "the statement of endeavors" for the tenure and promotion file), all these documents are designed to connect experience to future promise, to chart a trajectory of development.

Advice for what these statements are and how they should be composed varies. Some guides explain that the statement should *tell a story* about the writer, although others emphasize that these statements are not stories but *crafted professional documents*. If I am presenting this as a crafted professional document, then what I might say is this: I am a scholar who, through my efforts to advance Global Asias as an emergent multidisciplinary and transfield approach to studying Asia in relation to its multiple diasporas, is actively engaged in conceptualizing the diversity of academic labor as alien forms—forms of writing and professional enactment that challenge the distinctions that disarticulate research, teaching, and service orientations. But if I am narrating the story that animates this objective, then I should tell you that my experience with being myself made alien through illness changed the trajectory of my career in surprising ways. More specifically, being diagnosed with advanced-stage breast cancer transformed my sense of what kinds of work I wanted to do and how I wanted to work. The palimpsest engendered by these different kinds of alien form generates the infrastructure and methods of my Global Asias scholarship. These articulations are not mutually exclusive, of course, but they draw on different

conventions for their effects. In this way, the formal qualities of the narrative statement are inherently frictive, of a piece with the varied kinds of generic frictions that I have experimented with as a teacher, scholar, editor, and administrator, as well as with the generic frictions that undergird *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*' self-composition in ways that illuminate the multifocal nature of Global Asias scholarly praxis.

The frictions undergirding my scholarly engagements are generic but could also be mapped temporally. I spent the first half of my career working squarely within the field of Asian American studies, positioning myself as a literary critic, and being affiliated exclusively with English departments. During the last fifteen years, I have directed my scholarly attention to creating Global Asias as a multidisciplinary and transfield framework, an endeavor that has dis/located me in ways both expected and unexpected. Operating adjacent to but also at a remove from conventional areas of scholarly inquiry such as area studies and ethnic studies, I have focused on the opportunities and constraints of institutional forms in the advancement of modes of scholarly praxis that exceed the taxonomies of labor that govern academic life. In this recounting, there is a clear bifurcation between my scholarly praxis pre- and post-cancer diagnosis and treatment, a metamorphosis that cannot be explained entirely by my illness but also cannot be understood in isolation from the questions of debility, capacity, and im/possibility that such an experience made palpable.

Without discounting the real distinction between these two periods of scholarly effort, to comprehend my purposes—as a scholar, as a program-builder, and in this book—means it is also important to narrate the significant overlaps between them. My scholarly investments in examining the concept of “agency” and tracing how it manifests not just in literary and cultural objects but also in the institutionalization of different domains of knowledge production are quite consistent, as are my interests in embracing the entanglement between tactics and theories. While my earlier work emphasized the limits and possibilities of Asian American subjects as “double agents,” those whose divided allegiance signals not so much a desire to betray as it does a sense of the generative dissonances that multiple affiliations can encourage, my ongoing efforts to develop Global Asias as a speculative genre of academic labor could be characterized as an intellectual project about ways of imagining myself and others as “freer agents,” those who explore how a capaciously imagined scholarly praxis might put pressure on, offer alternatives to, or even possibly remake the institutional constraints that govern academic life and practice. To that end, freer

agency is, in this case, an expression of what I have previously theorized as Asiancy, “an acknowledgment of how Asian American material contexts, practices, and objects produce a differentiated and differentiating form of agency” (T. Chen 2014, 65).

To be blunt: Freer agents are not *free*. Like everyone else, they are subject to institutional curtailment and operate under conditions—of life, health, and (non)employment—that make certain choices unthinkable. The work I have done over the last fifteen years, both what I have chosen to do and how I have chosen to work, has been an attempt to imagine and enact a scholarly praxis that questions the ways in which genres of academic labor might be approached more expansively, in the process arguing that higher education’s deterministic understanding of genre has limited the possibilities of how we as humanities scholars research, teach, and serve. Even though Global Asias began as an intellectual exercise about what it might mean to bring the disparate fields of Asian area studies, Asian American studies, and Asian diaspora studies into nonaligned relation, it has evolved into a method for disrupting the standard operating procedures of academia more broadly. As an editor, program-builder, teacher, researcher, center director, colleague, adviser, consultant, collaborator, and mentor, I have championed how Global Asias can be approached as a speculative form of academic labor that advances knowledge production by disrupting boundaries—between fields and disciplines, between types of writing, and between the varied activities and engagements that contribute to scholarship—and embracing dissonances both generic and infrastructural.

Minor Genres of Academic Writing and the Shadow Archive

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

MINOR GENRES OF ACADEMIC WRITING AND THE SHADOW ARCHIVE

AN ARGUMENT ABOUT SCHOLARLY PRAXIS

AN ARGUMENT

The capaciousness of scholarly praxis is often not reflected by higher education's deterministic use of teaching, research, and service as generic categories of academic labor. Scholarship and conceptual arguments emerge from intellectual engagements that span the gamut of scholarly activity. Attending to the minor genres of academic writing and the shadow archive encourages us to conceptualize our work as alien forms, composite assemblages of academic labor that reflect the dimensionality of scholarly praxis by working through a diversity of genres.

Two Different Uses of GENRE

DETERMINISTIC

- A deterministic understanding of genre focuses on **defining** and **taxonomizing** academic work.
- Work is slotted into a category which then determines the **merit** and **decipherability** of the labor that it includes.

SPECULATIVE

- Shifts critical attention from *belonging* to *use value*.
- Approaches genre in ways that exceed taxonomy, focusing on its speculative **potential** in catalyzing a **praxis** that actually recognizes how scholarly knowledge production can, and should, combine research, teaching, and service orientations.

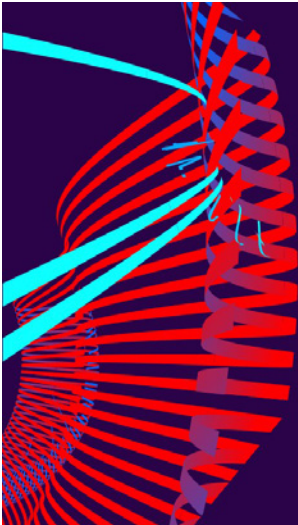
Differentiating Genre and Form

GENRE

Types of academic writing that can be conceptualized both deterministically and speculatively.

FORM

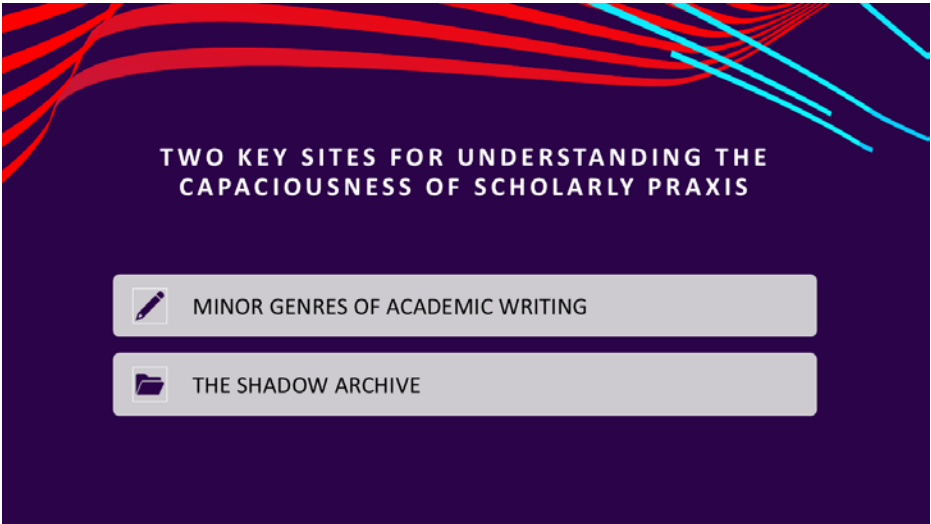
Patterns of academic practice and expectation whose performance might also become the grounds from which to imagine a new set of shapes and priorities for institutional life.



Can GENRES and FORMS be the same?
YES ☒

Can GENRES and FORMS be different?
YES ☒

How might disarticulating FORM from
GENRE allow us to think differently about
the relation between academic labor and
academic writing?



**TWO KEY SITES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE
CAPACIOUSNESS OF SCHOLARLY PRAXIS**

 MINOR GENRES OF ACADEMIC WRITING

 THE SHADOW ARCHIVE

Minor Genres of Academic Writing

DEFINING THE MINOR

1986

Deleuze and
Guattari

The three characteristics of minor literature are the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation.

1996

Katz

The minor is not a theory of the margins, but a different way of working with material.

2005

Lionnet and Shih

*When we juxtapose **minor** with **transnationalism**, a new field of meanings emerges with an array of combinations of issues that depart from existing notions of "minority discourse."*

DEFINING THE MINOR

2017

Sharp

The minor creates or unearths new or unexpected, if tangential, trajectories.

2020

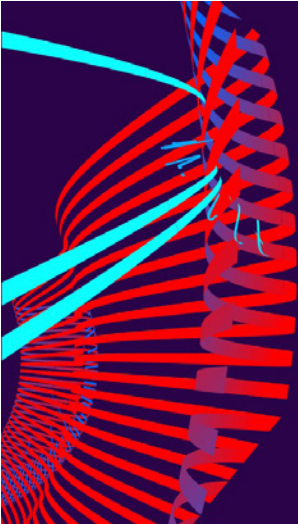
Park Hong

Minor feelings occur when American optimism is forced upon you, which contradicts your own racialized reality, thereby creating a static of cognitive dissonance.

2021

Yapp

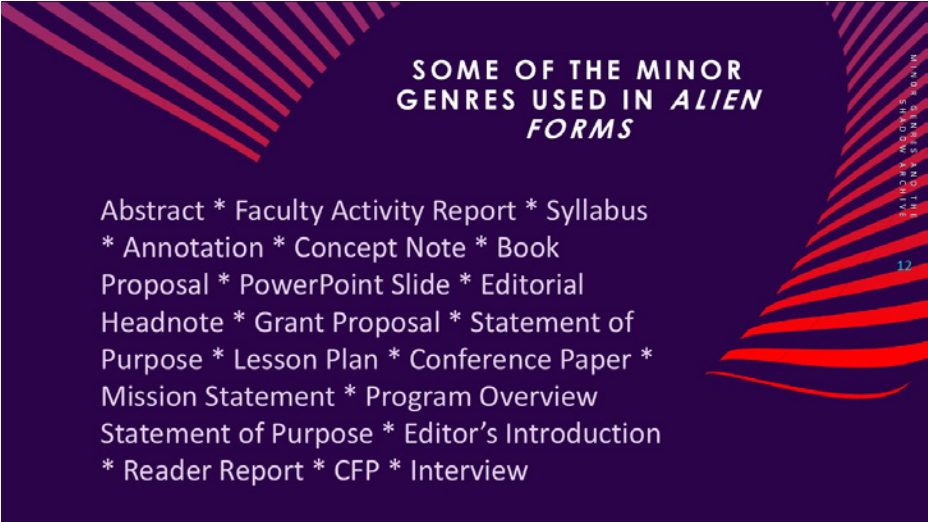
The task of the minor is to rethink the terms, conditions, and operations that define not only whom or what we value but also how we value.



Alien Forms uses the **minor genres of academic writing** to describe the peripheralization and undervaluation of the many types of writing we do as academics.



CAN MINOR GENRES OF ACADEMIC WRITING ADVANCE SCHOLARSHIP?



SOME OF THE MINOR GENRES USED IN *ALIEN* *FORMS*

Abstract * Faculty Activity Report * Syllabus
* Annotation * Concept Note * Book
Proposal * PowerPoint Slide * Editorial
Headnote * Grant Proposal * Statement of
Purpose * Lesson Plan * Conference Paper *
Mission Statement * Program Overview
Statement of Purpose * Editor's Introduction
* Reader Report * CFP * Interview



Introducing the Shadow Archive



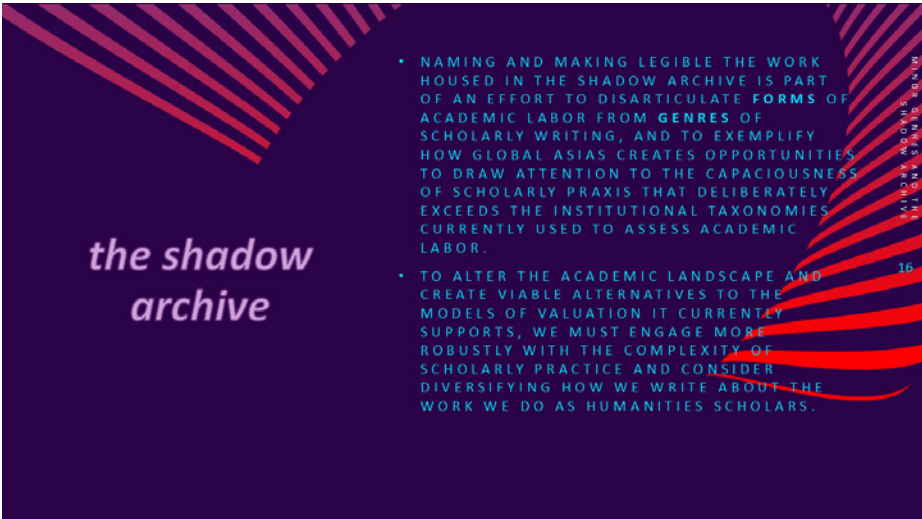
the shadow archive

- Academic institutions tend to privilege (and reward) a very narrowly conceptualized type of writing and scholarly expression.
- The capaciousness of scholarly praxis cannot be accounted for by the visible archive of scholarship and intellectual activity generated through publication alone.
- It is important to find a way to inventory and assess the diverse forms of scholarly writing, thinking, and engagement that lead to humanities scholarship.



the shadow archive

The shadow archive describes the plethora of documents—many of them composed using minor genres of academic writing—that an expansively conceptualized scholarly praxis generates.

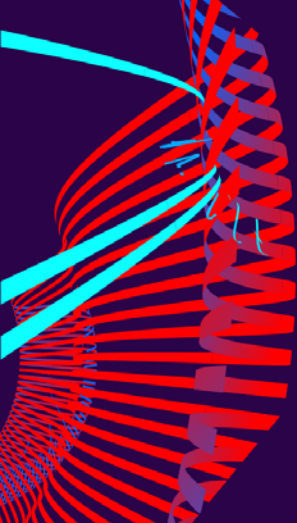


the shadow archive

- NAMING AND MAKING LEGIBLE THE WORK HOUSED IN THE SHADOW ARCHIVE IS PART OF AN EFFORT TO DISARTICULATE **FORMS** OF ACADEMIC LABOR FROM **GENRES** OF SCHOLARLY WRITING, AND TO EXEMPLIFY HOW GLOBAL ASIAs CREATES OPPORTUNITIES TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THE CAPACIOUSNESS OF SCHOLARLY PRAXIS THAT DELIBERATELY EXCEEDS THE INSTITUTIONAL TAXONOMIES CURRENTLY USED TO ASSESS ACADEMIC LABOR.
- TO ALTER THE ACADEMIC LANDSCAPE AND CREATE VIABLE ALTERNATIVES TO THE MODELS OF VALUATION IT CURRENTLY SUPPORTS, WE MUST ENGAGE MORE ROBUSTLY WITH THE COMPLEXITY OF SCHOLARLY PRACTICE AND CONSIDER DIVERSIFYING HOW WE WRITE ABOUT THE WORK WE DO AS HUMANITIES SCHOLARS.

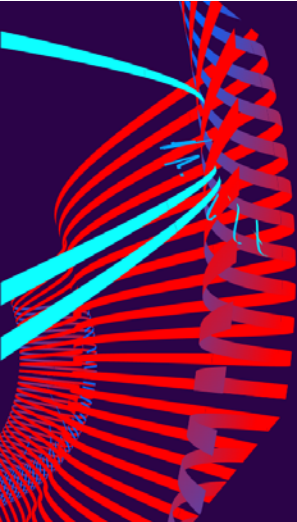
THE SHADOW ARCHIVE

16



A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

*What happens if you treat
major and minor genres of
academic writing in relation
and you work to make visible
the labor that is often
relegated to the shadow
archive?*



Major Genres	Visible Archive
Minor Genres	Shadow Archive

Major Genres

Visible Archive

ACADEMIC
LABOR

Minor Genres

Shadow Archive

The Shadow Archive

Published Writing



The Shadow Archive

Published Writing





Global Asias as/through Alien Form



DEFINITIONS

Unconventional volumes of scholarship that explore the possibilities of scholarly writing by embracing multiple genres, situating knowledge production both within and beyond academic contexts, locating authorial expertise in bodily as well as intellectual sites, and cross-pollinating knowledge across disciplinary and field boundaries through writing that is both critical and creative.

Forms of writing and professional enactment that (1) engage the genres in which they are working speculatively, (2) leverage the conceptual possibilities of generic frictions to create structural dissonance, (3) challenge the distinctions that disarticulate research, teaching, and service orientations, (4) embrace the synergistic possibilities of cross-pollinating epistemologies and practices across institutional taxonomies of scholarly labor, and (5) support the formation of new assemblages of scholarly labor whose value isn't overdetermined by existing institutional definitions of TRS.

A form of academic labor whose incongruency with existing determinative definitions of TRS opens up new possibilities for utilizing it in speculative, worldmaking ways.

EXAMPLES

VERGE: STUDIES
IN GLOBAL
ASIAsGLOBAL ASIAs:
METHOD,
ARCHITECTURE,
PRAXIS BOOK
SERIESGLOBAL ASIAs:
TACTICS &
THEORIESGLOBAL ASIAs:
INSTITUTIONAL
FORMS / ALIEN
FORMS

“And all of it is alien because it leverages the incongruency between academic labor and existing determinative definitions of TRS to open up the speculative, worldmaking possibilities of Global Asias knowledge production.”

THANK YOU

Tina Chen
tcg3@psu.edu

WIND, STARS AND THE
SHADOW ARCHIVE

27

Working As/Through Alien Form

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The annotated bibliography is an interesting genre of academic writing, one that I am familiar with primarily because I often assign it as an exercise in my graduate seminars. I think most scholars find annotated bibliographies useful, to help either jumpstart or organize research projects, but do not consider them especially good vehicles for making scholarly arguments. From an instrumental point of view, they are also of limited value as publications since they are not counted toward promotion at many institutions. These perspectives make perfect sense in the context of contemporary higher education—after all, this type of writing is an excellent example of what I have been calling the minor genres of academic writing—but since challenging the conflation of form and genre is part of this book's project, employing the annotated bibliography to make my arguments enables me to reinforce *Alien Forms and Minor Genres'* efforts to imagine how a scholarly project that embraces diverse professional activities as part of a connected practice could both recognize undervalued knowledge practices and create new modes for making the work we do as academics legible.

In the first draft of the manuscript I submitted to the press, this section of the book was built around six keyword essays I had written. I thought that it would be instructive to see how Global Asias principles, philosophies, and practices were being generated by and developed through the writing of those essays, even when those essays were not explicitly about Global Asias. I also thought revisiting those essays would illustrate one of the book's main arguments—that scholarship is created through diverse genres and forms of academic writing and academic labor—by centering the keyword essay, a genre of writing that is more often aligned with pedagogy than with research. The feedback I received from my readers and editor helpfully encouraged me to rethink this approach by experimenting

with the diversity of forms that could be imagined once one fully embraces enacting scholarship through alien forms of practice and writing. In other words, my generous interlocutors were asking: Could working with even more unconventional modes of writing draw attention more effectively to the alienness of the forms and genres being discussed? In reconceptualizing this section of the book in response to that generative question, I have thus tried to follow through on the generic provocations of part I and be even more committed to the speculative character of an evolving Global Asias praxis that has always wrestled with the constraints and affordances of genres of writing in relation to forms of academic labor.

To that end, this annotated bibliography is written to make visible what I mean by a capacious scholarly praxis. Like the (speculative) faculty activity report in part I—which highlights how that genre is designed to record (and assign value to) only the activities already deemed worthwhile by an institution in order to make space for including work that exceeds the taxonomies that currently overdetermine the work of academics—this unconventional use of a genre that is normally not envisioned as adequate for scholarly research writing leverages structural dissonance to expose how the constraints of traditional academic writing are not simply formal or representational in nature but also fundamentally epistemological. Building on the genre's use of summary and evaluation as critical approaches, this annotated bibliography surveys two significantly overlooked sites of academic labor—the minor genres of academic writing and the work generated in what I am calling the shadow archive—to argue that making such labor legible is key to understanding not only the expansiveness of Global Asias scholarly praxis but also the work that we do as humanities scholars in academia. Accordingly, this annotated bibliography includes entries on both published and unpublished writing, giving them equal attention and value in contributing to the dimensionality of the work that has gone into developing and advancing Global Asias as a field of knowledge production.

2011 VERGE PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS

Abstract

This proposal to the University of Minnesota Press, cowritten with Eric Hayot, argues that the disarticulations between area studies and critical ethnic studies make it harder than it should be to think about Asia and

the world on a more global, transhistorical scale. Even though Asian studies and Asian American studies have historically focused more on the distinctions between the fields than the similarities, renewed attention to diasporic movement, transpacific displacements and affiliations, and comparative work suggests the increasing importance of acknowledging the synergies possible between them. To that end, the proposal makes a case for a new journal—*Verge: Studies in Global Asias*—that shows how the very ideas at stake in traditionally centered forms of scholarship emerge through and shape the material activities that act as their ground. Inspired in part by Teemu Ruskola's arguments about the possibilities of a "doubly decentered" (2011, 117) scholarship, the proposal conceptualizes the journal as an infrastructure supporting scholarship that "approaches the aesthetics, history, and culture of Asia from a perspective that undermines the centrality either of European notions of the unparticular universal or of Asian varieties of the un-universalizable particular." Scholarly proposals, true to their generic natures, always begin with, or come back to, the questions animating knowledge production. In this case, the proposal questions existing assumptions and practices by noting the continued sway exerted by "the nation" in both interdisciplines; exploring how the ostensible distinctions between Asian studies and Asian American studies obscure the Cold War contexts that mobilize both knowledge forms; and recognizing the paradoxical reinforcement/disruption of disciplinary methods through an embrace of multidisciplinary.

Annotation

Global Asias is an invitation to build alien forms. While this statement articulates the book's basic premise, its simplicity encompasses a complicated history of speculation, imagination, experimentation, and transformation. Looking back at this proposal more than a decade after we submitted it to UMN Press, I can see the ways in which the proposal unwittingly charts a disconnect between two different dimensions of the journal's Global Asias praxis. Specifically, the proposal argues for the journal's existence by providing an intellectual rationale for bringing disparate fields into relation. The explicit focus on the intellectual (as opposed to the infrastructural) aspects of the journal thus appears to reinforce the hierarchies of scholarly praxis that govern academic life. And yet a more abrasive reading also brings to light some nascent characteristics that I eventually begin embracing as fundamental aspects of Global Asias as alien form. For example, although the

word “infrastructure” is never used in the proposal, there is focused attention to the various academic configurations—fields, disciplines, markets, editorial collectives, advisory boards, genres of academic writing—that both create the circumstances animating the journal’s invention and energize its critical interventions; its shadowy presence here marks what I eventually start to describe as an “architectural” approach to the building of Global Asias. This early (non)recognition of the importance of the infrastructural also underlies the proposition of the journal’s most distinctive feature: a *Convergence* section featuring nontraditional genres of academic writing designed to highlight collaborative endeavors and “back-and-forth intellectual engagement and exchange.” There are differences between the originally proposed rubrics and the standard set of rubrics that *Verge* now features, which draw attention to the ways in which the proposal itself is a speculative fiction, a document that imagines that a new field requires differently imagined forms—of writing, of institutional articulation, and of scholarly labor. Finally, revisiting this proposal reminds me that in our earliest days of imagining the journal into being, we debated whether *Verge*’s subtitle should be “Studies *of* Global Asias” or “Studies *in* Global Asias.” This reminder is the result of a typographical oversight—we mistakenly left one articulation of the subtitle uncorrected—but is useful nonetheless in centering the key differences between “of” (which indicates belonging or a quality of possession) and “in” (which indexes location or position but also serves as a function word to indicate “means, medium, or instrumentality”). As the work of building Global Asias over the last decade has made manifest, the field’s dissonances derive from a self-reflexive engagement with the disparate locations generating knowledge and from a willingness to consider Global Asias not through possession but as a medium for expressing differently imagined intellectual preoccupations and academic realities.

2014 ENGLISH DEPARTMENT MENTORING PROGRAM

Abstract

The English Department Mentoring Program is an innovative program at Penn State that provides support and professional instruction, creates opportunities to enhance departmental collegiality, and generates new infrastructural mechanisms to assist minority and other underrepresented members of the department. The program embraces a multidirectional

model of mentorship that encourages participants to develop meaningful and productive affiliations across ranks and experiences. Central to the program are “mentoring cohorts”—mixed groups of faculty, advanced graduate students, and incoming graduate students who meet twice a semester to get to know each other, talk about professional and academic issues, and serve as practical resources for issues and questions that might come up during the year. While many people think of academic mentoring in terms of apprenticeship, this program focuses on the importance of reciprocity and community in productive mentoring relationships. The cohorts are therefore crafted to encourage mentoring that is mutual and multidirectional; they are structures that seek to nurture the myriad ways in which we can all work to support each other. There are three major tracks through which the program works to support graduate students. On one track, interested members of the department participate in mentoring cohorts, mixed groups which meet two times each semester to address a variety of issues about being successful in the program and professionally. The second track of the program, open to everyone in the department (not just the people participating in the cohorts), focuses on targeted professional development by sponsoring four workshops a year on topics of professional interest and concern. The third track of the program addresses the specific needs of minority and other underrepresented populations, sponsoring workshops and events designed to acknowledge some of the particular challenges faced by such students and faculty members.

Annotation

Mentoring occupies a vexed space in academic life. On one hand, studies show that mentoring enhances professional success and supports academic career advancement, especially for those who are early in their careers or from underrepresented groups. Effective mentoring fosters social connections, expands professional networks, improves research skills and productivity, invigorates pedagogical practice, and promotes a sense of community among all who participate (including mentors). On the other hand, critics like Lauren Berlant and Kandice Chuh have cautioned against mentoring. Even though mentoring “can tell us something about the cluster of promises, the attachments and fantasies, and generally, the double-bind that defines the place of minority discourse in the academy” (Chuh 2013), it often operates to produce problematically optimistic attachments and suggests individualized labor as a corrective to structural conditions of disparity, precarity,

and thoroughgoing inequity. In both scenarios, mentoring is perceived as a *service matter*, an effort that might impact pedagogical performance and research productivity but that is fundamentally distinct in nature from those other (more privileged) genres of academic labor.

Service has always occupied a vexed position in my scholarly life. Even though I fully understand the institutional hierarchy of labor, in which service is placed well behind research and teaching in assessing our performance for tenure and promotion, much of the service I took on early in my career reflected the intellectual investments and scholarly priorities that I believe gives Asian American studies its conceptual and ethical character. Despite this, I still did not challenge defining service as something generically distinct from research or teaching as genres of academic labor. For a long time, I was content to make *service matter* by maintaining a personal commitment to support students and colleagues through mentoring and advocacy.

For me, service and cancer have a vexed relationship, one that cannot be easily disarticulated. Indeed, I got my diagnosis just before running a junior faculty development workshop for the East of California caucus. Even though I kept my diagnosis from the participants, it shadowed me—not just that week, but ever since. After my diagnosis, which gave me leeway to prioritize my life and work differently, individual acts of mentorship started to manifest in increasingly institutional forms. I developed and participated in a series of professional development programs (retreats and workshops for the East of California caucus and the Association for Asian American Studies) designed to make knowledge transfer and cohort creation an integral aspect of life in academia. These experiences then contributed to creating a mentoring program for the Penn State English department, which gave me an opportunity to start articulating explicitly the ways in which mentorship can be an effective way to reshape the standard operating procedures that govern academic life. Creating and directing this mentoring program for nine years by insisting that this kind of academic labor is *not just* service enabled me to engage in more meaningful ways with what it means to center mentorship in one's scholarly praxis.

What does it mean to center mentorship in one's scholarly praxis? In the case of my work with Global Asias, this goes far beyond creating explicitly labeled “mentoring programs.” It means that we consistently create infrastructures that are designed to build cross-rank cohorts engaged in intellectual exchange and collaborative knowledge production (i.e., multiauthor *Convergence* features in the journal, the Global Asias summer institute, team-based projects such as *Global Asias: Tactics & Theories*, and the Cultivating

Early Career Networks program we cohost with the Japan Foundation, New York). It also means that we engage early-career colleagues as equal partners in producing knowledge, intentionally disrupting the hierarchies that govern much of academic life. And it means that we make efforts to support colleagues by working with them—through our sponsored panels and roundtables at the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) and the Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS), through the Global Asias Cyber Chats, and the Global Asias conference series—to build Global Asias through interinstitutional, transfield, and cross-disciplinary relationships.

2014 “AGENCY/ASIANCY”

Abstract

This keyword essay, published in *The Routledge Companion to Asian American and Pacific Islander Literature* edited by Rachel Lee, utilizes the subject/object distinction upon which much previous theorization of agency has depended to explore how this concept operates as both a practical and a theoretical preoccupation in Asian American literary studies. By approaching agency through a framework that centers “the object(s) of agency,” it becomes possible to create a conceptual topography of the diverse forms of engagement—with identity and subjectivity, with politics and aesthetics, with collectivity and individuality, and with national borders and transnational dynamics—that Asian American writers and scholars have manifested through their questioning of agential possibilities and limits. Ultimately, the essay argues that attending to object status can move us toward finer articulations of ethico-political understanding and concludes by proposing the utility and importance of “Asiancy,” a concept that recognizes how Asian American material contexts, practices, and objects produce a differentiated and differentiating form of agency.

Annotation

This is the first essay I wrote after finishing cancer treatment and, during the fraught experience of trying to write it, I seriously considered leaving academia. The dissonance (cognitive) I experienced after chemotherapy did not feel empowering even as I was in the preliminary stages of theorizing

other forms of dissonance (conceptual, aesthetic) as generative. The disconnect between these two types of dissonance constitutes an early instance of what I would eventually begin understanding as alien form—that is, scholarly knowledge production that centers embodied experience and engages scholarly genres of writing by approaching them unconventionally. In other words, it turns out that my inability to write as I had always written became an opportunity to think about reimagining how to be (or, more accurately, how *I* could be) in the profession. The unique challenges of the keyword essay—a genre that often focuses on synthesizing existing work but which I also wanted to utilize to create space for my own critical intervention, especially in relation to pedagogical use and instruction—enabled a form of writing that wasn't initially determined by an existing research question. Instead, it allowed for the (more) organic emergence of my own scholarly interests and concerns within the context of attending carefully to the pitfalls and potential of a critical moment of field consolidation in Asian American literary studies.

2015 VERGE 1, NO. 1, EDITORS' INTRODUCTION
(WITH ERIC HAYOT)

Abstract

This editors' introduction has several different objectives. As expected, it *acquaints* readers with the materials collated in the first issue of *Verge*, a diverse grouping of scholars, genres, disciplines, fields, geographies, and methods that is meant to illustrate—without being prescriptive—the possibilities and limits of Global Asias as a field of academic knowledge production. But it also takes advantage of the generic instability of the editorial introduction to draw attention to the multifaceted dimensions of scholarly praxis that creating a new journal encompasses. To that end, it *critiques* the ways in which knowledge production tends to rely on ossified categories of the universal and the particular by contending the assumed universality of “the world” against the assumed particularity of “Asia.” It *suggests* that world history has sometimes been conceptualized as distinct from Asia, an epistemological bias that is indexed by the belated heralding of Asia's arrival on the global stage. It *argues* that “Asia” is a fiction, a story that can (and should be) narrated differently, and that the academy's conventional approach to narrating “Asia” is based upon an awkward siloing of Asian area studies from Asian diaspora studies. It *proposes* the journal

as a space of multigeneric and multidisciplinary experimentation, a platform for bringing distinct disciplines, methods, and concerns into juxtapositional relation—not to consolidate them into a new, interdisciplinary field called Global Asias but to suggest that there may be intellectually generative frictions from this type of dissonant engagement. It *speculates* that Global Asias will be a collaboratively crafted scholarly endeavor, one that *Verge's* readers and contributors will make together over the years and be willing to rethink as time progresses. And it *embraces* self-reflexivity as an integral part of the building of Global Asias, demonstrating how structures like the journal's *Convergence* features are created to foster collaborative intellectual engagement and exchange and to encourage dissensus as a form of engagement that is as valuable as consensus.

Annotation

I had written only two editor's introductions before I wrote the one for *Verge* 1, no. 1: one with Viet Thanh Nguyen for a special issue of *Jouvert* on "Postcolonial Asian America" (2000) and the other for a special issue of *MELUS* on "Asian American Performance Art" (2011). When I wrote them, I understood this genre of writing to be both straightforward in its goals and limited in its ambitions: a preface creating a critical frame with which to contextualize the various scholarly pieces included in the issue. The work of critical framing is important for thinking about the coherence of a text, whether journal issue or book, but the stakes of such work have been amplified by my involvement as the founding editor of *Verge*, a journal whose successes over the last decade have arguably inaugurated Global Asias as a new field of scholarly inquiry. Because of the work I have done with and through *Verge*, I now see the editor's introduction as a genre of academic writing that is intimately connected to *field work*, the active, intentional, surprising, and evolving intellectual efforts to shape an academic field. If, as this book argues, institutions of higher education have deterministically utilized teaching, research, and service (TRS) in ways that have prioritized research as the most intellectually impactful way to shape an academic field, my holistic efforts to develop Global Asias as a speculative form of scholarly praxis have led to thinking more seriously about the ways in which what I am calling minor genres of academic writing are themselves sites through which we contribute to, intervene in, and reimagine the scholarly landscape.

“Minor-ness” has a long critical lineage. Initially framed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1986, 18) to delimit the characteristics of a literary practice that “deterritorializes” language to animate “revolutionary potential,” it has subsequently been used by other critics for a variety of purposes. For geographer Cindi Katz (1996, 489), minor theory is an “interstitial” approach to academic knowledge production that gives us a “different way to work with material.” Françoise Lionnet and Shuh-mei Shih (2005) propose “minor transnationalism” to encourage the study of transversal movements across literatures and cultures, emphasizing the “hybrid and relational” interactions between minor networks rather than the vertical hierarchies that undergird major-minor relations. Curator Chris Sharp (2017, para. 2) conceptualizes the minor as interruptive and disruptive, “a mode of making that is characterized by resistance not as a political position, but as a natural consequence of the practice itself.” Cathy Park Hong (2020, 55) describes “minor feelings” as “the racialized range of emotions that are negative, dysphoric, and therefore untelegenic, built from the sediments of everyday racial experience and the irritant of having one’s perception of reality constantly questioned or dismissed.” Hentyle Yapp approaches the minor as a method for rethinking “the terms, conditions, and operations that define not only whom or what we value but also *how we value*” (2021, 13; emphasis original).

Whether imagined as revolutionary praxis, theory, mode, affective response, or method—all these approaches suggest that the smallness, illegibility, peripherality, or undervaluation of the minor can be leveraged for transformational ends. Being in sympathy with these efforts, I use the term *minor genres of academic writing* to describe the peripheralization and undervaluation of the many types of writing we do as academics. In characterizing them as such, I do not mean to argue that they are somehow misunderstood or are transformative in and of themselves. Sometimes minor genres—instantiated here as an editors’ introduction but this category includes many of the genres that populate *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*, such as abstracts, annotations, bibliographies, proposals, Power-Point presentations, calls for papers, keyword essays, and interviews—are minor in purpose, aspiration, and execution, forms of writing that are inextricable products of academic life but localized expressions of limited scholarly ambition. But sometimes they can also be *alien forms*, forms of writing that challenge the distinctions that disarticulate TRS orientations. In presenting argument and intervention, and in making the case for Global Asias as a new method and field of academic study, we imagined

the scholarly ambitions of our project through the minor genres of editors' introduction, *Convergence* feature, and journal—an imaginative act that invites ongoing collaborative engagement.

**2017 “THE ‘COMFORT’ OF CRITICAL CONSOLIDATION:
PEDAGOGY, ETHICAL ALIENATION, AND ASIAN
AMERICAN LITERARY STUDIES”**

Abstract

This essay, published in *American Literature*, proposes ethical alienation as a critical pedagogical practice by analyzing the neoteric critical consolidation of Asian American literary and cultural studies. The publication of four compendiums—*The Routledge Companion to Asian American and Pacific Islander Literature* (2014), *Keywords for Asian American Studies* (2015), *The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature* (2015), and *The Cambridge History of Asian American Literature* (2015)—within the span of a year signals a pivotal moment in Asian American literary and cultural studies, one that both recognizes the institutional gains of the field and addresses the (in)compatibilities between the field's theoretical developments and its pedagogical practices. This essay considers the centrality of ethics to a post-identity Asian American studies, suggesting how ethical alienation—signaled both by the figuration of “comfort women” / military sex slaves / *halmoni* and by our own estrangement from it—can create productive classroom and metapedagogical practices in the study of Asian American literature. By attending to the field's consolidations around a set of pedagogical and scholarly imperatives and analyzing that critical solidification in relation to “comfort women” / military sex slaves / *halmoni* both as a figuration of “complex personhood” (Gordon 1997) and as an interdisciplinary “term of analysis and history rather than personhood” (Chuh 2003), this essay argues that ethical alienation as pedagogical practice can lead us to a differently ordered set of disciplinary priorities.

Annotation

This essay has a long history, but its evolution is illustrative of the prolonged arc of thinking and labor that contribute to scholarly knowledge production. In its earliest incarnation, it was a talk written to be delivered on campus visits during my first academic job search. The essay focused on

the complex figuration embodied by “comfort women” / military sex slaves / *halmoni* and examined how identification’s “wishful trajectory” (Kang 2003) often led us to assume that a more intimate identification with these figures would lead to more accurate representation and ultimately greater justice. In returning to these figures after fifteen years to rework this argument in relation to pedagogy for a special issue of *American Literature*, I found that much had changed for me and for the field of Asian American studies. In many ways, our latest embodiments had made newly visible our alien forms: I had survived and continued to live with cancer; the field had to wrestle with recalibration in light of the “profoundly problematic attainment [of canonicity] for a body of writing that drew its strength from being at the margins and challenging the complicity of the center” (Srikanth and Song 2015, 27). In working through the implications (both positive and negative) of institutionalization in relation to Asian American literary studies, this essay helped me to realize the connections between an alienizing praxis and the critical consolidation of knowledge.

2020 “(THE) TRANSPACIFIC TURNS”

Abstract

This essay draws on the restlessness and open-endedness signaled by the act of turning to the Pacific and to the transpacific’s inherent asymmetries as the bases for an interpretive logic of transpacific possibility. Accepting the “epistemic asymmetry” of the transpacific as both challenge and promise—which means acknowledging such asymmetry not simply or even primarily as a description of the conditions of the transpacific but as a catalyst through which transpacific knowledge and critical orientations of the transpacific are produced—this essay draws into structurally dissonant relation some of the varied transpacific turns made possible by ongoing critical attention to the Pacific Ocean and its multiple shores. The essay highlights three key transpacific turns—through militarization, the ecological, and Indigeneity—that conjointly work to map the uneven terrain encapsulated by the transpacific by focalizing the critical insights of each approach through transpacific literary and cultural production. Collectively, the transpacific turns explored here realize the shifting, evolving, and contradictory dimensions of literary and cultural transpacific studies as an institutional formation that reticulates American studies, Asian studies, Asian American studies, and Native Pacific studies.

Annotation

As with many of the essays included in this annotated bibliography, this essay was invited as part of a field-defining project, this time the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Asian American Literature and Culture* (2020), which was itself conceptualized as part of the ambitious Oxford Research Encyclopedia (ORE) project. Designed to address the problems of misinformation and overabundance in an environment of information proliferation, the ORE is a collaborative endeavor which brings together international communities of scholars across multiple disciplines and fields of study to collectively produce knowledge. The ORE project shares some important qualities with the Global Asias project: Both are collaborative enterprises which in the process of coming into existence ask us to confront the limits of conventional definitions of scholarly research. In tackling the challenges of writing about the transpacific for the ORE, I became more aware of the way in which the encyclopedia article—another minor genre of academic writing not especially valued for its scholarly ambition but instead considered more relevant for pedagogy—might be approached speculatively to support yet another definition of alien form: the formation of new assemblages of scholarly labor whose value isn't overdetermined by existing institutional definitions of TRS.

2021 “GLOBAL ASIAS: ON THE STRUCTURAL INCOHERENCE OF IMAGINABLE AGEOGRAPHY”

Abstract

Conceptual geographic formulations such as the Orient, Asian America, and Global Asias are employed to generate critical work about Asia and its diasporas, but these concepts simultaneously reference and remain disarticulated from “real” geographies. Therefore, they are ageographic in nature: While they encompass or bring into visibility specific geographic features and characteristics (and acknowledge geopolitical structures), the conceptual realities that they signal and enact are enabled by the ways in which they simultaneously reference, exceed, and remake such topographies imaginatively. Bringing the foundational work of Edward Said on “imaginative geography” into conversation with the fields of social geography, cultural history, and literary studies to explore the ways in which contemporary Asian/American speculative fictions register the evolving imaginability of the worlds we inhabit, study, and create, this essay

argues for the importance of conceptualizing Global Asias as imaginable ageography and explores the critical and aesthetic implications of such conceptualization.

Annotation

With the publication of this essay, I begin transitioning my attention from the field consolidation of Asian American literary studies to the emergence of Global Asias as a multidisciplinary and transfield arena of scholarly inquiry. This essay was published as the anchor essay of the last volume in the four-volume Asian American Literature in Transition (2021) series; its inclusion and placement in the project suggests that the historical divisions between Asian American studies and Asian area studies might be reconsidered through Global Asias approaches. In shifting my critical energies toward envisioning Global Asias as an expansively conceptualized scholarly endeavor, I also begin experimenting with how a neologism might operate as a keyword for speculative academic praxis. If, as I argue in this book, *alien form* names a type of academic labor whose incongruity with existing determinative definitions of TRS opens up new possibilities for utilizing it in speculative, worldmaking ways, then the possibilities opened up by imaginable ageography gesture not only to Global Asias but also to the other landscapes—the academy, the humanities, the discipline, and the university—that I (we) inhabit.

2021 GLOBAL ASIAs MAP BOOK SERIES PROPOSAL **SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PRESS**

Abstract

This proposal to the University of Hawai'i Press—Global Asias: Method, Architecture, Practice (MAP), coauthored with Charlotte Eubanks—argues that *Verge* has been very successful in creating shared spaces of collaboration where scholars working in different disciplines, periods, fields, and methods can, to borrow the terminology of Donald K. Emmerson (2008), a political scientist of Southeast Asia, interrogate their “terms of enlistment” and wrestle with the “dilemmas of allegiance” that undergird interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary scholarship. While the challenges of undertaking multidisciplinary and transfield scholarship remain formidable, the journal's success means that advancing Global Asias as an academic method and field requires a new infrastructure to help scholars explore the

epistemic challenges posed by Global Asias as a conceptual approach to the study of Asia and its multiple diasporas. The series stages intellectual exchanges between and across disciplines and fields to reimagine scholarly knowledge production about the global nature of Asia-focused worlds and epistemologies. Embracing Global Asias as an effective means of cultivating communities of scholarly engagement across disciplinary, regional, methodological, and institutional boundaries, we propose here a book series that capitalizes on the existing resources and structures developed by *Verge* and the Global Asias Initiative (GAI) to engineer multiyear, transinstitutional collaboration on the methods, problems, tactics, and possibilities of Global Asias as a scholarly endeavor. The book series encourages intellectual exchanges between and across disciplines, identifies some of the epistemic challenges posed by Global Asias, and explores how Global Asias might be utilized, perhaps counterintuitively, as a term of what Jerry Won Lee (2022) calls “semiotic precarity” that operates to destabilize or transform existing methodologies in area studies, ethnic studies, and diaspora studies.

Annotation

Sometimes it feels as though my work exists in parallel universes. *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* is an attempt to imagine a diversity of relation between such realms: quantum, transversal, frictive, exponential, and dissonant. Key to understanding this profusion is making visible the ways in which I have engaged Global Asias as an alien form—and embraced alien form as a means of exploring a more capacious articulation of intellectual engagement. As I have been demonstrating through my revisiting, in this annotated bibliography, of the different kinds of writing and thinking I have done over the last decade, some of which is made legible through publication but much of which is composed using minor genres of academic writing and thus relegated to what I am calling the shadow archive, alien forms reapproach scholarly labor as speculative genres—patterns of practice and expectation that give shape to academic priorities whose performance might also become the grounds from which to imagine a new set of shapes and priorities for institutional life. To put this in even simpler terms: Alien forms can look familiar because they acknowledge the formal conventions that shape generic legibility, but since they also work against generic constraints, they are constructed in ways that challenge the generic distinctions that disarticulate teaching, research, and service (TRS) as the foundations of scholarly praxis.

The Global Asias MAP book series is a case in point. At first glance, it appears to be a book series like any other. But its alien nature manifests through its connectedness to other Global Asias projects, its insistent centering of mentorship, its privileging of editorial labor as a scholarly praxis that disrupts determinative understandings of TRS, and its willingness to create infrastructure that reimagines the conditions of our work in the academy by foregrounding and fully committing to Global Asias' collaborative ethos. The book series takes its name from the title of an essay I wrote for a Global Asias forum published by the *Journal of Asian Studies* (JAS; see the abstract, annotation, and republished essay with additional annotation elsewhere in this section of the book). The shared title of the article and the book series speaks to the ways in which my Global Asias work operates both synergistically and in dissonant registers. Even as the book series conspires in the project of advancing Global Asias as a field of academic knowledge production, its approach to cultivating such work is distinct from (although not opposed to) the juxtapositional method fostered by *Verge* and described in the JAS essay. As we all know, books are different from articles and *Convergence* features, the genres mobilized by the journal, which is itself a specific genre of writing and enactment.

While Global Asias MAP encourages the same willingness to experiment with the limits of form characteristic of the journal's *Convergence* features and continues *Verge*'s practice of supporting scholarly research by leaning into the pedagogical and conceptual contributions made by a commitment to editorial labor, it also finds its own ways of imagining the shape of Global Asias scholarship and reimagining the conditions of work to which we are subject in academia. With regard to the former, my coeditor and I are asking authors to articulate an explicit relationship to Global Asias knowledge production—even if that articulation bears no resemblance to the philosophies and practices espoused by *Verge*. In relation to the latter, the series embraces collaboration—between different kinds of editors (Charlotte and I as both journal editors and book series editors working closely with Stephanie Chun, our acquisitions editor at the University of Hawai'i Press), between authors and editors, between colleagues working in different fields, and between mentors and mentees—as a meaningful way in which we can imagine alternatives to the hierarchies and assumptions structuring academia as we know it. Crucially, the series supports all its authors with project development workshops and incubates synergistic collective projects that imagine alternative ways of interacting with each other and scholarly forms (see the *Tactics & Theories* project for an example).

The book series is part of a constellated approach to scholarly praxis—it works alongside, through, and in nonaligned relation with the article that lays out some of the philosophies animating Global Asias methodology, the journal that works to make Global Asias legible, the proposal that pitches it as a project that is both academically distinctive and commercially viable, the summer institutes that cultivate aspects of its collective ethos, the grant proposal written to secure funding for project development workshops and open-access publishing, and a host of other GAI projects and endeavors, most of which were created through minor genres of academic writing. Alien forms are speculative in nature. Like other speculative fictions, alien forms approach worldbuilding by conceptualizing and building infrastructure.

**2021–2025 TACTICS & THEORIES PROJECT (PROPOSAL,
GLOBAL ASIAs SUMMER INSTITUTE 2022,
CONFERENCE ROUNDTABLES, EDITED VOLUME)**

Abstract

This project brings together a diverse group of scholars to work across ranks, disciplines, fields, geographies, and languages on a set of critical concerns animating the possibilities and problems of Global Asias scholarship. Focusing on a set of keywords that highlight not only potential overlaps but also points of disagreement between area studies and ethnic studies—*transits*, *indigeneity*, *epistemology*, *language*, and *a/geography*—this enterprise is designed to challenge the silos of academic knowledge formation that currently make legible and organize the study of Asia and its multiple diasporas. The project is an example of how the collaborative ethos of Global Asias scholarship can create innovative models of academic knowledge production by catalyzing new approaches to Global Asias scholarship and pedagogy.

Key to enabling this deeply collaborative approach is a carefully scaffolded set of activities designed to help contributors recognize disciplinary differences, create shared vocabularies, engage the structural dissonances between teaching and research as scholarly endeavors, and experiment with collectively generated forms of academic thinking and writing. More concretely, we imagine the architecture of this project to include diversely constituted keyword teams, ongoing working groups

that meet virtually for a semester, a weeklong in-person workshop under the auspices of the Global Asias Summer Institute in June 2022, a series of sponsored panels and roundtables, and ultimately a published volume. While we hope the edited volume will solidify Global Asias as a vibrant, multidisciplinary field of academic knowledge production and inaugurate a new wave of scholarly and pedagogical interest in Global Asias methods and topics, we are equally focused on how such a project can reimagine the conditions of possibility animating scholarly research and lay the groundwork for sustainable and sustaining intellectual exchange across disciplinary, institutional, and field boundaries. The diversity of materials and approaches included in the volume reflects a broad understanding of scholarly work and promotes an intellectual approach that resists mastery by building and investing in structures of intellectual engagement and experimentation that embrace disagreement and differences. The project's composition derives from a commitment to enacting the central tenets of Global Asias—a distinctive embrace of multidisciplinary, collaborative knowledge production that is not consensus driven, and self-reflexivity.

Annotation

Global Asias: Tactics & Theories is a project that has been articulated and developed through many different forms of academic labor and myriad genres of academic writing: invitation letters, a call for applications, a book proposal, keyword teams, virtual meetings, workplans, a summer institute, conference panels and roundtables, *Convergence* research forums, syllabi, pedagogical modules, reading lists, bibliographies, and an edited collection. As with the book series itself, the volume approximates a traditional genre of academic scholarship—here, the edited collection—but uses Global Asias methods and praxes to create itself as an alien form. So even though it is a volume with a scholarly introduction, five collaboratively authored chapters, five sets of pedagogical resources, and an index, it is not so much an edited collection as it is a book-length *convergence*, “a form of relational nonalignment, a clamor of scholars coming into a shared space for a time, arriving via different vectors and departing with different trajectories and at different speeds, practicing the art not of synthesis or consensus but of *suspension*” (Eubanks and Chen 2025, 8; emphasis original).

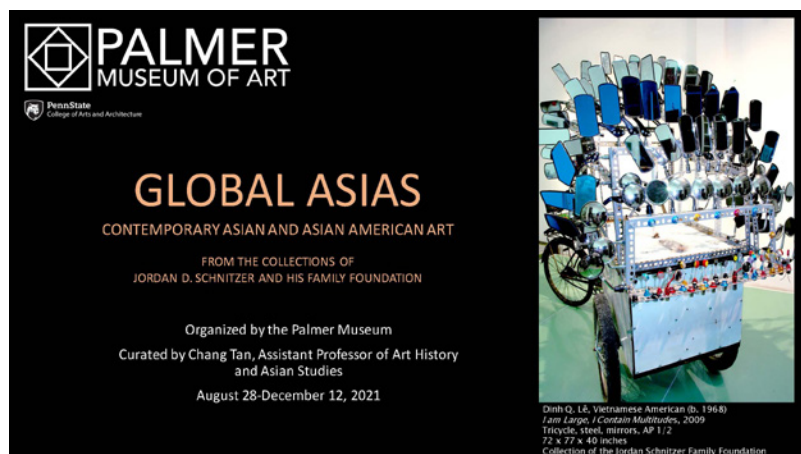
To describe something as “alien” can often mean to index something as strange. Here’s a partial list of the project’s many strangenesses:

- It utilizes keywords not to construct a genealogy of critical usage but to serve as a focalizing lens for exploring the challenges and opportunities of multidisciplinary and transfield collaborative work.
- It proposes “acts of suspension” as a method of collaborative thinking that encourages scholars to resist the impositions of expertise and mastery in favor of developing work that embraces impasses and discontinuities as equally valuable forms of intellectual engagement.
- It creates space (during the collaborative process and in the published volume’s interleaves) for tracking the labors and engagements that usually remain unseen (and thus undervalued) as part of a broader effort to recognize the minor genres and shadow archives of scholarly praxis.
- It invites—and builds infrastructure to make it possible for—graduate students and contingent faculty to work with tenure-track colleagues and senior scholars as full partners in knowledge production.
- It experiments—with how to imagine collaboration across field and discipline, with different forms and genres of academic writing, and with how to keep knowledge production unconsolidated.
- It centers mentorship by building it into the project’s process and structure, with mentorship within cross-rank teams encouraged, Tina and Charlotte meeting regularly with all teams during the semester of virtual meetings, integrating pedagogy as a core aspect of the project’s intellectual commitments, prioritizing the creation of community, and considering the *process* of collaborative knowledge production equally important to the academic *product* being generated.
- It offers an alternative to conventional scholarly approaches by encouraging Global Asias scholars to question how we understand “coverage” (the desire to map scholarly expertise onto geography and an aspiration to comprehensiveness), “evenness” (the practice of producing scholarship that synthesizes and creates uniformity out of discrepant sites, conditions, and dynamics), and “locatedness” (to describe both the importance of acknowledging the positions from which we produce knowledge and the representational challenges such acknowledgment may generate).

Another way to perceive this work's alien form is to visualize and understand its inherently composite nature. In *Alien Forms and Minor Genres'* third introduction, written as a set of lesson plans, one of the pedagogical activities asks the student (you, me, and interested others) to "create a chimera that emblemizes the incongruities and juxtapositions that constellate and animate your scholarly praxis. You can either draw or describe this creature. How does its hybrid composition make its alien nature manifest?" I created that assignment before I started writing this annotation, but I can see more clearly now the linkages between how I was trying then to use the lesson plan to distill the alien forms of scholarly praxis and how I am trying currently to give shape to the ways in which my Global Asias work is chimeric in nature, a creature whose "strange incongruities" (J. Rice 2020, 26) create new conditions of emergence. Chimeras are imaginary creatures compounded from incongruous parts; chimeras can also be defined as things that exist only in the imagination. This book argues that the first definition exemplifies an approach that can open ways of redefining the word's second meaning. I believe alien forms can help us make a more expansively conceptualized scholarly praxis a reality rather than an unrealizable dream.

2021 GLOBAL ASIAS: CONTEMPORARY ASIAN AND ASIAN AMERICAN ART EXHIBITION

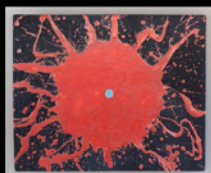
Abstract



Global Asias examines the cosmopolitan, playful, and subtly subversive characteristics of contemporary Asian and Asian American art. The exhibition highlights the work of fifteen artists of Asian heritage who draw on a rich array of motifs, techniques, and cultural motivations to construct diverse “Asias” in a modern global context.

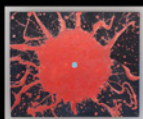
The exhibition is divided into three thematic sections:

Exuberant Forms, Moving Stories, and Asias Reinvented.



Exuberant Forms

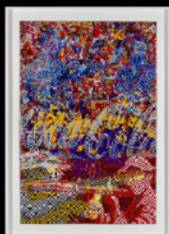
features work that expands and complicates the canonical narrative of abstraction. Works in this section incorporate handmade papers, collage, traditional raku ceramics, and Vietnamese basket weaving techniques, reshaping conventional views of abstract art—its composition, palette, materiality as well as its cultural implications.



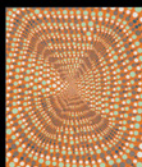
Jun Kaneko



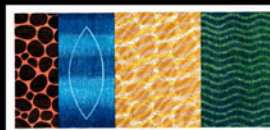
Jacob Hashimoto



Dinh Q. Le



Barbara Takenaga



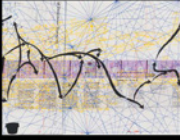
Hiroki Morinoue

Moving Stories

brings together powerful prints and mixed-media works that reflect on the experiences of migration, both within Asia and beyond. Works in this section examine vexed histories—internment camps for Japanese Americans in WWII and the Vietnam war—and map diasporic identities and trajectories. Like the artists themselves, art is always compelled to move and to respond to the shifting socio-political realities of time and place.



Roger Shimomura



Rirkrit Tiravanija



Dinh Q. Le



Dinh Q. Le



Hung Liu

Asias Reinvented

highlights two- and three-dimensional works that transform styles and techniques of traditional Asian arts in alignment with the vibes of the contemporary and cosmopolitan. Collectively, these works suggest the plurality and fluidity of "Asia" as cultural construct and creative practice.



Akio Takamori



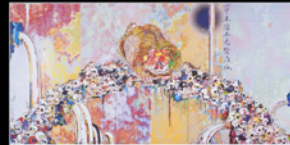
Patti Warashina



Jun Kaneko



Takashi Murakami



Annotation

The above abstract is composed of the publicity postcards developed to encourage people to attend the exhibition. Featuring artwork from the collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and his family foundation, the *Global Asias* exhibition discussed here was curated by my colleague Chang Tan. As the postcards outline, the exhibit brought together art created by contemporary Asian and Asian American artists using three main themes: “Exuberant Forms,” “Moving Stories,” and “Asias Reinvented.”

Embracing the collaborative ethos of *Global Asias* means that much of the work I do involves supporting the work of others. This is true for my editorial labor, which actively engages with other scholars’ thinking and writing both to elucidate concepts and arguments that will be credited to authors and to advance the methods of *Global Asias* as a field of academic knowledge production. It is also true for mentoring, which grounds all my scholarly praxis but perhaps manifests most visibly in my work with *Verge*, the *Global Asias* Summer Institutes, the publishing workshops and “Chat with an Editor” sessions I regularly host, the junior faculty retreats and mentoring programs I’ve developed, and my sustained involvement over the last fourteen years with Penn State’s Center for American Literary Studies’ First Book Institute. And it is certainly true for the collective engagements I’ve fostered through the development of *Convergence* features for the journal, collaborative projects that are cultivated through myriad GAI platforms, and endeavors like the Cultivating Early Career Networks (CECN) program that GAI hosts in partnership with the Japan Foundation, New York.

While a conventional understanding of scholarly labor would consider all this work as “service,” what *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* has been arguing (and trying to demonstrate) is that much of this effort problematizes approaching TRS as discrete genres of academic praxis. More pointedly: We exist in an environment where a determinative approach to genre leads us to act as though research scholarship manifests only in the genre of the research essay or book, pedagogical labor manifests through syllabi and other course materials, and the bureaucratic genres of writing that most of us produce should never be considered intellectual or scholarly in nature and ambition. By disarticulating forms of academic labor from genres of academic writing and questioning the ways in which they often are collapsed, can we create new conditions of possibility from which to imagine different ways of recognizing the dimensionality of our scholarly praxis?

Like so many of the projects described in this section of the book, the exhibition evolved as/through a variety of forms and genres, including a Portfolio feature in *Verge* 7, no. 1 (“Art of the Global Asias: From Identity to Intervention”), a series of community engagement events and activities (such as artists’ lectures and workshops, roundtables, and lesson plans for educational activities), the exhibit itself at the Palmer Museum (accompanied by a book-length exhibition guide, a virtual tour, and a teaching toolkit), and the yearlong traveling exhibitions that followed at museums across the United States. In my supporting role, I provided definitions and explanations and overviews, helped to conceptualize resources and approaches, developed auxiliary materials and activities, secured financial contributions, and wrote some captions and the opening remarks for a virtual tour. This public-humanities-oriented work reflects, in different registers, the dimensionality and expansiveness of scholarly praxis that I think we in the humanities should embrace and more fully enable—not as an addition to, or an alternative expression of, our scholarship but as a meaningful form of bringing together the TRS orientations that motivate academic life and work.

**2022 “GLOBAL ASIAS: METHOD, ARCHITECTURE,
—— PRAXIS”**

Abstract

This essay, published in a *Journal of Asian Studies* Global Asias forum that was inspired by the presidential panel organized by Christine Yano at the 2021 AAS conference, introduces the philosophy, principles, and practices animating Global Asias scholarship to consider how this conceptual rubric shifts the ways in which we approach the subjects, objects, methods, and praxes of the academic study of Asia. Structurally dissonant as an epistemological project, Global Asias encourages scholars to acknowledge the institutional designs and disciplinary practices that currently organize and make legible work on Asia and its diasporas while simultaneously highlighting the limits of, and points of noncontact between, the broader infrastructures (including area studies, ethnic studies, diaspora studies, and the disciplines and interdisciplines) under which such work has traditionally been organized. In addition to offering a conceptual topography of Global Asias, this essay proposes three praxis-oriented concepts—relational nonalignment, structural dissonance, and imaginable ageography—that enable Global Asias as a tactical and evolving approach to the study of Asia

and its multiple diasporas. It makes a case for the importance of building an architecture to support the emerging field of Global Asias as one that actively resists the drive toward “critical consolidation” that often results from academic paradigm work.

Annotation

Writing this piece was the culmination of many years of effort—in establishing the journal, in developing a more explicitly articulated set of theories and tactics for Global Asias praxis, in working to make Global Asias more institutionally visible—and also the beginning of a new attentiveness to creating Global Asias as alien form. A key way in which this essay exists as alien form is that it both instantiates and abides in nonaligned relation to the book series that I coedit with Charlotte Eubanks, also titled *Global Asias: Method, Architecture, Praxis* (see separate entry). While establishing research expertise can sometimes lead to editing a book series, often the intellectual labor suggested by the title of “editor” can be misleading. In this case, Charlotte and I are leaning into the opportunity to explore the many alien forms that Global Asias makes possible. Our collaboration imagines the series as one committed to developmental editing and mentorship, and welcoming of generic innovation—precisely because such forms of academic labor and writing continue to remain illegible and undervalued in the academy. The inaugural volume in the series is a collaborative project on the tactics and theories of Global Asias, an experimental project that constellates a diverse group of scholars working across rank, field, discipline, area, and method to collectively tackle the challenges of Global Asias scholarship. The connections between research, editing, mentorship, pedagogy, and field-building are thus embodied in the reticulated relationship between the myriad genres of academic labor encompassed by the nonaligned relation between essay and book series. As I have been arguing, alien forms beget alien forms. I am looking forward to what these new infrastructures will make possible.

2022 HENRY LUCE FOUNDATION CONCEPT NOTE AND GRANT PROPOSAL

Abstract

The Global Asias Initiative (GAI) is a multiplatform project. The overarching aim is to bring into relation, but not necessarily into alignment, work

in Asian, Asian American, and Asian diaspora studies. These fields have traditionally been siloed from one another, as Cold War models of area studies have stressed language acquisition while North American formations of ethnic studies have focused on questions of race, class, and gender. Both approaches tend to ignore Asian América: diasporas located in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. While there have been numerous calls to bring these three fields into conversation, without appropriate infrastructure these exchanges wither before bearing fruit.

This initial concept note and the grant proposal we were subsequently invited to submit articulate the GAI's continued commitment to building various forms of infrastructure that invite, support, and sustain such integrative, collaborative work. Building on existing platforms (including *Verge* and other GAI programs such as the conference series, Cyber Chats, and summer institutes), we solicited funding from the Henry Luce Foundation to launch three additional infrastructures: an open-access book series, a series of project development workshops, and targeted outreach to scholars located in Asia.

Annotation

When we first began our work on Global Asias, no one involved actually identified as a Global Asias scholar. Instead, interlocutors approached as scholars who were aware of the ways in which academic training silos the study of “area” from the study of “diaspora” but nonetheless were deeply shaped through the institutional identities—of field, discipline, geography, and specialization—we are trained to embrace. Such a reality accordingly informed our decision to build *Verge* as an infrastructure that would allow scholars to enter the conversation from markedly different locations without requiring them to convert or swear new scholarly allegiances. More precisely, an architectural approach enabled us to encourage those inhabiting this space to imagine how Global Asias as a field might emerge—provisionally, through both coalition and disagreement, and in continually evolving forms and configurations—from our engagements with and within the journal.

In the decade since, the field of Global Asias has become more institutionally legible. We are now seeing a new generation of scholars in North America who *do* consider their work to be Global Asias in nature and who are comfortable identifying themselves as Global Asias scholars. We are also seeing that there is interest (in Asian institutions and from our colleagues based in Asia and in other parts of the world) in exploring how

Global Asias might (and needs to) evolve to include them. Such developments, then, require the creation of new infrastructures—in this case, a series to support book-length projects and development workshops based in Asia that provide Asia-based colleagues with opportunities similar to the ones we’ve historically created through the GAI.

2022–2025 JAPAN FOUNDATION, NEW YORK (JFNY)
PARTNERSHIP AND THE CULTIVATING EARLY
CAREER NETWORKS PROJECT

Abstract

This program, jointly sponsored by the Japan Foundation, New York (JFNY) and the GAI, is designed to mentor early-career colleagues, create transpacific scholarly networks, and incubate collaborative projects that explore the potential overlaps and disjunctions between Japan studies and Global Asias as differentiated fields of academic inquiry. When invited to collaborate with JFNY on featuring Global Asias in their recently launched US-Japan Junior Scholars Networking Project, a program whose general objective is to connect junior Japanese studies scholars in the United States and Japan for the purpose of promoting dialogue and networking, we fabricated a set of interconnected engagements to support scholars working at the intersection of Japan studies and Global Asias. The Cultivating Early Career Networks (CECN) project is a three-year initiative that endeavors to build a durable infrastructural assemblage to make possible the kinds of dynamic and sustaining exchanges that Global Asias scholarship requires. Beginning in year 1 with a pair of Cyber Chats—the first one focusing on “Challenges and Opportunities for Global Asias Approaches to Japan Studies” and the second centering on “Migration, Identity, and Diaspora at the Intersection of Japan Studies and Global Asias”—we worked to identify a set of scholars, and a constellation of issues, that would contribute to a robust transpacific conversation. Year 2 brought together a cohort of eight participants from Japan and the United States (and two Penn State graduate students) for a yearlong series of virtual conversations addressing four targeted mentoring needs: making intersectional research legible, publishing, developing networks that support us both professionally and personally, and constructing collaborative projects. In the program’s final year, teams worked on their

proposed collaborative projects and convened at the Global Asias 7 conference, hosted by the GAI in spring 2025.

Annotation

This project continues the GAI's history of collaborating with other institutional partners—in this case, a public diplomacy organization—to create infrastructures around Global Asias that can bridge the historical divides that separate area studies scholars from critical race and diaspora studies scholars. JFNY first approached Charlotte Eubanks to see if they would be interested in leading a project on Global Asias under the auspices of JFNY's US-Japan Junior Scholars Networking Project. While on the surface the JFNY's program and the CECN project we eventually developed seem quite similar—both enterprises emphasize mentorship and aim to build relationships between scholars located in the United States and in Japan—it is worth noting that there were significant differences in our two organizations' approaches. JFNY tends to privilege a more hierarchical model of program-building; when they contacted Charlotte, they imagined that Charlotte could serve as the senior mentor for the project after selecting a small group of potential participants, and that scholarly expertise would first be disseminated vertically before being engaged horizontally across the cohort. GAI embraces a more collaborative model of knowledge production, which means that we tend to build projects through a scaffolded approach that works on creating opportunities for diverse constituencies, identifying potential collaborators through open calls as opposed to closed networks, ensuring different points of entry (and exit) for interlocutors, and developing infrastructures that can generate sustainable communities of practice. JFNY has been incredibly open to working to create the CECN project cooperatively and reciprocally, understanding and appreciating that generating a program using Global Asias methods would necessarily entail a structural embrace of its collaborative ethos.

As with many of the projects discussed in this annotated bibliography, CECN is a chimera, a composite of multiple forms of academic labor and genres of academic writing. What does it mean to work as/through alien form as a scholar, to embrace the diversity of knowledge production by refusing to limit scholarship to narrowly defined genres of writing? Although this might come across as a rhetorical question, it is not intended as such. Instead, I ask this with genuine interest in figuring out how many of us

might answer, hoping to make more explicit a conversation about the multifaceted nature of scholarly praxis and the ways in which we and our institutions should consider making such dimensionality legible by recognizing it in meaningful ways. I think one strategy for how this works is to build a multicomponent project that results in a product that is valued when institutions assess academic labor: Here, there will be specific outputs—conference panels and publications—that participants can put on their cvs and faculty activity reports. But that approach, in isolation and without context, continues to support the problematic hierarchies that privilege certain forms of academic praxis (i.e., research) over others (i.e., teaching and service) and reinforces the notion that these genres of scholarly labor should be differentiated from each other.

In the CECN program, we are making room for participants to create collaborative projects that simultaneously recognize the importance of legibility (especially for early-career scholars) and make it possible to cultivate engagements whose values aren't solely determined by institutional metrics. To that end, the participants have proposed working together to develop models and resources for collaborative syllabus creation, stage a series of virtual conversations on positionality and different points of entry into Global Asias and Japan studies, and foster a space to discuss new directions for scholarship on empires in the Pacific. No doubt some of this work, which is ongoing, will manifest in publication of some sort. But what will be equally important to recognize are the structures, approaches, and intellectual engagements that are generated to make publication possible. Even though there are many who might argue that the reason publication is valuable is because it already assumes and demonstrates these other types of labor, I think only by making those other labors more visible can we challenge the institutional hierarchies that fix academic labor into overly reductive forms of expression.

2023 NEH SUMMER INSTITUTE GRANT PROPOSAL FOR
“GLOBAL ASIAs: TACTICS & THEORIES”

Abstract

This proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to run a two-week summer institute for higher education faculty and graduate students reflects the GAI's continued commitment to cultivating sites of collegial engagement, productive disagreement, and communal

knowledge-making. Given the increasing numbers of colleagues who are interested in learning more about Global Asias but who feel relatively isolated, either because their institutions still disarticulate area studies from ethnic studies or because it can be challenging to build the type of cross-disciplinary and transfield networks that Global Asias scholarly praxis requires, a program like the one we're proposing is critical to introducing interested colleagues to the challenges and opportunities of this emergent method and field of study. Drawing on insights generated out of the *Global Asias: Tactics & Theories* volume, this summer institute is an opportunity to leverage the genre of the summer institute itself—a scholarly convening that encourages professional development within the context of collegial interaction, collaborative engagement, and shared exploration—both to conceptualize and to instantiate Global Asias as an interwoven praxis, one that requires critical attention to understanding both theories and tactics. While my other principal investigator, Charlotte Eubanks, and I acknowledge that the academy in its current form tends to read theory and tactic as distinct—in institutional parlance, often “theory” is research and “tactic” is pedagogy—we think that theories and tactics are deeply intertwined and should be engaged in relation. So, for example, this proposed summer institute will introduce theoretical concepts such as “relational nonalignment,” “imaginable ageography,” and “structural dissonance,” and then work systematically with participants to explore how these concepts can be used to rethink course design, institutional program-building, and the creation of academic networks and scholarly community.

Indeed, we believe that a dual focus on tactics and theories will enable us to collectively imagine a more expansive scholarly praxis around Global Asias, exploring how the genres of academic labor (TRS) are often more generically complex than institutions imagine. To that end, the summer institute will facilitate seminars introducing participants to the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches of the field; create collaborative working groups that enable scholars to begin developing the multidisciplinary and interinstitutional networks that Global Asias scholarship requires; invite colleagues who have worked to develop the legibility of Global Asias (through curriculum development, through the creation of institutional forms such as departments, programs, and research clusters; or through the vehicles of academic platforms like journals, book series, digital humanities projects) to run workshops on program-building; and provide opportunities to support participants' individual professional

goals by connecting them to each other and to the spectrum of Global Asias platforms developed by the GAI.

Annotation

Since launching *Verge*, I have embraced working through the academic genre of the summer institute. The GAI's yearly summer institutes have historically emphasized mentoring early-career scholars; each summer institute is focused on a specific theme and designed to cross-pollinate knowledge across field and disciplinary boundaries by encouraging a diverse set of interlocutors to develop some shared vocabulary, workshop writing, and create collegial and intellectual networks that might then manifest in and through other projects (in the journal, at conferences, or as part of the Global Asias MAP book series). As a scholarly form, summer institutes are very effective in cultivating and reinforcing the collaborative ethos that undergirds Global Asias praxis. They also enable a scaffolded approach to creating Global Asias as alien form by showing participants how their individual research projects can be enhanced, reimaged, or otherwise connected to a variety of other scholarly genres of writing and praxis. In the past, summer institute participants have collectively created special issues (of *Verge* and other journals), conference panels and roundtables, symposia, writing groups, *Convergence* features, and Cyber Chats.

While the complexities of Global Asias scholarly practice often manifest as chimeric composition, another way to approach Global Asias as/through alien form is the repeated processing of its philosophies and praxes through different academic genres of writing and scholarly labor. In other words, alien forms can also be generated through the practice of regenreing. As described in one of the activities for "Building Alien Forms" included in the book's third introduction, which is itself written using the genre of the lesson plan, regenreing is the act of "using a different genre to write or enact your academic work." Just as a more capacious scholarly praxis can be developed when we disarticulate form and genre to see how the genres of academic labor (broadly conceptualized as TRS) can be expressed in and through a variety of forms, a more capacious conceptualization of Global Asias emerges when we revisit its core principles and philosophies through a variety of academic genres and forms. Crucially, such reiterative practice is meant not to consolidate knowledge but to consider the affordances of form and the dissonances that invariably proliferate when we work with and through a diversity of configurations.

In the case of this NEH grant proposal and the summer institute it proposes, regenreing occurs in a variety of ways. As noted, the GAI conceptualizes the summer institute as itself a genre of academic engagement that invariably leads to other genres of academic writing and praxis. The thematic focus of this institute is drawn from the work of the *Tactics & Theories* project, an instance of regenreing the edited volume to test its propositions regarding how we tend to disarticulate theoretical and practical knowledge in academia and to explore how Global Asias might offer us an alternative way of thinking such work in relation.

Field work advances through a multiplicity of genres. Our scholarly praxis is more capaciously enacted than the determinative genres of TRS that academia currently utilizes. Recognizing the complexity of our academic labors requires that we take seriously the work and writing produced in the shadow archive and resist only valuing the very specific forms of research writing that scholars undertake. While I have talked a lot about editing as an alien form of academic labor that engages each of these three key ideas, this proposal is an opportunity to emphasize the importance of the summer institute as an institutional form that helps to make possible the multidisciplinary and transfield engagements of Global Asias scholarly praxis.

2024 GLOBAL ASIAN STUDIES (UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO)

INTERVIEW

Abstract

This conversation was recorded and disseminated as part of a research initiative developed by the Global Asian Studies (GAS) program at the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia (IASA) at the University of Tokyo. Launched in 2022, the GAS program was created to develop new research themes and methodologies responding to the agency of local scholarship in Asia while simultaneously engaging with a global audience. By inviting scholars from related institutes in Asia and around the world to share how they have approached thinking about Asia in a global context, the interview series seeks to collate some of the academic knowledge and practices being generated around “global Asia” and share that information with a broader audience. Hosted on Zoom in late October 2023, the GAS interview team (composed of Jiyeon Kim, Pattajit Tangsinmunkong, and director Shigeto Sonoda) framed a conversation with Tina Chen about the history and mission of the GAI to explore the ways in which we have been conceptualizing Global

Asias as a “structurally dissonant epistemological project.” As part of that conceptualization, we discuss the importance of “epistemological non-consolidation” (as an intellectual goal and as a scholarly praxis), the distinctions of engaging Global Asias from different geographical locations (i.e., North America and Asia), challenging the insularity of academic training, the critical need to build infrastructures to make Global Asias knowledge production possible, and the irony of how the absence of existing support can become the conditions of possibility for inventing a new structure and approach to how we work in academia. As the dialogue makes clear, Global Asias has the potential to change the academic landscape—not simply by introducing a new term or paradigm to disrupt the existing assumptions and priorities but as a way to approach scholarship as/through alien form.

Annotation

Throughout my career, I have been aware of the power of conversation—to encourage intellectual engagement, disseminate academic knowledge production, and create scholarly communities. After all, it seems so obvious—in the classroom, at conferences, during institutes, in the hallways with colleagues, during campus visits (both when on the job market and later, when invited to visit for reasons beyond employment), or when certain problems take on national legibility and “experts” are consulted and cited in news stories that are inevitably generated in their wake—that talking to and with each other is fundamental to the work of the humanities. And yet conversational engagement was relegated to a sphere distinct from my research, which took shape in the form of library visits, online research, solitary reading and note-taking, and the writing of articles and books that somehow were deemed more valuable as metrics of scholarly accomplishment. Indeed, for the first half of my career, this bifurcation—between the collaborative energies of the conversational exchange and the scholarly achievements of solo research—seemed to me unquestionable, just a reflection of “how things work” in academia.

And then, two things happened: I got cancer and I launched a new journal and became an editor. While these two life events were not initially connected, they became inextricably intertwined. After diagnosis and treatment, I was not the same: literally true after chemotherapy, a mastectomy, and radiation, but also psychologically and spiritually and cognitively true, because life-threatening illness fundamentally changes you in so many ways. In this case, illness gave me license to reimagine how to work and

what kinds of work to do. I won't romanticize this as a moment of freedom or agency, especially early in the process of reimagination. After cancer treatment, I experienced significant cognitive impairment. It was difficult (and sometimes impossible) to comprehend what I was reading, to synthesize complex materials, to remember things, or to communicate effectively what I wanted to say. Aphasia impairs the expression and understanding of language; it makes reading and writing especially laborious. It was hard not to experience my aphasia as a potentially extinction-level event. After all, how could I be an English professor if I lost my ability to use language?

Learning to deal with aphasia and other kinds of cognitive impairment meant that standard operating procedures were no longer possible. I have discussed this briefly in relation to the first essay—"Agency/Asiancy"—I wrote after treatment, an experience that showed me how radically I would have to alter my writing habits in order to produce scholarship. But what this experience with unwellness also taught me was that I could, and perhaps needed to, do more to question the standard operating procedures of academic life. In relation to the founding of *Verge*, this became an opportunity to begin thinking about what it would mean to set aside the generic hierarchies that had hitherto overdetermined the value of my academic labors—and what it would mean to commit to working in minor genres (the journal, keyword essays, CFPS, abstracts, syllabi, grant proposals, summer institutes, and, in this case, the interview) with the same scholarly intent and dedication that I had devoted previously only to those genres of research productivity that I had been interpellated to value. Taking up the editorial work that a new journal demands also challenged me to address in more systematic ways the bifurcation between the collaborative energies of the conversational exchange and the scholarly achievements of solo research. More specifically, approaching editing as/through alien form resulted in the creation of *Convergence* features designed to make more legible the diverse genres through which we could articulate the complexities of our scholarly praxis, much of which happens through collegial exchanges (in classrooms, at conferences, during institutes and workshops) that remain somehow distinct from research writing and thus undervalued in institutional assessment. It also served as example and reminder of the transformative power of conversational exchange; good editing requires the staging of multiple conversations (between author and potential audience, between reviewers and authors, between editors and boards, and between editors and authors), and editorial work enabled me to experience the power of these exchanges in meaningful ways.

This interview with GAS showcases some of what I learned about the alien forms of scholarly praxis through my work with Global Asias. It exemplifies my belief in the importance of using a diversity of genres to share scholarship; it reflects my commitment to making different forms of collaborative engagement more visible in my academic work; and it highlights the importance of sharing scholarly research with a broader, nonspecialist audience.

**2024 “SYMPATHY’S ACTIVE ENGAGEMENTS: THE POST-1940
ASIAN AMERICAN NOVEL” (ULTIMATELY PUBLISHED AS
“THE ASIAN AMERICAN NOVEL”)**

Abstract

The diversity of post-1940 Asian American novels provides an opportunity for critics to approach this corpus by both recognizing the genre as a coherent tradition and acknowledging the internal contradictions that characterize this literary and cultural form. Dilating on sympathy and its many critical meanings to map the varied dimensions of a literary category that is extraordinarily capacious even as it has also been subject to narrow prescriptiveness, this essay proposes that twentieth- and twenty-first-century Asian American novels have emphasized the significance of making Asian American subjects legible, supporting coalitional subjectivities and collective representational practices, and experimenting with form. Even as the imperatives of providing a literary overview often depend upon taxonomic clarity, the essay argues that working through sympathy’s active engagements illuminates that critical fictions, just like the narrative fictions studied in this essay, are provisional in nature—and that the multiple stories encompassed by the collective work of Asian American novelists and Asian Americanist critics are essentially what Ruth Ozeki (2013) calls “tales for the time being,” fictions that are subject to change.

Annotation

This essay was written for the Oxford History of the Novel in English project, which the press describes as a “comprehensive, worldwide history of English-language prose fiction in all its varieties.” Slated to be part of volume 8—*American Fiction Since 1940*—the essay wrestles with the ways in which field consolidations often require the crafting of singular narratives: of origin, of discovery, of emergence, and of legacy. In tackling this specific

genre of writing as an alien form, I continued experimenting with the ways in which keywords could be used contrapuntally: simultaneously to create conceptual frameworks for understanding what are essentially incredibly diverse literary groupings and to create mechanisms for disrupting the critical consolidation of disciplinary knowledge encouraged by institutionalization. One of the dissonances *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* explores is produced by generic frictions. As a literary critic, I first began thinking of generic frictions through the aesthetic experimentation of Asian American writers but eventually began to wonder if such experiments could also be undertaken in the production of my own scholarship.

2024 GLOBAL ASIAS WRITING THE PROFESSION (GAWP)

Abstract

Global Asias is an opportunity to rethink area studies, ethnic studies, and diaspora studies as disarticulated institutional forms of knowledge production about Asia and its multiple diasporas. It is also an opportunity to reimagine mentoring and professional development structures that make Global Asias scholarship and institutional legibility possible. By putting into practice some of the principles developed through Global Asias epistemologies—namely, nonaligned relation, structural dissonance, reimagined community, and speculative imagination—the Global Asias Writing the Profession (GAWP) program operates as a platform that cultivates cross-disciplinary and transfield collaboration, creates networks to support colleagues, connects scholars to professional development opportunities, and constructs new modes of intellectual engagement.

GAWP conceptualizes “writing the profession” as a means of recalibrating the role that writing (in and through) communities play in creating academia itself. Instead of allowing the profession to dictate genres of academic writing and their value, GAWP inverts this dynamic to generate a Global Asias writing community that can rewrite how we study Asia and reimagine the role of writing in creating both scholarly community and research. This means that the program embraces a very expansive definition of “writing.” For some of our participants, scholarly publication will be a desired outcome. Others might be motivated by the opportunity to write outside of the constraints of academic genres and conventions and dialogue with others to envision new forms of collaborative knowledge-making,

perhaps experimenting with writing for a general audience or crafting their work as public humanities scholarship. Writing for pedagogical purposes (creating syllabi and courses, developing new assignments) is also encouraged. GAWP welcomes such diversity and invites us—as scholars, thinkers, teachers, and colleagues—to explore multiple avenues for writing ourselves, and our profession, into being.

This program is inspired by the principles developed by the GAI for Global Asia scholarship and demonstrates how the “theories” of this field can also generate new models for how to create a scholarly community and reimagine the profession. It gives Penn State colleagues an opportunity to develop their writing, capaciously imagined, within the context of a sustained network, thus more firmly connecting them to the development of Global Asia as an emerging field of knowledge production. It addresses the structural issue of isolation (a problem faced by many Asian Americanists and Global Asia scholars, who often work in relative institutional isolation) and creates mentorship and professional development structures that will be of use to varied constituencies: early-career scholars for whom such support makes a crucial difference in promotion and also more senior scholars who were trained in either area studies or ethnic studies but who are moving toward (or interested in learning about) the multidisciplinary and transfield approaches exemplified by Global Asia methods and practices.

Annotation

Writing programs for faculty abound in academia. There are programs that are designed to make us accountable and/or more productive; programs that provide critical feedback on scholarly projects; programs designed to provide protected spaces for colleagues to generate scholarship; programs designed to cultivate community; programs that offer productivity coaching; and programs that aim to teach faculty how to write across a range of media and reach a public audience. Whatever their design or intent, such programs are engaged in helping scholars to meet the institutional demands that academic success requires. They are wonderful resources and many of them work very effectively to support faculty research success.

As a faculty writing program, GAWP shares in many of these goals: It is an infrastructure that encourages faculty to commit to their writing, to work collegially so that writing isn't such a solitary endeavor, and to understand the importance of writing in making scholarship visible. But GAWP is also an alien form, and it utilizes the capaciousness of Global Asia

knowledge production and scholarly praxis to imagine how we write not only to fulfill the articulated goals of the institutions we inhabit but also to remake institutional understandings of what forms scholarship—and maybe scholarly writing—can take. To that end, GAWP invites its participants to explore writing in relation to the expansiveness of scholarly praxis and to imagine how there are many forms of writing—not just writing articles and books—that animate intellectual life and deserve greater recognition. It asks questions that feel basic but also somewhat heretical: Why does so much of the writing we do as academics not count when it comes to assessing our scholarly accomplishments? What happens if we embrace more diverse forms of writing as both a reflection of—and a means of moving toward—a more dimensionally imagined scholarly praxis, one that challenges the deterministic approach to TRS as discrete categories of academic labor and interrogates what might happen to institutional life if we refuse the hierarchies that such categorization is currently designed to reinforce?

2024–PRESENT

**GLOBAL ASIAS: INSTITUTIONAL FORMS /
ALIEN FORMS (PROPOSAL, SI2025,
ASIA SHORTS VOLUME, WORKSHOP,
GLOBAL ASIAS CYBER CHAT)**

Abstract

We see Global Asias as an invitation to build things differently. Since 2015, the award-winning journal *Verge* and the Global Asias Initiative have been exploring how Global Asias knowledge production can reshape the academic landscape. Our work over the past decade has shown us that Global Asias is more than an opportunity to question the institutional structures that historically disarticulate area studies from ethnic studies and diaspora studies. Global Asias is also an opportunity to build new structures. Indeed, Global Asias can be provocatively approached as an *alien form*, “forms of writing and professional enactment that (1) engage the genres in which they are working speculatively, (2) leverage the conceptual possibilities of generic frictions to create structural dissonance, (3) challenge the distinctions that disarticulate research, teaching, and service orientations, (4) embrace the synergistic possibilities of cross-pollinating epistemologies and practices across institutional taxonomies of scholarly labor, and (5) support the formation of new assemblages of scholarly labor whose

value isn't overdetermined by existing institutional definitions of teaching, research, and service."

Embracing Global Asias' disruptive energies and collaborative ethos thus enables us to imagine alternative approaches to the building of orthodox bureaucratic forms. Such forms might include programs, centers, and departments. Embracing disruption also enables us to undertake conventional genres of academic knowledge production (research essays, monographs, book series, edited collections) in ways that remake the institution of higher education. And finally, Global Asias as a cooperative venture encourages us to experiment with unconventional forms of scholarship (what *Verge* has pioneered as *convergences*, nontraditional genres of academic writing that are collaborative, polyvocal, and structurally dissonant). These distinct efforts are all fundamentally institutional in nature, and there is great potential in thinking more systematically about the ways in which Global Asias manifests in and works to remake the institutional forms of academic life.

In conceptualizing the Global Asias: Institutional Forms / Alien Forms project, we draw on a very successful history of using a scaffolded approach to building networks, communities, and multifaceted scholarly engagement. We will host a 2025 Global Asias Summer Institute and circulate an open call for submissions to generate materials for an Asia Shorts volume. SI2025 (July 28–August 1, 2025) invites teams working on using Global Asias methods and principles to build new institutional forms to apply for a weeklong intensive experience that is focused on generating new programmatic, curricular, and collaborative possibilities and/or utilizing existing institutional units in new and innovative ways. GAI will also design and circulate a CFP to solicit contributions that explore the alien forms of Global Asias by experimenting with unconventional forms of scholarly writing. We believe combining these two approaches will yield a set of thought-provoking engagements that can help illustrate ways in which we can use Global Asias to rethink, reimagine, and remake the institutional forms that govern academic life.

With the increasing interest in creating new institutional possibilities around Global Asias, how might we seize this opportunity to re-engineer the processes and dynamics of institutionalization? Put differently: Making Global Asias institutionally legible does not necessarily require us to create it to fit existing bureaucratic forms but might instead be an occasion where the alienness and dissonance that are inherent in Global Asias could be deployed to imagine institutional forms anew—by questioning the genres of academic labor, embracing transinstitutional partnership in ways that keep knowledge practices unconsolidated, and experimenting with interdepartmental

collaborative ventures that actively work against ossifying scholarly praxis. This project aims to exemplify and illustrate the transformational possibilities of Global Asias approaches by highlighting how knowledge production operates in relation to the institutional forms that academia makes available to scholars, students, administrators, thinkers, teachers, and critics.

Annotation

As I sit here writing this (current moment: July 2024; final formatting in August 2025), space-time compression means that the temporal overlaps between *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* and other GAI projects make it increasingly difficult to map the relationships between them in linear ways. What initially began as an effort to show how the work of the last decade has led to the writing of *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* has, in the course of revising the manuscript and the additional time that has taken, shapeshifted into recording how the thinking and writing of the book is now, in inverse fashion, informing the latest set of GAI projects. Specifically, the last few projects described and annotated from the shadow archive involve a fair amount of speculation; they draw on the critical philosophies and practices that have animated much of my Global Asias work over the last decade, but they remain horizons of possibility, collaborative projects that are still being imagined into being. The Global Asias: Institutional Forms / Alien Forms project is still coalescing. It will clearly take shape through some of the varied forms that GAI has historically embraced for cultivating Global Asias work (including academic/professional partnerships between GAI and the Association for Asian Studies [AAS], collaborative teams, the summer institute, an edited collection), but it is equally clear that the project's exploration of institutional forms as alien forms—an exploration that draws on and is inspired by the ways in which this book conceptualizes Global Asias scholarly praxis—will in its unfolding yield a range of new and different forms through which to encapsulate, engineer, and reimagine scholarly work and life.

2025 "WAYMARKS: A READER'S GUIDE" AND "ACTS OF SUSPENSION" (WITH CHARLOTTE EUBANKS)

Abstract

The introductory materials in *Global Asias: Tactics & Theories* include a reader's guide and an editors' introduction. Given the innovative nature of the

project—and the experimental forms of collaborative writing that it includes—coeditors Tina Chen and Charlotte Eubanks leverage two different prefatory genres to help readers into a productive relationship with the text and its ideas. “Waymarks: A Reader’s Guide” tends toward the pragmatic and is directed to readers who are new to the Global Asias conversation. It overviews Global Asias’ intellectual genealogies, explains where the *Tactics & Theories* volume fits in the Global Asias ecology, shares the nuts and bolts of how this volume was engineered, and provides working definitions of “tactics,” “theories,” and “praxis.” The editors’ introduction, “Acts of Suspension,” is more conceptual and experimental in nature, arguing that in a collective endeavor such as Global Asias, a praxis of suspension attends to and stays with moments of unsettling, desettling, friction, and dissonance. Such praxis thus enables Global Asias scholars to be more explicit about the difficulties of locatedness, acknowledging where and how structural conditions of uneven resource distribution, for instance, continue to produce a drift toward East Asia, a trait of US-centrism, and a structural absence of Indigenous voices along with underrepresentation of South Asia and of land-based flows westward. Indeed, a praxis of suspension animates the project—its contours and challenges, its conceptual possibilities and limits, its forms and modes of engagement, its durational structure and ethical commitments—which could take its current shape only after the suspension of the usual practices that determine the nature, priorities, and expected outcomes of academic knowledge production.

Annotation

One of the greatest gifts that Global Asias has given me is the opportunity to work in tandem with my friend and collaborator Charlotte Eubanks. Without the centrifugal force exerted by Global Asias pushing us outside of our areas of scholarly expertise and comfort zones, Charlotte and I would likely have remained friendly colleagues whose orbits (mine in Asian American studies and theirs in Japanese and Buddhist studies from the medieval period to the present) crossed only occasionally. Working together on Global Asias projects has been revelatory. Despite (or maybe because of?) our distinct research interests and training, we find the process of collaboration on the varied forms promoted by the GAI—journal, *Convergence* features, summer institutes, Cyber Chats, book series, mentoring program—to be energizing, generative, and deeply fulfilling. Our supportive relationship has made me a better scholar, administrator, teacher, mentor, editor, and colleague.

Learning from Global Asias as alien form—and learning from the work I have been able to do with Charlotte under the auspices of Global Asias—has led me to a different way of conceptualizing my scholarship, which combines TRS activities in ways that generate new forms of writing, enactment, and engagement. The training, conventions, assumptions, and priorities I had inherited when I started academic life did not necessarily point me toward creating a community of care, but Global Asias scholarly praxis has made this possible in ways I could not have envisioned before. A community of care can be what is created by a commitment to collaboration, to centering mentorship, to engaging across field and disciplinary differences, to exploring the generative possibilities of dissensus and relational nonalignment, to generic experimentation, to resisting the pressure to value our labors according to existing institutional dictates, to imagine alternative ways of doing and being in the profession of the academic humanities. I find it heartening to see and work with Global Asias scholars who actively foreground and prioritize building networks and practices that do more than support scholarship. They sustain us as whole humans. They imagine different futures.

Conclusion

This annotated bibliography of the work I have done over the last decade, including published research and writing as well as documents from the shadow archive, is meant to demonstrate how the speculative genres of academic labor that have been critical to moving Global Asias forward as a field of academic knowledge production have manifested as/through what I have been calling alien forms. Alien forms are composite assemblages of academic labor that reflect the dimensionality of scholarly praxis by working through a diversity of genres, some of which might be considered bureaucratic, pedagogical, prosaic, or utilitarian in nature. Such minor genres, I argue, operate synergistically to capture and advance a scholarly praxis that resists the tripartite division of academic labor into TRS as discrete categories.

Unsurprisingly, the alien forms described here are diverse in nature, expression, and manifestation. This accounting is not meant to restrict their articulation but instead is an effort to help make them more visible and thus more easily adoptable/adaptable. Some of the scholarly work examined here is alien because it manifests through forms that don't have

a lot of traction or legibility as vehicles for the expression of intellectual engagement—that is, some of the minor genres of academic writing that are generally considered bureaucratic, pedagogical, prosaic, or editorial. Some of it is alien because of the ways in which it reiterates across different forms and genres, a process of redoubling that heightens the dissonances between each instantiation to render unstable singular meaning or expression. Most of it is alien because it embraces the capaciousness of scholarly praxis and understands that capaciousness to manifest through different genres and assemblages of academic writing and labor. And all of it is alien because it leverages the incongruity between academic labor and existing determinative definitions of TRS to open up the speculative, worldmaking possibilities of Global Asias knowledge production.

I did not originally intend to write about these diverse forms of scholarly labor by utilizing abstracts and annotations, two minor genres of academic writing, but doing so has been a generative and revealing exercise. Consonant with the book's efforts to disarticulate forms of academic labor from genres of scholarly writing, and to exemplify how Global Asias creates opportunities to draw attention to the capaciousness of scholarly praxis that deliberately exceeds the institutional taxonomies currently used to assess academic labor, this annotated bibliography of my scholarly work over the last decade has been an opportunity to consider how scholarship and conceptual arguments emerge from intellectual engagements that span the gamut of scholarly activity. While some of that labor is rendered legible and accorded value through publication, much of it remains obscured—articulated through minor genres of academic writing and hidden in the shadow archive of scholarly praxis. *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* argues, and this annotated bibliography demonstrates, that in order to alter the academic landscape and create viable alternatives to the models of valuation it currently supports, we must engage more robustly with the complexity of scholarly practice and consider diversifying how we write about the work we do as humanities scholars.

Global Asias: Method, Architecture, Praxis

AN ANNOTATED ESSAY

This section of *Alien Forms* utilizes minor genres of academic writing to make visible the myriad genres of scholarly labor that are encompassed by the shadow archive of academic praxis. To that end, I am annotating this essay—originally published in the *Journal of Asian Studies*—to illuminate how the arguments made in the publication connect to the diverse forms of scholarly praxis that have been critical to building Global Asias as an alien form that brings together teaching, research, and service as distinct but interconnected genres of intellectual engagement. Even as annotation itself is often considered a minor genre of academic writing, its peripherality can be deployed to (re)imagine the shapes and outlines that make the dimensionality of our work more legible.

I.

Over the last five years, Global Asias as a conceptual means of bridging discrete academic disciplines studying Asia and its diasporas has come into increasing visibility and prominence. While the contours of Global Asias

This short essay was included in a Global Asias forum published by the *Journal of Asian Studies*. Much of the raw material for that forum was itself generated out of a presidential panel organized by Christine Yano.

Christine asked speakers to address from their particular perspectives (as a journal editor, head of organization, scholar of Global Asias, administrative strategist, activist, or some combination of these roles)

what it might mean for the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) to add a Global Asias component. In the directions she provided to panelists, she asked us to focus specifically on the following three questions:

- What does the special purview of Global Asias mean? What does it enable? What does it disable?
- Name three particular elements in your conceptualization of Global Asias that are most meaningful and explain why. What is the “work” of Global Asias?
- What have been or will be the existing institutional hurdles encountered by Global Asias and how might they be overcome?

As president of the AAS, Christine worked fiercely to make Global Asias a more meaningful part of the association. Her efforts were made possible, to some extent, by the many conversations and brainstorming sessions we had. We worked in tandem despite our distinct institutional locations—she as the president of a long-standing professional organization and I as the editor of *Verge* and the director of the Global Asias Initiative (GAI), two projects designed to disrupt the existing academic landscape’s installation of area studies and ethnic studies as discrete and relatively isolated knowledge formations. The surprise of Global Asias emerging as an explicit focus during the 2021 AAS conference (held virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic) was something many years in the making, the result of collaborative effort (and many academic labors that are usually consigned to what I have been calling the shadow archive) to connect across institutional, disciplinary, field, and geographical borders.

are still being explored and contested, this essay draws on the philosophy, principles, and practices animating Global Asias scholarship, as it has been promoted by *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* and the Global Asias Initiative (GAI) at Penn State University, to consider how this conceptual rubric shifts the ways in which we approach the subjects, objects, methods, and praxes of the academic study of Asia. More specifically, I draw attention to the ways in which Global Asias scholarship and collaborative practice can encourage recognition without resolution by cultivating nonaligned relationality as both a theoretical aim and a collective enactment. Structurally dissonant as an epistemological project, Global Asias encourages scholars to acknowledge the institutional designs and disciplinary practices that currently organize and make legible work on Asia and its diasporas while simultaneously highlighting the limits of, and points of noncontact between, the broader infrastructures (including area studies, ethnic studies,

diaspora studies, and the disciplines and interdisciplines) under which such work has traditionally been organized.

Given that there are varied and contested usages of Global Asia/s, it seems useful to begin with **an inventory** of the ways in which Global

I believe “inventory” is another minor genre of academic writing that deserves greater critical attention. Usually I think about this in disarticulated ways. Writing a series of keyword essays over the last several years has shown me the utility of inventorying previous scholarship in order to orient readers to the contexts animating my arguments and interventions. Even when I choose not to include an inventory in an essay, I will often generate an informal catalog as part of the preparation required to produce scholarship; in this context, I approach this type of writing as conceptual in nature. When teaching, editing, and/or program-building, I regularly approach the act of inventorying more prosaically as an organizational practice (e.g., list-making or note-taking). But *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*’ efforts to rethink the disparity between form and genre, and between different types of academic labor, make me wonder whether these disparate approaches are more connected than I usually understand them to be. And if so, how does that connectivity manifest in the types of Global Asias projects I have been building over the last decade? Put another way: The GAI has encouraged the collective praxis of Global Asias scholarship by highlighting how the disparities and dissonances of the field require us to promote inventorying as a crucially significant form of intellectual labor.

Asia/s has been theorized and critically enacted.¹ Previous work on Global Asia/s—which has been conducted using rubrics such as “Inter-Asia,” “Other Asias,” “Global Asia,” “InterAsia,” “Transnational Asia,” and “Global Asias”—has focused on the concept’s fictionality and narrativization; its ability to encompass intra-Asian differences and to imagine alternatives to geopolitical realities; its subjection to overdetermination by historically constituted discursive structures that, ironically, create the conditions by which to undermine unified notions of what “Asia” might mean or represent; and its reimagination of Asia as an interlinked set of formations that stretch beyond national, territorial, or cultural boundaries.² It is important to note that some analytical work that might be understood now as exemplary of Global Asias scholarship was generated as part of earlier and ongoing critical engagements with globalization—manifested, for example, in the increasing attention over the last twenty-five years to “inter-Asian” connections in area studies, the “transnational turn” in American studies of the 1990s onward, and the surfacing of what Prasenjit Duara (2021a) calls

“circulatory histories” in interdisciplinary fields such as transpacific studies and Indian Ocean studies.³ It is also worth noting that Global Asia/s approaches may overlap with emerging interdisciplinary studies that are focalized through the movement of populations (such as migration studies, diaspora studies, and critical refugee studies).⁴

In **mapping** the complex disposition of Global Asia/s, I compile here a provisional inventory of seven critical operations:

Over the last decade, I have been both drawn to and hesitant about what it might mean to approach Global Asias via “mapping.” Very aware of both the empirical/imperial uses of cartography and the ways in which countermapping practices seek to resist “dominant narratives formed by power” (Dayrit, n.d.), my GAI colleagues and I have used a critical cartographic approach to exploring the ambivalences of what it might mean to map the “imaginable ageography” of Global Asias. As I argued in the editor’s introduction to *Verge* 3, no. 1, the challenges of such an endeavor derive from conceptualizing Global Asias as a “site that insists on its own indeterminacy and plurality as much as its global expanse.” As part of the collaborative exchange I am currently having with Jacqueline Barrios, Weiling Deng, and CoCo Tin on how “thick mapping” as an urban humanities method can enable us to reimagine the temporal and spatial parameters of “the Asian century,” I discover an articulation of thick mapping’s goals that resonates with the ways in which I hope to enact Global Asias praxis. According to Todd Presner et al. in *Hypercities*, thick mapping aims for “extensibility and polyvocality: diachronic and synchronic, temporally layered, and polyvalent ways of authoring, knowing, and making meaning” (2014, 18). Yes.

- 1 As a heuristic for foregrounding the epistemological operations that structure our understanding of Asia as both geopolitical entity and cultural construct;
- 2 As an injunction to look beyond Western intellectual frameworks in theorizing Asia and to establish intellectual networks that connect across Asia without being necessarily triangulated through “West-oriented singularity” (K. Chen and Chua 2007, 1);
- 3 As a means of understanding transnational, transregional, and inter-Asian dynamics (sometimes as part of an explicit challenge to culture-language focus as the primary means of approaching the study of Asia, a legacy of Cold War area studies models, but also at times as a vehicle for emerging modes of disciplinary and epistemic colonialism);

- 4 As an expression of the neoliberal university's and global capitalism's drive to commodify the study of difference and otherness, reflective of ongoing efforts to absorb the resistant potential of emergent knowledge formations into existing curricula and practice;
- 5 As an instrument for challenging the fallacy that area studies produces "local" content but does not generate more broadly applicable theories and concepts;
- 6 As a critical space of interdisciplinary and transfield collaboration, one that emphasizes the central roles of migration, movement, and interconnection fundamental to a globally oriented world;
- 7 As a multidisciplinary collective practice that leverages the disjunctions, disagreements, and differences structurally embedded in how academic knowledge production about Asia and its peoples is compartmentalized into area studies, ethnic studies, and diaspora studies approaches, to both destabilize existing institutional practices and generate new cooperative models for scholarship and intellectual engagement.

Global Asia/s is conceptually capacious enough to include all these usages, and there is analytical potential in actively keeping these disparate ideas in tensile relation. Admitting the ways in which this inventory disarticulates concepts and approaches that are, in practice, often overlapping and entangled, this essay pays particular attention to the last two approaches and how they reflect the **theories and tactics** espoused by the

This phrase—theories and tactics—is informed by the ongoing work of exploring the alien forms of academic labor and approaching academic labor as an alien form. The parallelism of this articulation signals the chiasmus at the heart of Global Asia's methodology. Specifically, theory can be tactical and tactics themselves can comprise a theory. Emphasizing the interrelationship of tactic and theory has been crucially significant to advancing Global Asia's as a scholarly praxis that actively works to synergize the oft-disarticulated genres of research, teaching, and service. The importance of this relationship between theories and tactics manifests most visibly in the project we developed for the Global Asia's book series we launched with the University of Hawai'i Press. Titled *Global Asia's: Tactics & Theories*, this collective and deeply

collaborative project was designed to create space for diversely constituted keyword teams to wrestle with the distinctions and overlaps between theories and tactics, and to devise shared strategies for bringing these scholarly practices together in meaningful ways.

journal *Verge* and the related GAI projects with which it is engaged. In addition to offering a conceptual topography of Global Asias, this essay proposes three praxis-oriented concepts—*relational nonalignment*, *structural dissonance*, and *imaginable ageography*—that enable Global Asias as a tactical and evolving approach to the study of Asia and its multiple diasporas, one which actively resists the drive toward “critical consolidation” (T. Chen 2017a) that often results from academic paradigm work.

II.

As already noted, some of what we might now consider Global Asias scholarship was previously promoted and developed under different paradigms and concepts. While it is not feasible, given the limited space allotted for this essay, to offer an in-depth exploration of all the relevant work generated from the “transnational turn” in American studies or the “inter-Asian” connections of area studies, briefly attending to the overlaps and distinctions between the field of transpacific studies and Global Asias should be illustrative and enable a preliminary assessment of the ways in which Global Asias might generate alternative approaches that complement, contest, or extend “transnational” or “transpacific” scholarship.

As Viet Thanh Nguyen and Janet Hoskins (2014, 3) note in their attempt to define the field of transpacific studies, the Pacific has been both a space of “exploration, exploitation, and expansion” and “a contact zone [whose] history [is] defined not only by conquest, colonialism, and conflict, but also alternate narratives of translocalism, oppositional localism, and oppositional regionalism.” The transpacific’s expansiveness has been critically theorized in manifold ways: it has variously (and often synchronically) served as a void to be traversed (Y. Huang 2008), a space of imperial projection and fantasy (Wilson 2000), a zone of economic development and capital flows (Dirlik 1998), a site of Indigenous worldmaking and praxis (Hau’ofa 2008), a semiotic space for the development of counterpoetic artistic practices (Y. Huang 2008), a dynamic site from which to consider the

overlaps and disjunctions between Indigenous Pacific and Asian American epistemologies (Suzuki 2021), a militarized space (Shigematsu and Camacho 2010), an “oceanic archive” of decolonial possibility (Shu et al. 2019), and a mediated network whose “thick environment” makes conceptual and cultural engagement possible (So 2016). Crucially, transpacific studies generates myriad critical engagements with the existing fields with which it is in conversation (including Asian studies, American studies, Asian American studies, and Native Pacific studies, among others), although the nature of its relationships to such existing contextual and interdisciplinary frameworks has not always been centered as an integral aspect of its approach.⁵

Rehearsing the contours of transpacific studies, even in such condensed form, as part of the prehistory or parahistory of Global Asias draws attention to the ways in which we should not understand these intellectual fields|formations|approaches in developmental relation. Indeed, there are significant overlaps between the aims and approaches of both intellectual projects. Both are anchored by spaces of what Edward Said (1978) calls “imaginative geography”; both oscillate between efforts to pluralize (e.g., Erin Suzuki’s [2014] notion of “alternative transpacifics” and *Verge*’s insistence on the significance of Global Asias) and the critical consolidation that inevitably accompanies field formation and institutionalization; both leverage the vastness of oceanic and terrestrial spaces to work beyond national imaginaries and the nation-state as privileged sovereign form; and both orient their transnational vision in ways that recognize but hopefully exceed US exceptionalism.

While these shared investments are significant and not to be discounted, it is also worth considering some of the critical distinctiveness of Global Asias as theory and tactic, which in this iteration includes how (1) its multidisciplinary (as opposed to interdisciplinary) genealogy enfolds, without resolving, the tensions between area studies and critical ethnic studies, thus making it especially sensitive to the possibilities and limits of what Donald K. Emmerson (2008), a political scientist of Southeast Asia, has identified as the “terms of enlistment” and “dilemmas of allegiance” that are encountered by those working at the intersection of field and discipline;⁶

The work of advancing Global Asias over the decade has comprised innumerable moments of revelation. What looks from the vantage point of the now—in the spring of 2025, at the Global Asias 7 conference

where we celebrated ten years of publishing *Verge*—like a smooth trajectory of development is, from the position of specific historical moments, a series of questions and experiments, a bumpy road of both disappointment and discovery. Making the journal’s multidisciplinary ambitions—ambitions that are ever evolving and always in process of simultaneous realization and thwarting—a reality has entailed a lot of behind-the-scenes engagement with colleagues working in fields and with methods that are quite distinct from mine. Emerson’s insights as a political scientist of Southeast Asia have been supremely helpful to me in approaching Global Asias as an emergent multidisciplinary knowledge form. But I likely would not have come across his work without trying to conceptualize a Field Trip feature on political science and Global Asias that we published in 2017. In working on that feature, I became even more aware of how materially distinct disciplinary methods can be—and how difficult just *asking questions* can be, since such asking required a kind of translation to make them legible (or maybe “respondable” is a better word here) to political scientists. With the help of my colleague Fred Lee (hi, Fred!), we worked on crafting prompts that would elicit generative responses exploring the incompatibilities between political science as a discipline and the fields of Asian area and/or Asian diaspora studies. Sharing some of this behind-the-scenes work is one way to illustrate how the praxis involved in building *Convergence* features like this grounds much of the theorizing around and about Global Asias that I have done over the last decade.

(2) its aforementioned critical awareness can be carefully cultivated to create an intellectual approach that **resists mastery, that “holds a space without taking over existing spaces,”**⁷ by building and investing in structures of intellectual engagement and experimentation that embrace disagreement and differences; and (3) it actively directs attention to its ageographical constitution to enact a **self-reflexive critical practice**.

I have tried increasingly through my citational practice to signal the ways in which collaborative knowledge production should be meaningfully recognized. Much of the field-building work that the GAI cultivates manifests through the modalities of the conversational, the dialogic, and the exploratory. In other words, these modalities are often considered ephemeral and are thus often underrecognized and underappreciated in contributing to the intellectual efforts that publication makes legible. We (and this is not the royal *we* but the collective *we*) could not have advanced the development of Global Asias as a field of academic knowledge production without recognizing the power and importance

of publication; it is no accident that the journal *Verge* is the project with which we began this adventure and serves as the intellectual engine energizing the GAI as a research enterprise. However, our efforts to enact Global Asias as an alien form have also meant that we see the scholarly labors around publication—the conceptual work involved in creating special issues and features and, indeed, the journal itself; the bureaucratic attention to developing reviewer guides explaining the particular challenges of Global Asias work and introducing reviewers to the formal experimentation of the *Convergence* rubrics; the pedagogical commitment that animates the editorial headnotes we generate; the related Cyber Chats, workshops, and summer institutes we host—to be as crucial as publishing in developing Global Asias methods, architectures, and praxes. Unsurprisingly, our embrace of Global Asias’ collaborative ethos manifests in our own experiences of working collectively to reimagine the academic landscape. I have had myriad conversations—with Penn State colleagues; with authors and editors; with graduate students and other early-career professionals; and especially with my favorite coconspirator, Charlotte Eubanks—over the years, and the work of building Global Asias has been motivated by taking the ideas and concepts and questions and speculations from those conversations and trying to translate them into material programs and conceptual infrastructures that can support a community, a network, a field.

What do I mean by self-reflexive critical practice? How does this manifest in my approach to Global Asias and thus in this book, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*? Although the pithy statement I regularly use to describe the GAI’s Global Asias mission—“to bring into relational nonalignment work in Asian studies, Asian American studies, and Asian diaspora studies”—has been repeated so often that by now it feels like a truism, it articulates the conditions that make self-reflexive critical practice fundamental to my approach to this emergent field of academic knowledge production. More specifically, the forced proximity and juxtaposition without consolidation of area studies, race and ethnic studies, and diaspora studies as institutional knowledge forms makes it very difficult to navigate Global Asias as critical terrain without continually taking into account how our critical practices are deeply shaped by the disciplinary, field, and methodological training that informs our scholarship. This type of account-taking informs the architectural approach that characterizes GAI program-building. Rather than attempting to combine disparate fields or to privilege coherence, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* relies on constellation as a method, drawing into closeness disparate genres and forms of writing to challenge the assumed legibility of how academia sorts scholarly praxis into teaching, research, and service as distinct genres of academic labor and writing.

On a practical level, Global Asias creates a structure for bringing scholars together across temporal and methodological boundaries that is explicitly welcoming of diverse approaches to scholarly inquiry. Its distinctive embrace of multidisciplinary, collaborative knowledge production that is not consensus driven, and self-reflexivity offers an opportunity for different kinds of scholars and different kinds of scholarship to be in dialogue without collapsing them into a unified set of perspectives and approaches. In other words, Global Asias is not so much (or at least not simply) a repertoire of methods as it is an architecture that enables critical conversation across the silos of knowledge production that structure academia—discipline, field, area, period, methodology—yet does not interpellate interlocutors and practitioners into singular, synonymous, or even especially allied subject positions. Understood in this way, Global Asias serves as a conceptual infrastructure

This description/articulation is generated out of conceptualizing the journal as a platform, an infrastructure. *Architecture* is a term that I came to after some delay. My colleague Nicholas Risteen (an architectural historian) tells me that architecture “has often been figured as a method of navigating space between the real and the ideal, with each side of that balance moving in and out of favor depending on the times (utopianism gives way to rationalism, then swings back again, etc., responding to shifts in technology, economy, society, desire, what have you),” which means that my use of the term is somewhat more limited/limiting than its usage in design theory. Although not deployed in the way an architect would use it, the term *architecture* signals for me an attentiveness to the importance of carefully designing and building a structure that supports the articulated engagements we’re trying to encourage through Global Asias knowledge production. Therefore, the journal is an architecture, *Convergence* features are an architecture, Global Asias is, itself, an architecture.

Global Asias is a conceptual infrastructure, but it seems important to note that it is supported by an architectural approach that both connects and differentiates the conceptual, the methodological, and the material dimensions of the infrastructural. To clarify: Much of the work we have been doing through the GAI and its related projects has been about developing Global Asias as a critical frame for thinking through the potential overlaps and disjunctions between the different intellectual knowledge forms that (over)determine how we study Asia in relation to its multiple diasporas. But developing that critical frame relies on a broader commitment to building approaches and platforms that make such thinking possible.

To illustrate: when we were approached by the Japan Foundation, New York (JFNY) to lead a project on “Global Asias and Japan Studies,” this involved not just determining the program’s conceptual/argumentative emphases but also creating a plan and building a model for how to develop this project using Global Asias principles. In practice, this meant that we wanted to challenge JFNY’s traditionally hierarchical approach to program-building by demonstrating how the project’s developmental process and praxis could be generated to reflect and advance Global Asias’ principles such as collaborative knowledge production, relational nonalignment, and structural dissonance. Crucially, the approach we developed for the Cultivating Early Career Networks project with JFNY has been adopted by the Japan Foundation for other partnerships, which means that their future projects which are not explicitly focused on Global Asias will nonetheless be shaped in some way by Global Asias methods and principles.

enabling diverse scholars, methods, and practices to meet without declaring new fealties or renouncing cherished loyalties—although its successes may well generate increasing interpellative pressures, and mechanisms to combat such pressures should be part of Global Asias’ architectural and critical evolution.

Thinking of Global Asias in infrastructural terms draws attention to an inversive approach that foregrounds the elided structures that condition knowledge production. Even as Jessamyn R. Abel and Leo Coleman remind us that “inversion in this distinctive sense is a figure-ground reversal, bringing into view the buried or hidden material relations and expert negotiations that govern the operation and appearance of technical novelties, corporate forms, and the visible structures of political life” (2020, xi), Global Asias encourages not just a shift in perspective but also a shift toward a more methodological approach. In the introduction to a recent special issue of *Prism* on “Method as Method,” Carlos Rojas characterizes such an approach as one that “attends simultaneously to both objects and theories—including both the ways in which objects are constituted by specific sets of theoretical assumptions and the ways in which theoretical paradigms often rely on the objects and localities out of which they emerge” (2019, 216). In other words, inversion cautions against simply replacing one set of objects of analysis with others; rather, it considers both relatively spectacular objects and relatively invisible contexts in grounded relation.

III.

Since its inception, *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* has sought to reimagine scholarly approaches to the study of Asia and its multiple diasporas by making figure-ground reversal and the grounded relation between objects/contexts of study fundamental aspects of its conceptualization of Global Asias as an architecture that can be collectively built to generate conversation and debate across siloed sites of academic knowledge. Bringing into relation, but not into alignment, the fields of Asian studies, Asian American studies, and Asian diaspora studies, the journal has focused attention on how institutional fields of academic knowledge production operate historically and contextually to influence the scholarly understanding of the politics, cultures, societies, aesthetic practices, and peoples of Asia. The journal works to advance Global Asias by drawing on the methods, vocabularies, and priorities of critical race and ethnic studies to unsettle the assumptions of Asian studies while, in parallel, leveraging Asian studies' attentiveness to questions of place, regional awareness, and linguistic expertise to discomfit Asian American studies' tendency to reinforce the US-centrism of concepts governing the Asian diaspora.

The term itself signals both the promises and the dangers of its epistemic ambitions and challenges. For some, "Global Asias" may connote imperial imagination, a drive toward mastery, and the consumerist leanings of racial capitalism—and we would do well to keep these in mind as potential consequences of the concept's critical purchase, portability, and popular adoption. Nonetheless, its strategic deployment also operates on other levels to undermine these connotations. In such instantiation, "Global" encourages us to consider the multiple and relating parts of a situation, the dis/connections that make possible world-spanning dynamics, and suggests a modality of representation/anti-representation that can offer alternatives to nation-based frameworks.⁸ And "Asias" is deliberately plural/pluralizing. A rhetorical marker that moves us away from self-evident expressions of geographical identity (and their attendant cultural and linguistic associations) to relational dynamics, it shifts critical attention from the singularity of terrestrial denomination to the multiplicity of geographically demarcated but culturally inflected semi-otic space.

The theories of Global Asias work that I have shared thus far have organically evolved in relation to on-the-ground tactics developed through working on the journal, and through work published in the journal. To round out

The work of editing the journal and directing the GAI produced this article—the objects it studies, its main arguments, and its methodology. In returning to this essay as part of the work of writing this book, it becomes increasingly visible how the on-the-ground labors of writing *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* are, in turn, producing the latest iteration of Global Asias scholarly praxis. More specifically, in the midst of my revising this manuscript, the GAI launched a new collaborative project, *Global Asias: Institutional Form/Alien Form*, which invites colleagues to use Global Asias methods and principles to reimagine how—and in what forms—we write. As articulated both in *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* and in the call for papers for the Asia Shorts volume that is inspired by this book—which-is-not-yet-a-book, thinking about Global Asias as/through alien form encourages us to explore forms of knowledge production that are collaborative and polyvocal, forms that invite individual scholars to suspend their standard operating procedures.

the discussion of the methodological and architectural aspects of Global Asias on which this essay has focused, I now name three particularly meaningful elements of my conceptualization of Global Asias as an opportunity to contribute several concepts to the Global Asias toolkit that so many of us are collectively assembling. Specifically, I focus on a trio of praxis-oriented concepts—relational nonalignment, structural dissonance, and imaginable ageography—that have been especially useful in establishing the structural underpinnings of Global Asias as an emerging and collectively generated knowledge formation.

RELATIONAL NONALIGNMENT. In writing about “settler moves to innocence,” Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012, 28) remind us of the importance of an “ethic of incommensurability” when treating decolonization in relation to social justice projects based on human and civil rights and argue that “opportunities for solidarity lie in what is incommensurable rather than what is common across these efforts.” Relational nonalignment serves as a principle for embracing the coalitional possibilities of incommensurability. In approaching this principle structurally, the journal promotes a set of collaboratively authored features that create opportunities to dialogue across differences, and welcomes disciplinary and field dissensus as critical to troubling the critical consolidation of institutionalization and academic paradigm work. **Emphasizing relational nonalignment as both principle and structure enables the paradox of the journal’s parallel efforts to construct Global Asias as an institutionally legible knowledge project while resisting the urge to concretize it as a new (and dominant) institutional form.**

It has been useful to approach relational nonalignment as both a principle and a structure, by which I mean that we conceptualize relational nonalignment not only as an articulation of how Global Asias praxis can dis/compose academic knowledge production about Asia and its diasporas but also as a fundamental means of constructing projects that resist critical consolidation. This essay discusses how this dual approach manifests in the journal's *Convergence* features, but it is worth noting that this manifests in the building of other GAI projects.

Under the auspices of the GAI and *Verge*, I have collaborated with colleagues to bring together work from a variety of disciplinary vantage points and approaches, and to focus on the potential intersections and/or blockages that such a range produces. The journal has been a key driver in the development of Global Asias as a new epistemological paradigm through which to consider the interrelation—but not necessarily the alignment—of academic work in Asian studies (as a Cold War institutional formation), Asian American studies (as an ethnic studies formation), and Asian diaspora studies (as an emergent postnational formation). In addition to acknowledging the intellectual frictions between these interdisciplines, the journal recognizes ongoing tensions between disciplinary priorities and interdisciplinary commitments. The distinctions separating these interdisciplines are real and continue to be important, even as increasing emphasis on globalization, transnationalism, and diaspora suggests that the fields also have more in common than has traditionally been understood.

Accordingly, the multiauthor *Convergence* features pioneered by the journal—intellectual forums that encourage conversation between scholars working in different fields and disciplines and using different methods and approaches—were created as structures that could facilitate discussion and debate across academic silos. Sometimes relational nonalignment is fostered across disciplinary boundaries, such as through a “Codex” feature orchestrating a collaborative review of SanSan Kwan's *Kinesthetic City: Dance and Movement in Chinese Urban Spaces* by scholars working in Asian studies, Asian American studies, urban studies, dance studies, and performance studies (Bacalzo et al. 2016). Other times, relational nonalignment results in projects on topics as distinct as the relational displacements of Vietnamese refugees and the Indigenous Aetas of the Philippines (Espiritu and Ruanto-Ramirez 2020), the processing of disasters across Asia through the creation of a digital hub of scholarly engagement inspired by the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami (Onaga and Teo 2019), a

rethinking of the *Ramayana*'s cultural travels through the rhizomatic work of Japanese folklorist Minakata Kumagusu (Selinger 2021), or the ethical quandaries of collaborative digital humanities projects that make historical multimedia collections on the Himalayas available to global audiences (Turin 2018).

Verge's conceptualization of Global Asias does not attempt to resolve or downplay the disparities that divide historically contradistinctive fields of study; neither does it hope to blend them into a newly unified interdisciplinary field of academic inquiry. In seeking to foster multigeneric and multidisciplinary conversations, the journal aims to showcase the possibilities (and limits) of how Global Asias can be approached **as an object of study that can also actively unsettle its continued self-constitution**. In this

In the editor's introduction to *Verge* 5, no. 1, I described the journal's "paradoxical dual commitments both to establish and to discompose Global Asias as an intellectual object and practice" as an act of unsettling. More than a description, though, unsettling is an objective that manifests as both design and outcome when conceptualizing GAI projects. To elaborate: We intentionally build GAI projects so that they constellation different constituencies whose unusual proximities will generate different forms of unsettling. This attentiveness to design is evident in bureaucratic details (i.e., open calls to assemble new cohorts instead of private invitations or the reliance on pre-constituted networks; reminders about the different forms of diversity—geographical, disciplinary, field, historical, methodological, institutional, and rank—that we keep in mind when assessing applications; the deliberate juxtaposition of different areas of expertise when assembling leadership teams). And those details become critical to fabricating scholarship that embraces unsettling as a legitimate mode in the ongoing effort to dis/compose Global Asias.

way, Global Asias pursues the goals outlined by Junyoung Verónica Kim in her exploration of Asia–Latin America as method wherein she resists pressure to create knowledge as "a definable object of study" and instead works "to articulate a precarious position that calls attention to the workings of knowledge that naturalizes itself and forgets the material conditions of its own making" (2017, 100).

STRUCTURAL DISSONANCE. My earlier efforts to conceptualize this aspect of Global Asias emphasized how "structural incoherence" (T. Chen 2018) could helpfully reference several interlocking aspects of the knowledge

production about and representational practices of Global Asias. As I have argued elsewhere, structural incoherence offers us a way to theorize

(a) the multiple, overlapping, and embedded contradictions undergirding the cultural, social, political, and economic dynamics of a “place” both real and imagined (which contains valences of the really imagined, the imagined as real, and the real as imaginary); (b) the use of varied representational structures to produce nonunified ways of reading and critical thought; and (c) the coexistence of a singular manifestation (of place or identity) and the multiplicities of which it is made. (T. Chen 2021b, 318)

Indeed, the Global Asias work that I advocate in this essay is generated by the very incompatibilities—field versus discipline; Asian studies versus Asian American studies versus Asian diaspora studies; regional differences; disparate critical and theoretical prioritization—that challenge the stability of Global Asias as a field of knowledge production. Structural incoherence serves as a way to name those incompatibilities and to suggest that, rather than working against such incoherences, scholars embrace them as the generative conditions for cultivating work on/of Global Asias.

With the benefit of time and experience in seeing some of the various epistemic, disciplinary, and artistic cross-pollination that the architecture of Global Asias encourages, it now strikes me that “structural incoherence” might be too focused on describing the systemic conditions out of which Global Asias operates, and it would be useful to draw attention to the nature of the collaborative nonconsensus work that is being generated. Even though Global Asias serves not as a means or process of unification but, rather, as an architecture that encourages ongoing juxtaposition, proximity, and generic friction, the incongruities it encompasses often operate in productive relation. To that end, I offer here an amended concept—structural dissonance—to remind us that these new and exciting knowledge forms and practices are not so much incoherent as they are connected, operating in anomalous interrelation.

The journal’s *A&Q* and Field Trip features often bring together scholars working in the same discipline but on different geographical regions, periods, and/or topics—or on the same topic (indigeneity, settler colonialism, or Asia–Latin America transpacific studies) but using different methodologies—to discuss pressing questions about shared investments and

potentially oppositional stances. The resulting conversations emphasize structural dissonance as a key characteristic of Global Asias epistemology by embracing dissensus and creating space for agreement and contention to be equally valued forms of collective engagement.⁹ The diverse ways in which work encompassed by this aspect of Global Asias becomes the unstable conditions for simultaneously theorizing within and outside of **the institutional structures organizing the academic study of Asia**—area studies,

From the beginning, our approach to developing Global Asias has foregrounded the institutional dimensions that shape academic knowledge production. By framing the journal's (and subsequently the GAI's) mission as one that attempts to think with, through, and against area studies, ethnic studies, and diaspora studies as intellectual knowledge formations, we recognize the institutional contexts in which we operate as formative to shaping the kinds of scholarship we can or cannot undertake.

But a decade after launching *Verge*—and after a decade of learning how Global Asias methods and principles can reshape how we navigate conventional institutional structures—we're interested in reversing our critical attention. If we began our work on Global Asias by attending to how we (as teachers, researchers, and colleagues) might imagine different types of boundary crossing as a way of questioning the interpellative power of institutional structures such as fields, departments, programs, and courses, we are now just as interested in imagining how the methods and praxes of Global Asias knowledge production can be deployed to remake the institutional structures within which we operate.

To that end, I am collaborating with Charlotte Eubanks on a series of interconnected projects—a Global Asias summer institute, an Asia Shorts volume, and a National Endowment for the Humanities professional development institute—designed to create critical conversations and innovative scholarship around the question of how Global Asias as an alien form can disrupt standard operating procedures. We argue that “making Global Asias institutionally legible does not necessarily require us to create it to fit existing bureaucratic forms but might instead be an occasion where the alienness and dissonance that are inherent in Global Asias could be deployed to imagine institutional forms anew—by questioning the genres of academic labor, embracing trans-institutional partnership in ways that keep knowledge practices unconsolidated, and experimenting with inter-departmental collaborative ventures that actively work against ossifying scholarly praxis.”

diaspora studies, the disciplines and interdisciplines—embody both the challenge and the potential of what work on Global Asias can accomplish.

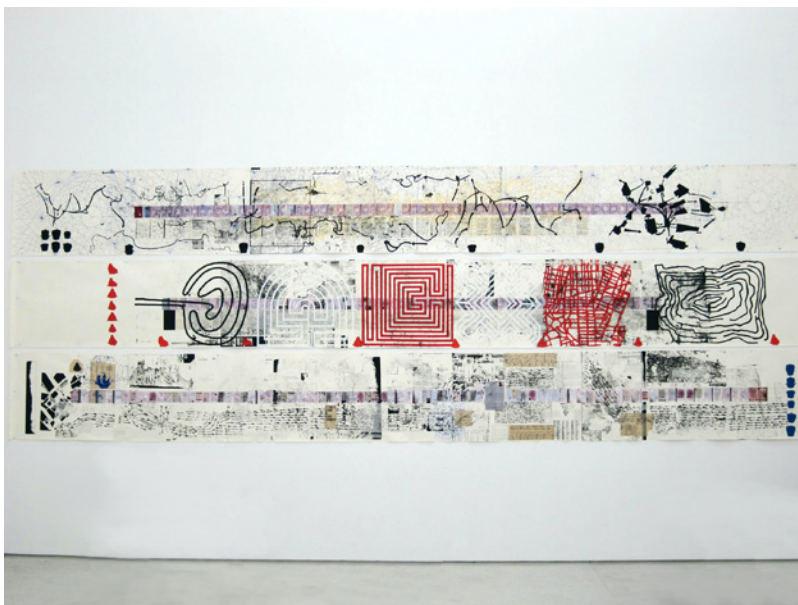
IMAGINABLE AGEOGRAPHY. This concept is inspired by thinking about Global Asias in nonaligned relation to other geographically referential concepts like “the Orient” and “Asian America.” Drawing attention to how their utility as interpretive paradigms derives from the ways in which they simultaneously reference and remain disarticulated from “real” geographies, I emphasize the critical possibilities of focusing on how such paradigms are *ageographic*:

built to reference the solidity of terrain but more grounded in the conceptual/imaginative realm than they are in specific terrestrial features or characteristics. Even more precisely, while they encompass or bring into visibility specific geographic features and characteristics (and acknowledge geopolitical structures), the conceptual realities that they signal and enact are enabled by the ways in which they simultaneously reference, exceed, and remake such topographies imaginatively. (T. Chen 2021b, 313)

By drawing attention to Global Asias as imaginable ageography, we foreground the ways in which the conceptual and political significances of Asia derive from, but cannot be equivalent to, the geographical certainties bolstering them.

As Naoki Sakai has argued, “the West is one term of the West and the non-West binary which serves to co-figure spatially the relation of one subjective position to another. Rather than designating a bounded territory, it expresses the orientation or gradient at a specific place” (2000, 83). This reminder that the West is not simply a geographical location but a spatial orientation that signals asymmetries of power clarifies the need, in thinking through the spatial relationships of modernity and globalization that necessarily undergird Global Asias, for paradigms and practices that bring into visibility the inextricably interconnected material and conceptual matters that make such formulations work, and that acknowledge their reality-producing effects even as they operate to resist their own intellectual dominance. To that end, imaginable ageography recognizes and foregrounds the epistemic operations that draw on cartographic authority to naturalize knowledge production itself.

An illuminating example of the ageographic mapping of Global Asias can be seen in Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija’s monumental series *Untitled*



Rirkrit Tiravanija, Thai, b. Argentina (b. 1961), *Untitled 2008–2011 (the map of the land of feeling)*, 2008–11, inkjet print, offset lithography, chine collé, color silkscreen. © Rirkrit Tiravanija and the LeRoy Neiman Center for Print Studies.

2008–2011 (*the map of the land of feeling*) (see accompanying figure).¹⁰ Born in Argentina, Tiravanija has had a global career spanning New York, Berlin, and Chiang Mai. The three scrolls that form the series map the artist's physical, emotional, and artistic movements over two decades. Stretching over eighty feet, they involve a broad range of printmaking techniques and were produced in collaboration with a community of forty assistants over three years. Tiravanija's passports are mingled together with maps, journal entries, recipes, directional notations, art historical references, and personal symbols. Confounding the map's orienting function, Tiravanija instead uses his art to archive memory, feeling, and experience—and to encourage relationship building, social interaction, and embodied engagement. The sheer size of the scrolls requires collaborative effort to make and install them, and forces viewers to confront partial perspectives and question the authority of how they view the terrain being ostensibly mapped.

Acknowledging partial views and questioning the authority of perspectives that are always limited by the institutional structures through which knowledge about Asia and its diasporas is generated are key characteristics of Global Asias as a conceptual rubric. As already noted, the critical consolidation of Global Asias as an emergent field formation is heightened by

the totalizing potential of “Global Asias” as a term. An integral aspect of an architectural understanding of Global Asias involves structural dissonance of a different order, generated not through the inter/disciplinary frictions discussed earlier but through the tactical staging of the paradigm’s constructedness, evolution, and disintegration. Thus, even as Global Asias enables alternative kinds of critical attention to the power of geographical imagination, I propose that conceptualizing it as imaginable ageography serves the important function of encouraging us to work against the consolidating effects of Global Asias, by squarely centering the simultaneous discordances and unifying mythologies inherent in its conceptualization. In other words, imaginable ageography invites the ongoing process of self-critique necessary to prevent concepts like Global Asias from cannibalizing, homogenizing, or critically consolidating the very complex subjects and experiences that they epistemologically reference and create.

These three concepts are obviously not meant to fully flesh out the nature of Global Asias work. However, I offer them as scaffolding points upon which we can collectively build Global Asias as a new institutional formation, one that recognizes the challenges inherent in conceptual totalization and remains open to the frictive energies powering intellectual encounters between and beyond the silos that separate the study of Asias from its multiple diasporas.

IV.

Global Asias is a collective epistemic project that makes visible the role that institutionalization plays in creating knowledge about Asia and its multiple diasporas. Through engineered modes of engagement that enable cross-disciplinary dialogue and transfield cooperation and debate, the methods and architecture of Global Asias challenge existing institutional practices that separate scholars working on “Asian” topics from those working on “diasporic” topics, to create new conditions of possibility that embrace the fundamentally transnational and global nature of Asia-focused worlds and epistemologies. Such engagement is enacted multiplicitously through a series of critical shifts in perspective and collective practice, shifts enabled by building spaces (both literal and conceptual) for scholars working with disciplinarily specific approaches to meet; by encouraging cross-pollination across knowledge silos through interdisciplinary or transfield approaches; and by asking those trained to promote academic expertise (often defined

in prescriptively narrow ways) to inhabit zones of discomfort and give up individual authority in favor of collaboratively generated modes of inquiry.

Such critical shifting signals a process of reorientation, one that centers the significance of Asia and its peoples even as it resists the logics of singularity and critical consolidation. By literally placing Asia, Asian diasporas, and Asians at the heart of our epistemological enterprises, we acknowledge the significance of movement, borders, and boundary crossing as a dynamic aspect of studying worlds that are focused on, influenced by, and birthed out of Global Asias, and reorient the space/time coordinates by which we imagine Asian worlds such that alternative cultural concepts and geopolitical contexts come into focus. This reorientation helps us remap Asia outside of an East-West binary to focus on different axes of relation (e.g., Asia–Latin America, inter-Asia, Sino-Africa), attunes us to alternative forms of territoriality (such as nonsovereign entities like Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, or Oceania, or concepts such as Brian Russell Roberts’s [2021] “borderwaters”), and enables critical attention to migratory formations that complicate center/periphery models of movement (such as the “double diaspora” [Wacks 2015] of Indians from Tanzania who then scatter throughout the Anglophone nations of the developed world, or *zainichi* Korean Americans). **Global Asias recognizes the importance of migration (for the subjects we study, but also for us as scholarly subjects), consequently enabling us to consider ongoing forms of exodus and resettling, new and old forms of displacement (along with an awareness that displacement can occur even when populations stay in place), and emerging forms of connectivity generated by technology and the increasing prominence of the digital in mediating across distance and division.** As a vibrant, multidisciplinary

To draw attention to this, we focused the 2024 Global Asias summer institute (SI2024) on the topic “Involuntary Migration.” Designed to complement *Verge* 12, no. 1, a special issue on “The Trade in Humans,” SI2024 embraced the dual dimensions articulated here. More concretely, the institute endeavored to study different forms of forced migration while also encouraging participants to be aware of, engage with, and challenge how their embeddedness (in different institutions, departments, disciplines, geographical areas, and methods) might also be subject to migratory movement within the framework of Global Asias. Indeed, the open invitation we extended brought us, eventually, a series of fascinating projects—on mad mothers in medieval Noh drama, Indo-Caribbean and Korean coolies, Han women kidnapped into Manchu banner households in early Qing China, Korean *singmo* (female

domestic servants) who experienced coercive conditions of labor migration during Japanese occupation and post–Korean War industrialization, Vietnamese refugee Airbnb hosts who opened their homes to Afghan refugees, and Swedish Korean adoptees—that would normally not be considered in relation. The work of bringing them together, then, of necessity produced a series of movements—between different historical periods and subjects, between fields and methods, and between the “local” and the “global” as scales of analysis.

In making the work of the shadow archive more visible, especially by treating minor genres of academic writing as also crucial in the advancing of scholarly and intellectual questions, I share here an excerpt from the call for applications for SI2024 that I developed collaboratively with my fellow codirectors, Annie Isabel Fukushima and Kristin Roebuck:

“While the movement of people from one place to another has been happening since the beginning of human history, people move for many different reasons and movement does not always signal the freedom of mobility. [. . .] Since the sixteenth century, from Asia to the Américas, Africa, and Europe, involuntary migration has had many names, including indentured servitude, abduction, (transnational) adoption, human trafficking, slavery, ‘coolitude,’ denial of citizenship, and contracted labor.

“Understanding forced movement compels us to have complex conversations about militarisms, settler colonialisms, Indigeneity, racial capitalism, gendered oppression, and violence. In conceptualizing involuntary migration, we recognize that Asians are not passive victims. Indeed, focusing on involuntary migration creates opportunities for us to recognize that Asians are both agents and objects of involuntary migration—and in their movement they form the core of Asian diasporas and hybridized cultures worldwide. This institute, then, invites participants to look at involuntary migration and its role in the making of Global Asias.”

field of academic knowledge production, Global Asias thus reimagines the conditions of possibility animating scholarly research on Asia and its multiple diasporas, and lays the groundwork for sustainable and sustaining intellectual exchange across disciplinary, institutional, and field boundaries.

Notes

This essay was originally published in 2021 as “Global Asias: Method, Architecture, Praxis” in the *Journal of Asian Studies* 80 (4): 997–1009, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911821001595>.

- 1 I use “Global Asia/s” in this section to refer to a diverse set of transnationally oriented approaches to the study of Asia, and “Global Asias” throughout the

rest of the essay when discussing the specific iteration of such an approach promulgated by the journal *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*.

- 2 Such work is being accomplished through publication as well as through institutional restructuring. Previously published criticism on the topic includes K. Chen and Chua (2007), Spivak (2007), and T. Chen and Hayot (2015). It is worth noting that both Oxford University Press and Amsterdam University Press have Global Asia/s book series. Charlotte Eubanks and I coedit the Global Asias: Method, Architecture, Praxis book series published by the University of Hawai'i Press, which uses funding from the Henry Luce Foundation to support open-access publishing. Institutional restructuring is increasingly reshaping programs and departments (e.g., Global Asia programs at Simon Fraser University, Utrecht University, Haverford College, and the University of Toronto, among others; the Department of Transnational Asian Studies at Rice University; various Global Asia/s initiatives at Duke University, Rutgers University, New York University, and Penn State) and encouraging transinstitutional partnerships (e.g., the InterAsia program sponsored by the Social Science Research Council, or the New York Southeast Asia Network).
- 3 For an overview of the transnational turn in American studies, see Durán (2020); for an overview of Asian area studies and the emergence of critical attention to inter-Asian connections, see Duara (2018); for a discussion of circulatory history, see Duara (2021a) and the "Field Trip" feature on "New World Orders and the Geopolitics of the Transpacific" in *Verge* 7, no. 1 (2021).
- 4 See *Verge* 6, no. 1 (2020), a special issue on "Displaced Subjects," for an example of how critical refugee studies and Global Asias can operate in tandem.
- 5 For an overview of the asymmetries and interconnections generated out of transpacific studies' engagements with these four interdisciplinary fields, see T. Chen (2020).
- 6 See the A&Q feature on "Political Science and the Study of Global Asias" (F. Lee et al. 2017) for a discussion on navigating the challenges of disciplinary priorities and interdisciplinary field commitments.
- 7 I am indebted to my colleague Charlotte Eubanks for this articulation, which they shared during the Global Asias Cyber Chat on "Challenging Disciplinary Silos" (April 23, 2021).
- 8 Thank you to Andrea Mendoza for inspiring this observation through her comments at the Global Asias Cyber Chat on "Challenging Disciplinary Silos" (April 23, 2021).
- 9 See, for example, the following two "A&Q" features: "Political Science and the Study of Global Asias" (F. Lee et al. 2017) and "Contemporary History/

Contended History” (Lanza et al. 2019). See also the following three “Field Trip” features: “Indigeneity at Sea” (Herman et al. 2018), “Settler Colonial Studies, Asian Diasporic Questions” (Day et al. 2019), and “Approaches Between Asia and Latin America: A Critical Renga” (Bachner et al. 2017).

- 10 This work was featured in *Global Asias: Contemporary Asian and Asian American Art from the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation*, an exhibition curated by Chang Tan and organized by the Palmer Museum of Art at Penn State, August 28–December 12, 2021.

What If, If Only, and If This Goes On: Reimagining Scholarly Activity Through Global Asias Practice

STATEMENT OF ENDEAVORS

When I teach courses on speculative fiction, I often begin by introducing students to three phrases that have come to be associated with writing about worlds-yet-to-be: “what if,” “if only,” and “if this goes on.” While the origin of these phrases is contested, attributed variously to Robert A. Heinlein or Isaac Asimov and often associated with Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*, I came to them by way of Octavia Butler (1998). In “‘Devil Girl from Mars’: Why I Write Science Fiction,” a transcript of remarks she gave at MIT, Butler describes her novel *Parable of the Sower* not as prophecy but rather as a cautionary tale and suggests that the power of writing science fiction comes from its generic adeptness in imagining the consequences of, and alternatives to, the world that we already inhabit. Beginning class with these different conjectural possibilities helps me as a teacher to encourage students to understand the specific generic conventions of speculative writing as they manifest in literary and cultural production. Beginning a statement of endeavors with these different conjectural possibilities helps me as a scholar to make visible the ways I have enacted Global Asias as a speculative genre of academic labor, one that refutes the conventional ways in which genre is used to taxonomize research, teaching, and service into distinct categories of labor. Taking these provocations as an invitation to approach scholarly praxis speculatively, my work over the last fifteen years has combined research, teaching, and service activities by engaging them through the alien forms of Global Asias scholarship. Such engagement has generated Global Asias as a multifocal field of academic knowledge

production, leading to the creation of methods and frameworks that allow scholars working in the historically siloed arenas of Asian area studies, Asian American studies, and Asian diaspora studies to cross-pollinate knowledge across field and disciplinary boundaries.

A conventional statement of endeavors would assign meaning to that work by creating an inventory that maps onto the taxonomy of research, teaching, and service that higher education uses to catalog scholarly labor. Given the arguments I have been making about why it is critical to embrace the dimensionality of scholarly praxis by being more attentive to how the work that we do often combines or exceeds these generic categories, I will take a different approach in this document. More specifically, I will take three institutional forms that I have created using Global Asias—the journal *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*, the monograph *Alien Forms and Minor Genres: A Speculative Handbook of Academic Labor*, and the Global Asias Initiative, a multidisciplinary research center—to illustrate how all of them engage research, teaching, and service orientations simultaneously. The goal of such an unorthodox approach is to reinforce the broader arguments I have been making through my writing and scholarly practices that the capaciousness of what we do as humanities scholars can be the grounds not just for building new fields of academic inquiry but also for rethinking the ways in which we express and assess the impact of our intellectual labor.

Since I returned from medical leave in 2012, my service, research, and teaching have been integrated in support of advancing Global Asias as a multidisciplinary and transfield approach to the study of Asia in relation to its multiple diasporas. In imagining Global Asias as an opportunity to enact a more capacious scholarly praxis, one that combines service, teaching, and research activity in ways that question the forms—of writing, of institutional legibility, and of scholarly praxis—available to us, my work over the last thirteen years has taken an architectural approach. By this I mean that rather than developing the emergent field of Global Asias via projects that conceptualize teaching, research, and service as disarticulated genres of academic labor, I have focused my critical energies on building platforms that allow me and others to work together to develop the variegated types of writing, engagement, and practice that such a collaborative, nonconsensus, and multidisciplinary field demands. Even as this kind of approach can be subject to the injunction to make clear which of these three types of academic labor it reflects or is by default perceived as “service,” I have argued in my monograph *Alien Forms and Minor Genres: A Speculative Handbook of Academic Labor* that it should instead be considered

as a fundamental means of creating scholarship that includes differentially coherent practices which simultaneously engender new forms of knowledge and recognize undervalued knowledge practices.

My work on/in/through Global Asias has manifested in a variety of institutional forms—among them, a monograph, a journal, and a research center. While some of these forms are clearly associated with specific genres of academic labor (the monograph with research activity, and the journal and research center with service activity, for example), I have approached all of them by exploring how they can be constructed as “alien forms”—forms of writing and professional enactment that embrace the synergistic possibilities of cross-pollinating epistemologies and practices across institutional taxonomies of scholarly labor. As I have exemplified in my founding and editing of *Verge* and my establishment and directing of the Global Asias Initiative, as well as in the conceptualization and composition of my monograph, Global Asias as an alien form engages institutional genres speculatively to support the formation of new assemblages of scholarly labor whose value isn’t overdetermined by existing institutional definitions of TRS.

In founding and editing the award-winning journal *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*, the opportunities to combine research, teaching, and service activities have been manifold. The journal is conceptualized as a platform for engineering various kinds of engagements between the disparate fields of area studies, race and ethnic studies, and diaspora studies. Its creation of, and commitment to, innovative genres of academic writing—exemplified through a set of rubrics highlighted in its opening section, entitled *Convergence*—has generated new intellectual investments and scholarly collaboration, outputs that have been instrumental in advancing Global Asias as a multidisciplinary field of academic knowledge production. Building the journal as a research platform—not just for the contributors who publish within its pages but for me as an editor—has enabled self-reflexive scholarship that actively considers how and why the production of knowledge about Asia in relation to its diasporas depends upon understanding the nonaligned relations between the disparate fields that section off the study of “Asia” from the study of how people, concepts, and cultures move across nation-state formations. As the editor of a journal created to bring a new academic field into existence, the work I do with authors and contributors is deeply collaborative. It exemplifies the multifaceted nature of scholarly praxis by leaning into the synergistic possibilities that arise from combining research expertise, pedagogical practice,

and editorial engagement. The journal is recognized for the ways in which it prioritizes its pedagogical and research missions in equal measure; the quality of the engagement it offers to potential contributors adds not just to the excellence of the work that it publishes but to the development of the broader field of Global Asias itself. The accolades that *Verge* has received—the 2016 Best New Journal Award from the Council of Editors of Learned Journals (CELJ), the 2020 PROSE Best New Journal in the Humanities Award from the Association of American Publishers (AAP), and the 2022 Distinguished Editor Award from CELJ—reflects the impact that building the journal as an alien form has had.

Similarly, the Global Asias Initiative, a multidisciplinary research center supported by Penn State's Department of Asian Studies and College of Liberal Arts, has been constructed as an architecture that supports an integrated praxis combining teaching, service, and research activity. While building this kind of institutional form is often considered primarily an administrative task, I draw attention here to how my academic labors for the GAI are also emphatically pedagogical and research oriented. The GAI hosts multiple platforms for encouraging integrated scholarly praxis—beyond the journal, these include a book series; a conference series; a Cyber Chats program; a set of “On the Road” partnerships with other academic, institutional, and public diplomacy organizations; and a yearly summer institute. Although I could discuss the integrated nature of Global Asias scholarly praxis through each of these platforms, for the purposes of illustration I will focus on the summer institute as a specific academic form that I have employed to encourage a more capaciously imagined scholarly praxis, one that both reflects and instantiates the multifocal nature of Global Asias knowledge production and practice. The GAI's summer institute program, ongoing since 2014, mentors early-career scholars by creating conditions for imagining collaborative work that crosses field and disciplinary boundaries. Each institute is focused on a specific theme and designed to foster interaction between scholars working with diverse methodologies in a variety of different fields and disciplines across the humanities and humanistic social sciences. In supporting early-career scholars, my work through the summer institute is by nature pedagogical; as eleven previous cohorts can attest, the summer institute teaches participants how to develop shared critical vocabularies, to tackle pressing research problems, and to develop the kinds of transinstitutional networks that Global Asias scholarship requires (but that many find difficult to create and access). The summer institute is also a research-intensive enterprise. It supports individual

research projects undertaken by participants, but it just as importantly mobilizes unlikely cohorts of scholars to engage in the messy, fractious, rewarding, and confounding labor of building Global Asias as a scholarly field of knowledge production. Such mobilization not only impacts the individual projects that participants bring to the institute; it also creates conditions that make the creation of collaborative and polyvocal projects such as the recently published *Global Asias: Tactics & Theories* volume possible.

Working in the ways that I have with *Verge* and the Global Asias Initiative is not just about embracing the expansiveness of an integrated scholarly praxis. It is also an argument about the ways that higher education's limited understanding of genre affects the possibilities of what humanities scholarship can—and should—endeavor to create. To that end, after working for over a decade on enacting Global Asias scholarship (broadly conceptualized) as a speculative genre of academic labor that combines service, research, and teaching activities, I wrote a book, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*, to make legible why embracing the dimensionality of scholarly praxis has been critical to building the field of Global Asias. *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* argues that acknowledging the diversity of scholarly labor critical to the profession can transform the genre of the academic monograph. More pointedly: What happens if we treat field formation and alternative genres of academic writing as speculative fictions, forms through which to reflect and reimagine the possibilities and value of scholarly labor? In attempting to answer this question, the book introduces readers to the principles and methods of Global Asias scholarly praxis and proposes that we take seriously how an integrated approach to academic labor can critically contribute to the advancement of new fields and methods of scholarly engagement. It is an academic monograph but it is also an alien form, composed in a way that encompasses not just research publication but also the scholarly labors of pedagogy, editing, mentorship, program-building, and administration to which I have been devoted, and upon which the academic profession and the field of the humanities is built. Given how research activity through publication is often disarticulated from the labor of pedagogy and service, the book imagines an alternative future by speculating about how the hierarchies of value assigned different forms of academic labor might change if the genres in which we write were to evolve.

Undoubtedly, there will be questions and concerns about, as well as resistance to, the scholarly praxis and outputs I describe here. After all, working as/through alien form creates myriad discomforts—both for me and for my interlocutors. Although the metrics by which one assesses the

value of our work in academia are often quite rigidly policed, I think it worth suggesting that the existing measures we use to disarticulate teaching, service, and research activity can, when applied indiscriminately and without flexibility, undermine our scholarly impact. By working against such taxonomic disarticulation, I have been extremely successful in developing Global Asias as a multidisciplinary, multigeneric, and collaborative field of knowledge production. The increasing legibility of the field; its embrace as an institutional framework for developing new curricular, public humanities, and academic programming; and the proliferation of new scholarly projects that move beyond and between area studies, ethnic studies, and diaspora studies—these testify to the field-defining impact of my integrated scholarly praxis.



ALIEN ABDUCTION, ALIEN FORM

Alien Form:

*Genre and the Production of
Ethnic American Literatures*



MONDAY, MARCH 31, 2014

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Five award-winning Ethnic American writers join Penn State faculty, students, and the public at large in discussions of how genre and literature's formal properties can be deployed to counter the strong desire to read Ethnic American literatures in terms of "identity," "culture," and "authenticity." Centered on the production and marketing of Ethnic American literature as well as the cross-pollination between literary fiction and genre fiction, this symposium will question the aesthetic possibilities and limits of Ethnic American literature itself as a generic category.

Roundtable One: 10:00 a.m.–Noon

The Making of Ethnic Stories:

Generic Instability and the Literary Marketplace

FEATURED PARTICIPANTS

Karen Tei Yamashita is the author of *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest* (1990), *Brazo-Marú* (1992), *Tropic of Orange* (1997), *Circle K* (2001), and *I Hotel* (2010). She is Professor of Literature and Creative Writing at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Nelly Rosario was born in the Dominican Republic and raised in Brooklyn. Her novel *Song of the Water Saints* won the 2002 PEN Open Book Award. On faculty at Texas State University's MFA Program, she is currently a Visiting Scholar in the Comparative Media Studies/Writing Program at MIT.

LOCAL PARTICIPANTS

Toni Jensen, Assistant Professor of English, Penn State University

Aldon Nielsen, The George and Barbara Kelly Professor of American Literature, Penn State University

Ben Schreier, Malvin and Lea Bank Assistant Professor of English and Jewish Studies, Penn State University

Judith Sierra-Rivera, Assistant Professor of Spanish and Latino Studies, Penn State University

Roundtable Two: 2:00–4:00 p.m.

Zombies, Aliens, Cyborgs, and Others:

Genre Fiction's Ethnic Afterlives

FEATURED PARTICIPANTS

Stephen Graham Jones is the author of numerous books, most recently *The Gospel of Z* (2014) and *Not for Nothing* (2014). He has been an NEA Fellow, a Texas Writers League Fellow, and has won the Texas Institute of Letters Award for Fiction and the Independent Publisher Multicultural Award. Jones is a Professor of English at the University of Colorado-Boulder.

Sheree Renée Thomas is a writer, editor, poet, and educator. The founder of Wangeanreggae Press, she has edited two World Fantasy Award-winning anthologies and has published a collection of stories and poetry, *Shotgun Lullabies* (2011).

Ken Liu is a Boston-based writer whose speculative fiction and poetry have appeared in *BSF*, *Asimov's*, *Analog*, *Strange Horizons*, *LightSpeed*, and *Clarkesworld*, among other outlets. He has won a Nebula, two Hugos, a World Fantasy Award, and a Science Fiction & Fantasy Translation Award.

LOCAL PARTICIPANTS

Tina Chen, Associate Professor of English and Asian American Studies, Penn State University

Amanda Page, Assistant Professor of English, Juniata College

Linda Ferguson Selzer, Associate Professor of English,
Penn State University

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STUDIES

For additional information, please contact the symposium's co-organizers, **Tina Chen** (tina.chen@psu.edu) and **Toel Jensen** (tj14@psu.edu).

Alien Form symposium poster. Sponsored by Penn State's Center for American Literary Studies; March 31, 2014.

Alien Abduction, Alien Form

CONFERENCE PAPER

PANEL ABSTRACT

“Asian American Racial and Literary Form, Post-Identity”

This session contemplates the role and use of Asian American literatures in a so-called “post-identity” and “post-racial” moment. Revising paradigms of new formalism in literary studies to consider Asian American racialization, Joseph Jeon, Kandice Chuh, Colleen Lye, and others have analyzed how race does not merely reside as embodied difference but is distributed through discursive structures, narratological techniques, and the ordering logics of social, political, and economic arrangements. Building on such work, this panel articulates an approach to Asian American literature that centers on the implications of contemporary US racial relations for narrative. The panelists pressure the relationship between Asian American identity and formal representation to trace how Asian Americanness is articulated, reworked, and transformed through experimental racial and literary forms.

Staging a conversation between senior and emerging scholars, this panel examines the limits and opportunities that critical engagements with post-identitarian discourse afford for the broader turn toward new formalism within Asian American literary studies. Each paper will be twelve minutes long, to allow ample time for discussion, and the panel will be moderated by Joseph Jeon, whose work on rethinking racial form through objecthood provides an important point of departure for our explorations. Collectively, these presentations suggest how an attunement to race's reconfigurations and permutations can offer possibilities for revising sedimented modes of understanding not only in Asian American literature but also in the continuing work of race within American literature.

PANELISTS: Crystal Parikh, Michelle Huang, Tina Chen, and Chris A. Eng

MODERATOR: Joseph Jonghyun Jeon

This paper was delivered at the 2018 Modern Language Association conference.

I would like to begin by thanking Chris for organizing this panel and by thanking my fellow panelists for allowing me to share this space with them. For the last several years, I've been teaching a graduate seminar on contemporary ethnic American literature called "Reading Beyond Race," even though I pretty much state baldly up front that, of course, the class is all about race. The course's emphasis on the possibilities and limits of post-racial aesthetics has enabled a series of really generative conversations about the ways in which genre fiction can both challenge and reinforce some of the conventional expectations we have for ethnic fiction. After all, as Nam Le (2008) exposes so brilliantly in his short story "Love and Honor and Pity and Pride and Compassion and Sacrifice," the "ethnic story" is itself a genre, and in my graduate seminar we explore how its generic contours can be expanded to include other kinds of generic imperatives to useful effect. Accordingly, my brief remarks today will address the post-identitarian turn in Asian American literary production by using alien abduction to think, metaphorically and conceptually, about the relationship between ethnic American literatures and genre fiction, to make us more aware of the aesthetic opportunities that popular genre fiction can imagine into being as literature (and vice versa).

I've been thinking a lot lately about alien abduction in an effort to focus on the possibilities of conceptualizing the relationship between these two seemingly distinct generic categories—ethnic fiction and genre fiction—as a complex set of multiple engagements: a dynamic of capture and transformation, possession and experimentation, erasure and reprogramming. If what I'm sketching here sounds messy, that's because it is. And while the messiness sometimes produces a generic friction that results in spectacular implosions, such friction also often manages to transform thermodynamically, a mechanical operation that becomes anything but mechanical.

Although critics have developed a number of different terms to articulate how this process of literary cohabitation operates—and here I have in mind Jacques Derrida's (1980) "genre mixing," Betsy Huang's (2010) "generic troubling," Josh Lukin and Joe Moffett's (2009) "genre poaching," and Wai Chee Dimock's (2007) "cumulative reuse"—I'd like to suggest that bearing down on the formal dimensions of alien abduction as a genre can help us do several things: (1) open up new ways of historicizing the relationship between ethnic American literature and genre fiction, (2) become aware of the aesthetic opportunities that popular genre fiction can imagine into being

as literature (and vice versa), and (3) develop critical reading practices that enable us to theorize the complexity of fictional worlds that respond to but are not completely determined by the autoethnographic imperatives dictating the criticism and interpretation of ethnic American literatures.

There is remarkable consistency in the tropes of alien abduction, which include abductees being taken suddenly by extraterrestrial beings, transportation by spaceship/UFO, scientific experimentation while in captivity, repressed memories, and ultimately a return wherein the normalcy of life before abduction is seriously challenged even as the abductee's credibility is similarly questioned. As Stephen Hong Sohn notes, the genre is characterized by formal fragmentation marking the temporal gaps and spatial discontinuities central to this experience; it is a genre that resolutely resists resolution, a form that "is at its core all about repetition, rupture, and circularity" (2014, 178).

What would it mean to think about the relationship between ethnic American literatures and genre fiction in terms of alien abduction? One answer involves historicizing this relationship so that what seems like divergence or opposition can be reapproached in terms of convergence and overlap. We should be attuned to the fact that the rise of alien abduction as a powerful cultural narrative coincides with anxieties about American global supremacy during the Cold War and the large-scale civil rights movements of the 1960s, both in the United States and in other parts of the world. We should understand that, despite popular perceptions of the abductee as being usually "a white, moderately affluent thirty-something American" (A. Roberts 2000, 144), alien abduction is, in the words of cultural critic Annalee Newitz, "not just a white person's story." And we should remember that the first reported case of alien abduction, the alleged abduction of Betty and Barney Hill from New Hampshire in 1961, is notable not only because it formalizes almost all of the tropes we have subsequently associated with the genre (isn't this consistency one of the ways in which we define genre, albeit dismissively?) but also because it marks the simultaneous registering and erasure of racialization (the Hills were a mixed-race couple).

Claire Light recognizes the historical dimension and the artistic possibilities of this relationship in her story "Abducted by Aliens!" (2009), which reads as a straightforward version of this genre. It is narrated by a woman whose brother claims to have been abducted by aliens and whose return is marked by rejection, disbelief, and familial disavowal. The tale's double narration—the brother's voice speaks through the sister's recounting; she finds herself possessed by his "insistent tones"—also becomes a means for

Light to analogize the Japanese American internment experience. As such, Light's speculative fiction elliptically references the spatially and temporally inflected traumas of Japanese American internment as part of its rehearsal of the questions of identity, authenticity, and memory that are at the heart of both alien abduction and ethnic narratives.

Using alien abduction to think, metaphorically and conceptually, about the relationship between ethnic American literatures and genre fiction also makes us more aware of the aesthetic opportunities that popular genre fiction can imagine into being as literature (and vice versa). In this regard, I'm particularly interested in the ways in which alien abduction stories always result in both capture and return. Indeed, I'd argue that the return is just as crucial as the kidnapping; it's what gives this genre its shape and trajectory. Abduction, in these cases, is never a matter of being completely overtaken or entirely subsumed. It involves resistance and irresolution—in other words, generic friction. So when ethnic American literature is abducted by genre fiction or when genre fiction is abducted by ethnic American writers, the really interesting stuff is what happens when the parties return from their abduction, because it's always a return with a difference. I don't think it is surprising that Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995) inaugurated the boom of Asian American writing in the 1990s. Lee's convoluted reworking of both the spy story's and immigrant fiction's conventions by allowing each genre to abduct and transform the other made possible an exciting and irrepressible literary imagination, a feat that he repeated in his 2014 dystopian novel *On Such a Full Sea*. It's a dynamic that Colson Whitehead explores in his zombie novel *Zone One* (2011), where the "elemental terror of the familiar turned homicidal" becomes a means for reconceptualizing the stories—and by extension the world—you think you know, once you realize that "a monster is a person who has stopped pretending" (2012).

Chiwon Choi's second poetry book, *Abductions* (2012), is a really interesting example of how alien abduction and Asian American literary production generate a dynamic of capture and return that produces, in the process, something new—an alien form that exceeds the boundaries of both genres from which it arises. Choi calls his collection a "science fiction poetry book" and crossing the high/low, literature/genre divide becomes more than the "fuck you" (that's a quote!) to the literary elite that Choi originally imagined. The collection is too complicated to summarize here, but let me share a few lines to give you a sense of how Choi allows the abduction narrative to capture the immigrant story, and vice versa:

i am now what remains of the details I choose to cherish
as I join my family once a month
and we do what we always have done to bare it,
tell each other new stories of ghosts
and shadows that we can't explain,
as mother entwines her short fingers
and tells us that one, that story,
about the ocean and the waves rising like cypresses
and the spaceship that has come for her
since she was a child.

when it is my turn,
i tell them i have been staying up nights,
my wife asleep next to me with her arms above her head,
and I tell them about all the UFOs over argentina
until he smiles, his mouth smaller now over his dentures.
“did I tell you about the chilean soldiers
Who witnessed the spaceships before the war
with argentina broke out?” he asks.
“yes, about the invisible dragons,” i say.
he nods, happy that i have once again embraced
the unseen guides that lead me to rapture. (Choi 2012, 17)

Using an alien abduction mythology to narrate the affective experience of capture, alienation, and return structuring his family's history of immigration from Korea to Paraguay to Los Angeles, as well as the even more intimate personal history of his wife's miscarriage of their daughter, Choi crosshatches the feelings of alienation, secrecy, unbelievability, disappearance, remembrance, and repetition that distinguish and unite the immigrant, the outsider, and the abductee.

I hope that thinking about alien abduction today will help develop critical reading practices that enable us to theorize the complexity of fictional worlds that respond to but are not completely determined by the auto-ethnographic imperatives dictating the criticism and interpretation of ethnic American literatures. Specifically, the criteria of identity and thematics that determine *what* we read as ethnic American literature and *how* we read it have remained remarkably enduring, despite repeated critical and artistic attention spotlighting the limits of this approach. Frequently, readers and critics don't know what to do with literature written by ethnic

writers who experiment with the transgression of ethnic boundaries, decide to tell “unmarked” narratives, or create characters who disrupt the racial congruence between author and character expected from ethnic fiction. Unsurprisingly, this often leads to “a narrow set of predictable themes and ideological positions” (B. Huang 2010, 146). By attending seriously to genre fiction’s relationship to literature, we can begin to better understand a specific set of aesthetic practices employed by ethnic American writers that draws on “a changing relationship between race and social justice, race and identity, race and history [. . . in order to] invent a new imaginary for thinking about the nature of a just society and the role of race in its construction” (Saldívar 2013, 3, 5). Ironically, the predictability of generic conventions—whether they’re about extraterrestrial aliens abducting unsuspecting people from rural landscapes or about illegal aliens “who cross national borders, allegedly abduct[ing] jobs and creat[ing] ‘mutant’ children through miscegenation” (Burns 2001, 197)—becomes unpredictable when we rub them together, the kind of generic friction that leads to thermodynamic transformation.

There’s a lot more to say about all this, of course, and no time left to say it. So I’ll end with this: The science and engineering of interacting surfaces in relative motion, the science of studying friction, is called *tribology*. For some, this could just as well be a name for the study of ethnic American literatures. But the *tribological* approach I’m advocating here is one that challenges the definitions—of genre fiction, of ethnic fiction—that differentiate these kinds of literary production from each other . . . and from the wider constellation of texts *out there* in the atmosphere beyond.

Syllabus 1

ALIENATION: ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURES

ENGL/ASIA 428

Fall 2021

Book List

<i>Tea</i> , Velina Hasu Houston	ISBN: 978-0822221036
<i>The Buddha in the Attic</i> , Julie Otsuka	ISBN: 978-0307744425
<i>They Called Us Enemy</i> , George Takei et al.	ISBN: 978-1603094504
<i>Something Sinister</i> , Hayan Charara	ISBN: 978-0887486050
<i>The Best We Could Do</i> , Thi Bui	ISBN: 978-1419718786
<i>Severance</i> , Ling Ma	ISBN: 978-1250214997
<i>On Such a Full Sea</i> , Chang-rae Lee	ISBN: 978-1594632891
<i>Gold Diggers</i> , Sanjena Sathian	ISBN: 978-1984882035

Course Description

This semester, we will explore contemporary Asian American literary production by reading a wide variety of texts focused on the concept of *AlieNation*. By figuring the relationship between notions of “the alien”—as the immigrant (*Alien Nation*), as the “enemy alien” figured against national belonging (*AlieNation*), and as the perpetual foreigner who can always be accused of being an il/legal alien (*Alien Asian*)—and “the nation,” this course encourages us to think about how critical the issues of identity, belonging, contestation, national formation, aesthetics, globalization, diaspora, and genre are to Asian American literatures. Additionally, we will interrogate the constructed, panethnic nature of “Asian America” as itself an imagined nation. In the process, we will familiarize ourselves with the richness and diversity of Asian American literature by considering a variety of genres, including short stories, novels, drama, memoir, comics, and film.

SYLLABUS

INTRODUCTION

8/24 [T]	COURSE INTRO
8/26 [R]	Cultural Representations of Asian America
8/31 [T]	"Love and Honor and Pity and Pride and Compassion and Sacrifice," Nam Le
	"The Third and Final Continent," Jhumpa Lahiri
9/2 [R]	"First Writing Since," Suheir Hammad
	"The Paper Menagerie," Ken Liu

ALIEN NATION



1886 US commercial / political cartoon: *Uncle Sam Kicks Out the Chinaman*, referring both to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and to the "Magic Washer." The actual purpose of the poster was to promote the "George Dee Magic Washer," which the machine's manufacturers clearly hoped would displace Chinese laundry operators.

9/7 [T]	<i>Tea</i>, Velina Hasu Houston
9/9 [R]	"Dark Blue Suit" and "1968" by Peter Bacho
9/14 [T]	"The Woman Warrior," Maxine Hong Kingston
9/16 [R]	Palmer Museum visit—Global Asias exhibition
9/17 [F]	(Anti-Asian racism and art webinar)
9/21 [T]	Global Asias exhibit discussion
9/23 [R]	"The Grandfather of the Sierra Mountains" section (including <i>The Laws</i> and <i>Alaska China Men</i>) from <i>China Men</i> , Maxine Hong Kingston
9/28 [T]	<i>The Buddha in the Attic</i>, Julie Otsuka
9/30 [R]	

ALIENATION



Civilian exclusion order #5, posted at First and Front Streets, directing removal by April 7 of persons of Japanese ancestry, from the first San Francisco section to be affected by evacuation. San Francisco, California, 1942. April. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2001705937/>.

- 10/5 [T] "Imprisonment, Internment, Detention,"
Joshua Chambers-Letson
Question 27, 28, Chay Yew
- 10/7 [R] "The Shoyu Kid," Lonny Kaneko
Chapters 2 and 3 from *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud
***They Called Us Enemy*, George Takei et al.**
- 10/12 [T]
- 10/14 [R]
- 10/19 [T] ***Something Sinister*, Hayan Charara**
- 10/21 [R]
- 10/26 [T] ***The Best We Could Do*, Thi Bui**
- 10/28 [R]

ALIEN ASIAN



Alien Asian. Image created by Tina Chen with assistance from Google Gemini. 2025.

11/2 [T]	"Alien/Asian: Imagining the Racialized Future," Stephen Hong Sohn
	"Skygypsies," Timothy James Dimacali and John Raymond Bumanglag
11/4 [R]	Severance, Ling Ma
11/9 [T]	
11/11 [R]	Poems from <i>Soft Science</i> , Franny Choi
11/16 [T]	On Such a Full Sea, Chang-rae Lee
11/18 [R]	
11/23 [T]	NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK
11/25 [R]	NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK

CONCLUSION

11/30 [T]	Gold Diggers, Sanjena Sathian
12/2 [R]	
12/7 [T]	
12/9 [R]	

Requirements

Participation	(including attendance and quizzes)	20%
Homework	(including Conversation Starter assignments and Global Asias exhibit assignments)	20%
Essay 1		20%
Midterm Exam		20%
Final Essay/Exam		20%

Syllabus 2

SPECULATIVE FICTIONS: WORLDBREAKING,
WORLD TAKING, WORLD MAKING

ENGL 577
Fall 2024



Connectivity. Image created by Tina Chen with assistance from Padlet. 2024.

Required Texts

"The Secret Lives of the Nine Negro Teeth of George Washington," P. Djèlí Clark · "The Paper Menagerie," Ken Liu · *Emergency Skin*, N. K. Jemisin · "Skygypsies," Timothy Dimacali and John Bumanglag · *How Alike Are We*, Bo-young Kim · "Chapter Six," Stephen Graham Jones · *The Deep*, Rivers Solomon · *The Bird King*, G. Willow Wilson · *Black Sun*, Rebecca Roanhorse · *Wild Beauty*, Anna-Marie McLemore · *the seeds*, Ann Nocenti and David Aja · *Area X*, Jeff VanderMeer · *The Girl with All the Gifts*, M. R. Carey · *The Marrow Thieves*, Cherie Dimaline · *Ink*, Sabrina Vourvoulias · *The Tiger Flu*, Larissa Lai · *How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe*, Charles Yu · "The Story of Your Life," Ted Chiang · *Arrival* (dir. Denis Villeneuve) · *This Is How You Lose the Time War*, Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone

Course Description

Rather than tracing a genealogy for a specific set of variants within the larger generic category of speculative fiction, we will focus instead on wrestling with the possibilities and limits of “the speculative” as a literary modality and a critical approach. Therefore, we will read idiosyncratically in a variety of genres—science fiction, fantasy, horror, and magical realism—that have been associated with the speculative, the hypothetical, the weird, and the fantastic. Interrogating the categorical distinctions separating these genres from each other—and genre fiction from literature—we will pay attention to the various topoi that have become associated with these forms, possibly including but not necessarily limited to world-building, dystopias, apocalyptic futures, alien encounters, cognitive remappings and information technologies, artificial life, ghostly matters, and posthuman embodiments as figured by the dead, the undead, and the machinic. We will draw on theoretical discussions of genre, gender, posthumanism, ecology, and critical race studies to help frame our discussions. Requirements for the course will include short response papers, leading a discussion on a primary text, a collaborative project, and a final customized research project. We will also supplement our literary and theoretical exploration with practical discussion about pedagogy, professional literary studies, the humanities, and academia.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading and Class Participation

As members of a graduate seminar, you are expected to be productive participants in class discussion and to come to class having completed all assigned readings.

Leading a Discussion of a Primary Text

You will lead our discussion of a primary text once this semester, helping us to understand the text’s aesthetic dimensions as well as to locate the text in one or more critical conversations. What do you find compelling, troubling, provocative, problematic, or otherwise noteworthy about the book? What are the critical questions that it raises? What are the terms by which this literary or cultural text asks to be explicated? Are there alternative interpretive approaches that can illuminate the text? How can it be productively thought of in relation to

the other things that we've read and discussed for the course? As part of your preparation, please create and distribute a handout that will help the rest of us understand and organize the insights you'll be sharing. Discussion leaders should meet with me in advance of their presentation to map out an approach.

Critical Response Papers

Over the course of the semester, you will write two short (up to two single-spaced pages) reading responses on primary texts. These papers should begin by identifying a key passage or set of passages from the text in question and develop a preliminary line of argument about the book by drawing on some of the critical reading assigned for the class. Ideally, these will serve as spaces for you to begin developing ideas that you might want to pursue in your final project for the course. *When* you write these responses is up to you, although I ask that you spread your responses over two different units of the course. Additionally, please don't write a response on the text on which you will be presenting. These essay responses are due IN ADVANCE of our discussion. In other words, if you can't get a response done by the day a text is up for discussion in class, you should write on another text because I will not accept late responses, given the flexibility built into the assignment.

Area X Trilogy Collaborative Project

You will work with several other students from the class on one of the books—*Annihilation*, *Authority*, *Acceptance*—of Jeff VanderMeer's Southern Reach trilogy, *Area X*. You'll work together to come up with a set of reading questions to guide class discussion on the text; additionally, you will need to articulate a group reading of how your assigned text operates within the larger structure of the trilogy, a much-beloved and oft-used structure for the narrating of science fiction and fantasy stories. Please provide a handout to help the class organize your discussion.

Final Research and Critical Thinking Skills Project

You are all at different stages in your academic career. For some of you, this is your first graduate seminar. Others of you are well into coursework, transitioning from the MA program into the PhD program. Several of you are preparing for comprehensive exams or working on drafting a dissertation prospectus. At least one of you is ABD. Some of you are interested in going on the academic job

market while others are anticipating careers outside of academia. Such diversity means that a standard one-size-fits-all final project wouldn't be the best way to help you learn necessary research and critical thinking skills, which is why this course offers a set of options for your final project. Everyone will meet with me sometime during the first two weeks of the semester to map out a personalized plan for your work this semester.

OPTION A. PEDAGOGY PORTFOLIO

As part of our work in exploring the nature of the speculative, let us question the ways in which speculation has served to establish a distinction between demonstrable and theoretical knowledge production. One vehicle for challenging this distinction will be through the genre and practice of the lesson plan. Specifically, you will be tasked with developing a lesson plan for one of the texts we study this semester, learning how to approach lesson planning via both speculation and argumentation. These lesson plans will be collated as a collaboratively generated class resource for those of you interested in teaching and/or studying speculative fictions in the future. *This is a multistep project that will include a course description, an annotated bibliography, a textual digest, and one week's worth of lesson plans.*

OPTION B. CONFERENCE CAMPAIGN

If you want to be an academic, figuring out how to productively engage in conferencing is very important. This final project provides you an opportunity to figure out how to tackle the challenges of getting into, writing for, attending, and presenting at an academic conference. If you are nearing the end of coursework, this kind of professional activity can help you to transition into the next stage of your career and fine-tune your ability to discuss your work with colleagues. *This is a multistep project that will include conceptualizing a conferencing strategy and writing an abstract (for either a panel or a paper), an annotated bibliography, and an eight- to ten-page conference paper.*

OPTION C. PUBLIC PRACTICE

An increasing number of scholars are interested in making the relevance of their research visible to a broader set of publics beyond the academy. Much of this work has become legible as public humanities, although the range, genres, and forms of expression such projects can take vary widely. This final project invites you to frame and design a scholarly endeavor using public humanities methods and scholarship. While the final product can manifest in a variety of genres (a website, a podcast, a piece of writing aimed at a general audience, a

mixed-media assemblage, a concept note, a policy paper), *this scaffolded assignment sequence involves a project proposal identifying research questions, an annotated bibliography, a critical synthesis of the public humanities scholarship mobilizing the project, and the public humanities project itself.*

OPTION D. ACADEMIC RESEARCH ESSAY:

CONTEXT AND INTERVENTION

If you are interested in developing your research skills and working toward academic publication, this final project gives you an opportunity to start laying the foundations for such scholarly work. This paper will be twelve to fifteen pages long (not including notes and bibliography). The topic and focus are largely up to you, so long as the paper addresses issues or questions that relate broadly to the focus of our work in this course. I realize that the length of the essay may seem somewhat peculiar, not short enough to work as a conference paper but obviously not long enough to be an article-length essay. My reasoning here is this: Given the other kinds of work I'm asking you to do for the course, along with the rest of your workload in other classes and as teachers, it is highly unlikely that asking you to produce a essay of twenty to thirty pages at semester's end will mean that that essay is of publishable quality. As such, I'd like to give you a space where you can work out the framing of a potentially publishable piece, asking you to focus particularly on how the set of questions you are exploring address a worthwhile concern, and experiment with the kinds of scaffolding (theoretical, critical, argumentative, and organizational) that you might need to establish such an argument. While you will need to use some primary texts to support your arguments, I am less interested in fully fleshed out close readings (although close reading is always welcome) and more invested in seeing if you can produce an insightful, provocative, and compelling argumentative intervention. If the final project seems promising, you will have done a lot of important work in moving toward publication and I would be happy to help you work on developing the other necessary parts of the essay. *This assignment sequence will include a paper topic proposal, an annotated bibliography, a critical synthesis of relevant scholarship, and the final paper.*

SYLLABUS

AUGUST 27

What If, If Only, and If This Goes On: Speculating on What This Course Could Do

PRIMARY READINGS:

- “The Secret Lives of the Nine Negro Teeth of George Washington,” P. Djèlí Clark
- “The Paper Menagerie,” Ken Liu
- “Emergency Skin,” N. K. Jemisin
- “Skygypsies,” Timothy Dimacali and John Bumanglag
- *How Alike Are We*, Bo-young Kim
- “Chapter Six,” Stephen Graham Jones

CRITICAL READINGS:

- “On Defining SF, or Not: Genre Theory, SF, and History,” John Rieder
- “Aesthetics of the Fucked,” Sean Grattan
- “Speculative Fiction,” Marek Oziewicz

MYTHOLOGIES

RITUAL | TRADITION | FOLKLORE | HISTORY | CULTURE | COSMOLOGY | SPECIES

SEPTEMBER 3

***The Deep*, Rivers Solomon**

“the deep,” clipping

“Understanding the Past, Imagining the Future: Teaching Speculative Fiction and Afrofuturism,” Jacqueline Ellis, Jason D. Martinek, and Sonya Donaldson

“The Whiteness of Science Fiction and the Speculative Fiction of Blackness,” André Carrington

SEPTEMBER 10

***The Bird King*, G. Willow Wilson**

“The Question of the Other: Cultural Critiques of Magical Realism,” Wendy Faris

“The Genres of World Literature: the Case of Magical Realism,” Mariano Siskind

“Racial Worldmaking,” Mark Jerng

SEPTEMBER 17

***Black Sun*, Rebecca Roanhorse**

“Taking the Fiction Out of Science Fiction: A Conversation About Indigenous Futurism,” Grace L. Dillon and Pedro Neves Marques

"Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang

"Postcards from the Apocalypse," Rebecca Roanhorse

"What's a Story Like You Doing in a Place Like This?" Novel Alliances

ECOLOGIES

NATURE | ENVIRONMENT | APOCALYPSE | DISASTER | CLIMATE

SEPTEMBER 24

***Wild Beauty*, Anna-Marie McLemore**

"Farm Workers in the Machine," Curtis Marez

"The Garden State: Conceptualizing Nineteenth-Century Latin American Environmental Discourse on Nature/Nation's Transformation," Niall Peach

OCTOBER 1

***the seeds*, Ann Nocenti and David Aja**

"Nature/Postnature," Timothy Clark

OCTOBER 8

***Area X (The Southern Reach Trilogy)*, Jeff VanderMeer**

BIOPOLITICS

INSTITUTIONALITY | TECHNOLOGIES | DISABILITY | RIGHTLESSNESS

OCTOBER 15

***The Girl with All the Gifts*, M. R. Carey**

"Vulnerable Life," Steven Pokornowski

"Introduction: Neoliberalism and the Reinvention of Life," from *Biopolitical Futures in Twenty-First-Century Speculative Fiction*, Sherryl Vint

OCTOBER 22

***The Tiger Flu*, Larissa Lai**

"Identity, Difference, Indistinction," Matthew Calarco

Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene, Donna Haraway

OCTOBER 29

***Ink*, Sabrina Vourvoulias**

"Immigrant Rights Versus Civil Rights," *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected*, Lisa Marie Cacho

"Introduction," *Rightlessness: Testimony and Redress in US Prison Camps Since World War II*, A. Naomi Paik

NOVEMBER 5

***The Marrow Thieves*, Cherie Dimaline**

"Introduction: The Cost of Getting Better," *The Right to Maim: Debility|Capacity|Disability*, Jasbir Puar

"Writing Toward a Definition of Indigenous Futurism," Chelsea Vowel

"The Temporal Imagination of Indigenous Futurisms," Mathias Nilges

TEMPORALITY

ORIGINS | FUTURES | MEMORY | SPECULATION | RELATION

NOVEMBER 12

***How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe*, Charles Yu**

Techno-orientalism 2.0 introduction, David Roh, Greta Niu, Betsy Huang, and Chris Fan

"Miracle Fiction?" Chris Fan

NOVEMBER 19

"Story of Your Life," Ted Chiang and

***Arrival* (dir. Denis Villeneuve)**

NOVEMBER 26

NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK

DECEMBER 3

***This Is How You Lose the Time War*, Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone**

DECEMBER 10

FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

Syllabus 3

CONTEMPORARY ETHNIC AMERICAN LITERATURES: READING BEYOND RACE

ENGL 597

Fall 2020 (A pandemic syllabus)

Required Texts

Erasure, Percival Everett

The Education of Little Tree, Forrest Carter

The Poet X, Elizabeth Acevedo

The People in the Trees, Hanya Yanagihara

A Tale for the Time Being, Ruth Ozeki

Americanah, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Atomik Aztex, Sesshu Foster

Zone One, Colson Whitehead

My Favorite Thing Is Monsters, Emil Ferris

Mongrels, Stephen Graham Jones

On Such a Full Sea, Chang-rae Lee

In the Distance, Hernan Diaz

Course Description

In this course, we will read contemporary Ethnic American literature but consider what it means when authors challenge the conventions of racial, ethnic, and cultural representation by (1) disrupting expected congruences between author and character; (2) destabilizing the borders of ethnic American literary topographies; (3) appropriating elements from popular genres and

incorporating them into “literary” works, in what Josh Lukin describes as “genre poaching”; and (4) putting pressure on the relationship between a politics of representation and the representational politics of ethnic literature. Paradoxically, in figuring out what “reading beyond race” might mean, the course centers “race” and its myriad expression as a critically important heuristic. In addition, we will contrapuntally explore a set of keywords—*representation, identity, bildungsroman, authenticity, transnationalism, globalization, genre, form, aesthetics, and postracialism*—that have been important in the formation of critical ethnic studies as an academic interdisciplinary to bolster our deconstructive approach to contemporary literary production and critical contextualization.

COURSE ACTIVITIES & PROJECTS

Engagement Activities

Because sitting in front of a computer screen and talking for three hours is extra boring via Zoom, our course will be using several different kinds of activities to heighten participation, engagement, and collaboration. You will see these different activities noted as icons on the syllabus. Our three main formats will be:



SLIDES (Students will prepare a single slide to share during class. Specific instructions for each slide assignment will be shared in advance of class.)



COLLABORATIVE LECTURE (These conversations centered on primary texts are designed to get everyone to work together to close-read literature and collectively generate a reading of a text.)



TEA TIME (These conversations will draw on our discussion-post activities—more info below—and involve working both individually and with partners on different aspects of discussion centered on academic scholarship. Drinking delicious beverages during tea time is strongly encouraged!)

Discussion Posts | Tea Time

Given the format and medium of our seminar this semester, we will be utilizing discussion posts to facilitate some of our conversations about academic scholarship. For this class, we will engage in five discussion-post exchanges over the course of the semester. Each set of critical readings will be organized around one of the keywords for the class and, this fall, everyone will play three different

roles in making these conversations about critical scholarship happen: You will work with a partner to generate three or four questions (1×); you will contribute responses to posted questions (3×); you will work with a partner to synopsize the discussion-post exchanges and facilitate an in-person conversation about the thread (1×). A detailed schedule of assignments and roles will be uploaded to CANVAS after the first week of class.

2F Primary Text Discussion

You will help frame and facilitate (2F) an hour of discussion of a primary text. What do you find compelling, troubling, provocative, problematic, or otherwise noteworthy about the book? What are the critical questions that it raises? How can it be productively thought of in relation to the other things that we've read and discussed for the course? As part of your preparation, please (a) develop a sequence of discussion questions and (b) create a guide (which can be in varied formats: a PowerPoint slide presentation, a handout, a poster) that will help the rest of us understand and organize the insights you'll be facilitating.

Goals of this assignment: (1) to help you develop two critical skills—framing and facilitation—that every successful academic needs as both a teacher and a researcher; (2) to provide the space and parameters that allow you to work through the relationship between an argument/reading and its constituent components, and to explore how sequencing/developing a trajectory can enhance the power of your ideas; and (3) to give you an opportunity to significantly shape class conversation/direction (one of my pedagogical philosophies involves turning substantive control over to students).

Keyword Project

Part of our work this semester is to think about the various kinds of critical apparatuses critical ethnic studies has mobilized in its effort to identify, promote, canonize, challenge, and problematize literary and cultural production. To that end, I have grouped our critical readings under a variety of “keywords” that have been important in the development of the (inter)discipline.

Rather than writing a traditional twenty- to thirty-page seminar paper, you will undertake a multipart keyword project this semester. While you should begin by drawing on the critical readings we have done, you will also be asked to supplement class resources; the supplementation for this assignment is very achievable, given the current limits of library operations due to COVID-19.

Through the key components of the keyword essay as a genre of academic writing—critical summary, contextualization, argument, and intervention—you will develop the writing and thinking skills that are critical to success in academia and required for successful publishing.

You can choose any one of the keywords we will be discussing this semester except *bildungsroman* (because the readings for that week focus mainly on giving you background in critical traditions). You will be working on this project all semester, and the timeline for the various components of the project will unfold as follows:

9/30	Keywords and the Keyword Essay WORKSHOP
10/21	Keyword Annotated Bibliography DUE
11/20–11/23	Critical Synthesis (part 1) DUE
12/2	Virtual Conference
12/14	Critical Contribution (part 2) DUE

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING SCHEMA

Reading and Class Participation

As members of a graduate seminar, you are expected to come to class having completed all assigned readings and to be productive participants in the course. Productive participation takes many forms, including timely submission of assignments, consistent engagement with course materials, regular participation in class discussion, and sustained collaboration with partners in group activities and projects. Maintaining lines of communication with colleagues is critical—if something will prevent you from fulfilling any of the responsibilities outlined here, please contact me or your project partners.

TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

This course requires you to have a webcam for class sessions. Since this is a graduate-level seminar, robust participation is expected and, whenever possible, you will be expected to keep your camera on. Please note that all classes and some assessment activities may be conducted using Zoom, Canvas, or other technology which may use your computer's webcam or other technologies to communicate, monitor, and/or record classes, class activities, and assessments. Please contact me if you are unable to comply or have any questions or concerns.

GRADING SCHEMA

Attendance and Participation (includes class attendance, preparedness, execution of SLIDES and COLLABORATIVE LECTURE exercises)	20%
2F Primary Text Discussion	20%
Discussion Posts Tea Time	20%
Keyword Project	40%
Annotated Bibliography	5%
Part 1: Critical Synthesis	15%
Virtual Conference	5%
Part 2: Critical Contribution	15%

INTRO: RACE & READING

AUGUST 26

- “Love and Honor and Pity and Pride and Compassion and Sacrifice,” Nam Le
- “Quillwork, Artifact #949494,” Toni Jensen
- “Recitatif,” Toni Morrison
- “Liking What You See,” Ted Chiang
- “Monstro,” Junot Díaz
- “My Heroes Have Never Been Cowboys,” Sherman Alexie

SEPTEMBER 2

 *The Poet X*, Elizabeth Acevedo

KEYWORD: *BILDUNGSROMAN*

Stella Bolaki, “Introduction” from *Unsettling the Bildungsroman: Reading Contemporary Ethnic American Women’s Fiction*

Martin Japtok, “Introduction” from *Growing Up Ethnic: Nationalism and the Bildungsroman in African American and Jewish American Fiction*

Patricia Chu, “*Bildung*: And the Asian American Bildungsroman”

RACIAL ASYMMETRIES

SEPTEMBER 9

 *Erasure*, Percival Everett

KEYWORD: REPRESENTATION

Stephen Hong Sohn, from *Racial Asymmetries: Asian American Fictional Worlds*

Jen Ho, “The Place of Transgressive Texts in Asian American Epistemology”

Gene Andrew Jarrett, “Introduction: The Problem of African American Literature”

Kenneth Warren, “What Was African American Literature?”

Kandice Chuh, “It’s Not About Anything”

SEPTEMBER 16



The Education of Little Tree, Forrest Carter

KEYWORD: IDENTITY

Tina Chen, “Agency/Asiancy”

David Treuer, “Indian/Not-Indian Literature”

Rey Chow, “The Interruption of Referentiality: Poststructuralism and the Conundrum of Critical Multiculturalism”

SEPTEMBER 23



The People in the Trees, Hanya Yanagihara

KEYWORD: AUTHENTICITY

Tina Chen, “Impersonation and Double Agency: Theorizing the Practice, Practicing the Theory”

Lee Schweninger, “‘Back When I Used to Be Indian’: Native American Authenticity and Postcolonial Discourse”

Henry Louis Gates Jr., “‘Authenticity,’ or The Lesson of Little Tree”

Ana-María Sánchez-Arce, “‘Authenticism,’ or the Authority of Authenticity”

SEPTEMBER 30

KEYWORDS PROJECT WORKSHOP

CROSSINGS & THE “HORIZONTAL” AXIS OF ENCOUNTER

OCTOBER 7



A Tale for the Time Being, Ruth Ozeki

OCTOBER 14



Americanah, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

OCTOBER 21



Atomik Aztex, Sesshu Foster

KEYWORDS: TRANSNATIONALISM AND GLOBALIZATION

Bryce Traister, “The Object of Study: or, Are We Being Transnational Yet?”

Paul Jay, from *Global Matters*

Chadwick Allen, “A Transnational Native American Studies? Why Not Studies That Are Trans-Indigenous?”

Tiara Na’puti, “The Rhetorical Contexts of Colonization and Decolonization”

Erin Suzuki, “Transpacific”

Lisa Lowe, from *The Intimacies of Four Continents*

Edward Said, “Globalizing Literary Study”

Ian Baucom, “Globalit, Inc.”

Min Hyoung Song, “Becoming Planetary”

Kandice Chuh, “Of Hemispheres and Other Spheres”

Simon Gikandi, “Phantom Time: Literary History at the Edge of the Nation”

Paul Jay, “Transnationalism” (ORE)

Lorenzo Mari, “Old and New Names: Afropolitanism, Failed-State Fiction, and World Literature”

Peter Kalliney, “Literary History After the Nation?”

Caroline Rody, from *The Interethnic Imagination: Roots and Passages in Contemporary Asian American Fiction*

Ramón Saldívar, “Imagining Cultures: The Transnational Imaginary in Postrace America”

GENERIC F(R)ICTIONS

OCTOBER 28



Zone One, Colson Whitehead

NOVEMBER 4



My Favorite Thing Is Monsters, Emil Ferris

NOVEMBER 11



Mongrels, Stephen Graham Jones

NOVEMBER 18



On Such a Full Sea, Chang-rae Lee

KEYWORDS: GENRE AND FORM AND AESTHETICS

Bertram D. Ashe, et al. “These—Are—the ‘Breaks’: A Roundtable Discussion on Teaching the Post-Soul Aesthetic”

Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry, “A Zombie Manifesto”

Ramón Saldívar, “The Second Elevation of the Novel: Race, Form, and the Postrace Aesthetic in Contemporary Narrative”

Betsy Huang, from *Contesting Genres in Contemporary Asian American Fiction*

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses)”

Colleen Lye, “Racial Form”

Amiri Baraka, “The ‘Blues Aesthetic’ and the ‘Black Aesthetic’: Aesthetics as the Continuing Political History of a Culture”

Rafael Pérez-Torres, “Ethnicity, Ethics, and Latino Aesthetics”

Jacques Derrida, “The Law of Genre”

Donna Haraway, “The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others”

Caroline Levine, from *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*

NOVEMBER 20–23

KEYWORDS PROJECT:

Critical Synthesis (Part 1) DUE

NOVEMBER 25

NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK

CODA: THE POSSIBILITIES & PROBLEMS OF POSTRACIALISM

DECEMBER 2

KEYWORDS PROJECT:

Virtual Conference

DECEMBER 9



In the Distance, Hernan Diaz

KEYWORD: *POSTRACIALISM*

Michele Elam, “Passing in the Post-Race Era”

Ramón Saldívar, “Historical Fantasy, Speculative Realism, and Post-race Aesthetics in Contemporary American Fiction”

Christopher Lee, “Introduction: The Post-Identity Condition”

Paul Taylor, “Post-Black, Old Black”

Paul Taylor, “Taking Postracialism Seriously: From Movement Mythology to Racial Formation”

Min Hyoung Song, from *The Children of 1965: On Writing, and Not Writing, as an Asian American*

John D. Miles, “The Postindian Rhetoric of Gerald Vizenor”

Sarah Banet-Weiser, Roopali Mukherjee, and Herman Gray, “Post-race Racial Projects”

DECEMBER 14

KEYWORDS PROJECT:

Critical Contribution (Part 2) DUE

Alien Abduction, Alien Form

RESEARCH ESSAY

On a family camping trip, Arnold and Jakob Shao vanish without explanation. While Arnold is found several days later—disoriented, agitated, and insisting that he and his son had been abducted by aliens—Jakob remains missing. *Light Years from Home* (M. Chen 2022) begins with Jakob's return to Earth after fifteen years spent serving as a member of a ragtag alliance fighting to save worlds and universes from the Awakened, an alien species intent on genocidal warfare and interplanetary domination. While Mike Chen has written a novel which leverages the alien abduction genre's unique ability to register cultural tension, the story focuses more attention on the dynamics of family conflict than on the discoveries of alien life and intergalactic warfare. In juxtaposing these two distinct genres—alien abduction and ethnic family drama—Chen does more than use the energies created by generic friction to power his exploration of grief, trauma, and belonging. He also creates opportunities to think through the differentiation of realist and speculative modes, to challenge the insularity of ethnic fiction and genre fiction and to imagine how the putatively stable conventions of these genres enable readers to embrace dissonance as a meaningful interpretive approach. By framing the conventions of the family drama within the conventions of the alien abduction narrative, Chen invites readers to read these genres with and against each other, in the process enabling the dissonance produced to make visible how genre manages literary and other forms of knowledge production.

Although alien abduction is a very specific genre, I am intrigued by its ability to help us think conceptually about dissonant knowledge forms more broadly. To that end, I read alien abduction heuristically, examining ways in which it encourages the exploration of varied forms of structural dissonance. Characteristic of the refractive and constellated approach embraced by *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*, this essay thus utilizes alien abduction to examine seemingly unrelated genres and their problematics—the

representational responsibilities of ethnic fiction, the formal imperatives of genre fiction, and the speculative fictions of Global Asias knowledge production—to imagine the dimensionality of a scholarly praxis that draws into nonaligned relation diverse forms of intellectual, pedagogical, and administrative labor. Consonant with this section of the book, which collates an array of materials illustrating some of the heterogeneous genres that academics employ (symposium, conference paper, syllabi, research essay), this essay understands dissonance as both a conceptual paradigm and a formal approach to argumentation. Paradigmatically, dissonance draws critical attention to the frictions and disjunctions that inevitably exist when different knowledge forms and literary genres cohabit. Beyond registering generic frictions, though, I also explore the possibilities of leveraging dissonance as a compositional aesthetic. More specifically, I revisit my earlier efforts to theorize Global Asias as a structurally dissonant knowledge formation in light of my pedagogical and scholarly interests in how alien abduction indexes the formal frictions between ethnic fiction and genre fiction. Approaching these varied types of dissonant dynamics in nonaligned relation can, I argue, help us to conceptualize structural dissonance as a meaningful way to make arguments about both knowledge production and scholarly praxis.

Aliens Among Us

In “The Hull Case” (1999), Peter Ho Davies appears to craft a pretty straightforward retelling of Betty and Barney Hill’s alleged abduction by aliens in New Hampshire in 1961. Beginning with an epigraph from K. Clifford Stanton’s *Taken: 12 Contemporary UFO Abduction Narratives* identifying the Hills as “a mixed race couple,” the story, and its narrative arc, remains quite faithful to that recounted by the couple in John G. Fuller’s *The Interrupted Journey* (1966), the best-selling volume that introduced the public to what would soon become codified as the standard tropes of the alien abduction narrative. As scholars have demonstrated, a number of the conventions of the genre—which include abductees being taken suddenly by extraterrestrial beings, the archetypal physiognomy of gray aliens, transportation by spaceship/UFO, scientific experimentation while in captivity, lost time, repressed memories that are recovered only through hypnosis, and ultimately a return wherein the normalcy of life before abduction is seriously challenged even as the abductee’s credibility is similarly questioned—can

be traced directly to the cultural popularity of the Hills' narrative. As the Hills' story makes evident, even though alien abduction is a genre that is defined by its central diegetic event—abduction by aliens—the specific iconography associated with it is equally critical to its mythmaking power.

Despite the narrative's seeming fidelity to its source material, there are, of course, deviations. In Davies's short story, Bernie Hull, like Barney Hill, is a postal service employee but Bessie is a nurse, not a social worker. While both Barney and Betty were previously married to other people, Bessie and Bernie met as single individuals and, at the opening of the story, have been married for over seven years (in reality, the Hills had been married for only sixteen months at the time of their alleged abduction). While such changes are to be expected when a writer reworks historical material into fiction, Davies makes two specific alterations to the story to draw attention to the significance of alien abduction's racial imaginary. The first is an act of literary invention: The author and book cited in the story's epigraph identifying the Hills/Hulls as a "mixed race couple" are made up, a feat of writerly sleight of hand that simultaneously claims and problematizes authority. And the second is the introduction of a new geographical context for the couple's interactions, with Davies significantly rewriting the duo's backstory by setting their courtship in Asia and in the context of the Cold War. These two moments of fabulation work to emphasize the importance of racial awareness to the alien abduction narrative, focusing imaginative and critical attention on why and how aliens among us (the racial other, the immigrant, those undocumented or ineligible for citizenship) are just as critical as the extraterrestrial aliens ostensibly shaping the genre.

Alien abduction has been described as an inherently American and predominantly white phenomenon, but despite (or perhaps because of) this, Annalee Newitz characterizes alien abduction as "a cautionary racial fable for our multicultural times" (1993). Lucas Tromly supports this reading by arguing that "the racial blind spots of abduction discourse emerge through the difficulty with which Asian Americans, whose conflation of racial and national identities cannot easily be gathered into a fantasy of national sameness, occupy the role of abductee" (2017, 277). Using Lisa Lowe's arguments on how abstract citizenship bestows those who qualify a sort of formal equivalence, Tromly proposes that the significance of alien abduction derives not especially from the event of abduction but from who gets to be abducted. In other words, despite the human uniformity seemingly produced by the radical otherness of extraterrestrial life, alien abduction is actually a racially exclusive narrative form, one which paradoxically reaffirms an abductee's claims

to citizenship and belonging since only those eligible for such legibility and inclusion can have these rights challenged in the first place. As Tromly puts it, “if approached in terms of the logic of the genre, to be abducted by aliens is to have one’s citizenship as an American confirmed” (282).

With this as context, Davies’s decision to make racialization and the occlusion of race a central aspect of his alien abduction story deserves additional critical attention. Building on the significance of the Hulls’ interracial relationship, he stages the couple’s romantic prehistory in Asia, a strategic relocation that highlights the critical role that the imaginable ageography of Global Asias plays in both reinforcing and problematizing US domestic race relations. Although we are not provided with many details—the couple’s entire courtship period is covered within the span of a single page—the ones we can ascertain are significant. Bessie nurses Bernie in a hospital in Tokyo after he is injured in Korea. Bernie’s military service in Asia takes on particular meaning in the context of the Korean War and the Cold War. As military historians have noted, African American soldiers have always fought on multiple fronts, actively navigating the domestic challenges of political and social inclusion in tandem with their roles in advancing US military interests abroad. While in broad strokes such interlinked efforts have been narrated as a trajectory that “generally moved from World War I (cooperation over struggle) to World War II (cooperation alongside struggle) to Vietnam (struggle over cooperation),” Mitchell Lerner (2018, 520) argues that understanding the fluctuating dynamics between integrationist and rejectionist attitudes in the African American community requires special attention to the “racial aspects of the Cold War” and the Korean War’s significance in relation to the integration of the armed forces ordered by President Truman in 1948, two years prior to the war’s commencement.

Executive Order 9981, “Establishing the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services,” called for “the equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin.” Although it was signed on July 26, 1948, military leaders delayed the order’s implementation, with the Army being especially resistant to integration. General Douglas MacArthur was notably unsupportive. As reported in the *New Journal and Guide*, an African American newspaper based in Norfolk, Virginia, Army Chief of Staff Omar Bradley stated, “The Army is not out to make any social reforms. The Army will put men of different races in different companies. It will change that policy when the nation as a whole changes it” (8).

This resistance to implementation generated some striking opportunities for African American soldiers to figure prominently in the Cold War imagination. The still segregated all-Black units stationed in Japan were among the first deployed to Korea; one of those units, the Twenty-Fourth Infantry Regiment, was the oldest segregated regiment in the US military and was credited with winning the battle at Yechon, one of the first American victories of the Korean War; the first soldier to earn the Medal of Honor in Korea was Private First Class William Thompson, a member of the Twenty-Fourth; and “the greater percentage of Black soldiers, many of whom were stationed in Japan and other areas of occupation in the Far East, meant that many of the first troops to arrive in Korea were all-Black units, a factor that contributed to the large number of Black troops taken prisoner in Korea” (Ward 2022, 30).

According to historian Mary Dudziak, “The story of race in America, used to compare democracy and communism, became an important Cold War narrative” (2000, 13). The fraught issue of US military integration during the Korean War, inextricably connected to the Cold War’s racial dimensions as well as to the internal logics of American racism, thus had both global and domestic implications. The global geopolitical conflict between the Western and Eastern blocs was often framed in racist terms inherited from a long Orientalist history; as Brenda Gayle Plummer (2013, 503) notes, “racism became part of a cold war framework in which states marshaled ideological and political resources against the threat of dissolution and subversion from within as well as from without.” The issue of racial discrimination was thus not only a domestic issue but one critical to the ideological battle being waged between democracy and communism. Communist propaganda regularly highlighted US racism to draw attention to the hypocrisy underpinning American democratic ideals. Conversely, civil rights leaders argued for better treatment for African Americans by suggesting the potentially disastrous implications of not addressing racial inequality when trying to win over the hearts and minds of nonwhite peoples in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Given this contextual background, Davies’s decisions regarding Bernie’s military service and the couple’s courtship in Asia take on critical resonance. Even though in Japan “they ate sushi together, and she wore beautiful multicolored kimonos, and it all seemed perfectly natural” (1999, 47), the issue of what is “perfectly natural” in relation to race draws special scrutiny. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that there is nothing “perfectly natural” about racial perception and that the couple

fundamentally disagrees on the issue's significance. Bernie's initial anxiety about a white nurse treating him is brushed off, with Bessie telling him "the race matter doesn't matter to me. And it shouldn't matter to you" (47).

What they both describe as "the race matter" becomes that which differentiates them, both before alien abduction and after. Before the abduction, Bernie is reminded that he is "the one black man in the room" (48) through actions both big (being refused service at the local sandwich shop, until his boss intervenes) and small (being called "a hero and a credit to his race" by his new brother-in-law at the wedding reception). During the Hulls' trip to Niagara Falls, Bessie consistently refuses to countenance Bernie's perceptions of racial discrimination. Although he can't remember details of the abduction itself, he vividly recalls the rest of the trip: the discomfort of walking into a diner to silence and stares, of being turned away from two motels that had forgotten to turn on their "no vacancy" signs, of being stopped by the police. In each of these instances, Bessie is able to not let the race matter matter; she either considers the incidents harmless or, more pointedly, tells Bernie "you were imagining it" (54).

Davies's story of alien abduction actually begins with another kind of possible abduction. As the couple is questioned by military investigators about the blue lights of the UFO, Bernie remembers that he initially "thought the lights were a cop at first" (46). Stopped more than once during their trip, the Hulls experience the policeman's question—"Any trouble here, ma'am?"—in divergent ways. Bessie confidently replies that there are no issues, while Bernie grips the wheel, fully aware that the stark difference between "Bernie's face—black—and then Bessie's—white" (46) raises suspicion that there is a kidnapping afoot. By beginning with racial profiling and the policeman's suspicions about a white woman being abducted by a black man, Davies's story scrutinizes the critical role that race plays in cultural mythmaking and links that explicitly to the ostensible whiteness of alien abduction.

Leveraging alien abduction as a genre that is especially suited for registering different types of dissonance, Davies shows how the specific cognitive and affective dissonances created by whether the "race matter" matters both prefigure and reinforce the dissonances associated with alien abduction. The strangeness of the extraterrestrial alien is thus shown as a culturally specific way of registering both the familiarity of the racial Other as alien and the alienation that derives from having one's perceptions of the race matter consistently discounted and disbelieved. While Davies centers blackness and Asiatic racial form in his exploration of alien abduction, Susan Lepselter notes that "the fallout of the still-open wound

of Native American colonization and genocide [also] drifts into space alien stories. Guilt and confusion and injury sometimes survive the fading of their overt material referents, become uncanny emotional tropes, float into varied patterns of discourse and experience, and give impact and weight to other stories about inscrutable power, and loss" (2016, 52). And as Jorge Ignacio Cortiñas makes evident in his play *Recent Alien Abductions* (2018), the space alien and the Latino/a as alien are intimately related cultural figures; his protagonist, Álvaro, dissects the inconsistencies of the season 2 opener of *The X-Files* (where Mulder goes to Puerto Rico to investigate an alien conspiracy) in order for the play itself to reveal the intricacies that tie the grandiose delusions driving Álvaro's fixation with alien abduction to the intimate traumas of his family history.

"The Hull Case" ultimately casts alien abduction as a cultural genre through which the traumas of race are mapped. Bessie's vivid memory of abduction is matched by Bernie's inability to remember, his amnesia not lifting until a year after they are interviewed. Tellingly, what Bernie remembers under hypnosis matches Bessie's recollection in its broadest outlines but with distinct differences. Like her, he remembers "a ship," unwilling nakedness, and being surrounded by "aliens touching him" (60). But in Bernie's memory, the ship is not (just) a spaceship but a ship whose "great white sails" (60) evoke the traumas of the Middle Passage, his abduction not by extraterrestrial aliens but by white slavers who poke and prod his genitals to assess his value as human chattel. In recasting the aliens—they are slavers in Bernie's memory but Bernie has himself been made (even more) alien by this experience, his post-abduction experience making clear that the genre is equally invested in how we figure aliens among us—Davies insists on the importance of working through alien abduction's racial imaginary.

How alien abduction palimpsestically engages the alienness of racial difference also motivates the richly atmospheric, tantalizingly elusive film *We Are Living Things* (2021). Written by Àlex Lora and Antonio Tibaldi, the film follows two US immigrants, Chuyao from China and Solomon from Mexico, as they search for truth about UFOs, alien abduction, and the dark undersides of American exceptionalism. Although the film's protagonists are separated by history, culture, race, and language, they recognize each other as kindred spirits. Their affinity stems in part from the ways in which they both exist in a system that makes them strange; as one character tells Chuyao, "You're odd." While oddness could reference both characters' fascination with UFOs and extraterrestrial life—Solomon believes his mother was abducted by aliens from the Arizona desert and spends much of his

time searching for magnetic rocks and listening for sound waves that will prove the existence of other life-forms; Chuyao's separation from her parents is partly caused by her belief in spaceships and her refusal to believe that they are "only in your head"—it is also a way of marking different forms of alienness. Since the woman who calls Chuyao odd is also a believer in UFOs, the strangeness she names points to other sources: Chuyao's foreign origin, which she mistakenly identifies as Korea, as well as her refusal to believe that she should not yearn for an otherworldly escape. As undocumented immigrants from China and Mexico, Chuyao and Solomon do not have the rights of citizenship and one way to interpret their fascination with alien abduction is, as Lucas Tromly (2017) reminds us, to read that fixation in terms of the privileges they are structurally denied.

While the film itself is deliberately elliptical and shies away from providing narrative, aesthetic, or political resolution, it provokes thought by asking us to consider illegal aliens and extraterrestrial aliens in nonaligned relation. In a pivotal scene, Solomon is told, as part of a xenophobic diatribe about immigrants, that his mother's disappearance would be more easily explained by understanding the dangers of border crossing: "Someone just raped her, cut her up in pieces, and made up the story of a spaceship." Critically, the tensions between the different versions of what happened to Solomon's mom remain unsettled, suggesting that there exists a layered connection between these different ways of engaging structural oppression. In a society that exploits the undocumented immigrant, alien abduction is actually a mundane occurrence and fundamental to the smooth running of the socioeconomic system. Chuyao and Solomon are, indeed, aliens among us, and centering a story about alien abduction on them does more than illuminate the genre's often disavowed racial dimensions. Tibaldi's decision to juxtapose illegal aliens with space aliens, and the conventions of social realism with those of speculative fiction, results in a film that prods us to think about the human dimensions of our fascination with alien life and to acknowledge how narrowly we approach this question.

Abduction's Ambivalent Afterlives

Since, as Jodi Dean suggests, abduction is always "more than an alien story" (1998, 4), what happens if we focus not just on aliens but on the act and experience of abduction itself? In the case of *We Are Living Things*, abduction is presented not as a singular event but as something that happens

repeatedly. While the film does not discount the possibility of alien abduction, it painstakingly shows us the myriad forms of abduction that structure Chuyao's and Solomon's lives. Chuyao is trafficked into the United States, forced to labor in a nail salon by day and as a sex worker at night by Tiger, the man who brought her into the country illegally. Solomon, an undocumented worker, is absorbed into an illicit urban labor camp, participating in a shadow economy whose secrecy contributes to the smooth functioning of the ethnic ghetto. Fourteen Chinese nationals are found dead in a meat freezer—a grisly discovery that the media suggests may be part of a trade in stolen identities and illegally circulated identification papers, even as some Chinatown residents think the bodies will be returned to China to be buried properly. Solomon kidnaps Chuyao in order to convince her of the dangers she faces. Chuyao tells Solomon that she was “taken” and that she thinks “they put something in my body” before telling him about the “bright light in the sky,” implying that she, too, was abducted by aliens. The film's proliferation of abduction, indeed its belief that acts and experiences of abduction structure much of the life of figures like Chuyao and Solomon, enables a more expansive understanding of abduction's epistemic import.

Focusing on abduction means recognizing the ways in which alien abduction connects to other story genres: the captivity narrative and the conversion narrative. These parallel genres center on figures who are in the process of navigating their fraught social placements. As Christopher Castiglia has noted, captivity narratives are especially compelling to those who have experienced forms of exclusion and who are particularly adept at registering the possibilities of “generic and cultural changes, divisions, and differences” (1996, 4). Some might argue that generically connecting abduction to captivity risks diluting the specific cultural impact of the alien abduction narrative, but such arguments underplay the ways in which it can be the act of abduction that figures the alien. In all these stories, abduction enables enactment by staging it through the master tropes of American national identity—freedom, containment, difference, and assimilation—which means that these foundational stories can also be stories through which we question the foundations of our own epistemic practices. Accordingly, focusing on abduction means acknowledging the sort of disruption that alters standard operating procedures; abduction demands a different way of doing things and of being in the world. Focusing on abduction means foregrounding loss—of time, of agency, of certainty—and learning to live with disturbance. Focusing on abduction means disturbance becomes the condition for enactment—of self, of future action, of epistemic possibility.

If you are an academic writing about alien abduction, it is perfectly fine—or possibly better—not to be interested in visitors from space. Indeed, most academics writing about alien abduction bypass debating the possibility of alien life and emphasize instead the genre's ability to index ordinary human need and desire by granting it a certain cultural shape. More specifically, they theorize alien abduction's expansive capacity to register seismic social changes and the anxieties such changes invariably produce. According to Susan Lepselter, such narratives are always collective in nature and expression, with the "UFO abduction story [being] itself a trace in the life of the social, an uneasy sign pointing to a half-forgotten disturbance beyond the individual's story" (2016, 65). Different contexts animating alien abduction have been proposed and vary widely. Jodi Dean (1998) suggests that such narratives index the ways in which democracy operates in a technoglobal information society. Dell Rose proposes that alien abduction narratives can be therapeutic in nature, "allow[ing] for an alleviation of cultural guilt by means of establishing a new power relation in which the abductee is forced to relive an analogous situation of powerlessness and is thus released from the accumulated guilt implicit in larger society" (2022, 263). Bridget Brown argues that alien abduction is a singular narrative that encompasses many stories: "the story of biotechnological progress told from the perspective of the anesthetized patient; of military-industrial advancement told from the perspective of the species struggling to avoid extinction on a polluted planet; of national progress and imperialism told by the citizen betrayed and colonized by his or her own government" (2007, 5).

These scholars posit different ways of narrating the social disturbance that alien abduction registers by recognizing the tactical utility of such narratives in making visible loss of agency and feelings of disempowerment. Whether disenfranchised, disordered, displaced, disavowed, or disputed, the narrating subjects of alien abduction give voice to what members of the UFO community have termed the "high strangeness" of lived reality in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. "High strangeness" is both a cause and an effect. It simultaneously registers and leads to what Timothy Melley has described as "agency panic" (1999, 12), a form of paranoia that manages anxieties about diminished individual agency and "the impossible totality of the contemporary world system" (Jameson 1991, 38) by harnessing the explanatory power of conspiracy thinking. If the hallmark of such thinking is radical doubt about the nature and function of both knowledge production and authority, the fundamental importance of interpretation is reinforced through alien abduction as a culturally

available explanation for feelings and experiences that otherwise remain inexplicable.

Alongside those whose theorizing of the historical contexts and social uses of alien abduction narratives presupposes that extraterrestrials do not really exist are cultural critics whose acceptance of—or at least openness to—the possibility of alien life enables a different way of focusing on the paradigmatic import of alien abduction. While alien abduction generates different reactions and outcomes, the generic imperatives of its cultural form have led to two dominant interpretive paradigms. The first, which is strongly associated with ufologist Budd Hopkins, focuses on the trauma generated by abduction, with particular attentiveness to the damaging and injurious aspects of such experience (such as the violence of seizure, the violation of medical experimentation on unwilling subjects, and the nefarious intentions of alien captors). The second, which is popularly connected to the work of Harvard psychiatrist John E. Mack, emphasizes the visionary and mind-altering consequences of alien contact, the possibility of transcendence leading to an expanded notion of reality.

Whether one understands alien abduction in terms of trauma or transcendence, both paradigms highlight the transformational import of such experiences and the narratives they generate. As schematics go, trauma versus transcendence offers a pithy way of acknowledging the epistemic transformations that grant alien abduction its cultural force. However, their explanatory clarity often theorizes transformation in totalizing terms. One is either traumatized or not traumatized. Abduction leads to transcendent knowledge, although such enlightenment can manifest as spiritual awakening or conspiratorial paranoia. Paradoxically, the confusion generated by alien abduction depends upon understanding its transformative impact in definitive ways. According to this schema, the changes wrought by alien abduction thus operate on a scale that registers outcomes only in toto.

While recognizing the usefulness of this way of reading alien abduction, this essay proposes theorizing abduction somewhat differently, suggesting that we linger in/with the ambivalences it generates. I am particularly interested in attending to the ways in which alien abduction stories accrue meaning not simply from capture but also from return. Indeed, I would argue that the return is just as crucial as the kidnapping; it is, arguably, what gives this genre its shape and trajectory. Return makes possible the registering of change, but such changes are always understood in relation to the assumed normalcy of life before captivity. Abduction, then, is never

a matter of being completely overtaken or entirely subsumed. It always involves resistance and irresolution. It produces, and is a product of, the sort of dissonance that results from experiencing technological advancement and social progress in tandem with rising levels of inequity, displacement, and injustice. It produces opportunities to examine how questions of form are always informed by how we try to make sense of the world we inhabit.

Asian American writers have demonstrated how the alien abduction narrative's cultural uses in examining both historical trauma and the possibilities of transcendence can be productively imagined in relation to transformation's ongoing ambivalences—formal, conceptual, and epistemological. In her short story "Abducted by Aliens!" (2009), Claire Light utilizes the generic conventions of alien abduction to discuss obliquely another abduction: the incarceration of Japanese-Americans during World War II. Narrated alternately by Kenji, who returns after a twenty-year absence, claiming that he was abducted by aliens, and his youngest sister, Emiko, who is "the only surviving family member who remembers all the stories, since our nieces and nephews were directed by their parents not to listen to their uncle, and obeyed" (63), the story is elliptical, fragmented, obfuscatory, and confusing. It juxtaposes and interweaves the tropes of alien abduction stories and internment narratives to emphasize that the trauma of Japanese/American incarceration is multifaceted, simultaneously historical, familial, psychic, affective, epistemological, and diegetic. However, the emphatic clarity of the story's title is counterbalanced by the story's insistent nontransparency, an uncompromising equilibrium that Light ultimately characterizes in her chapbook's afterword as a failure.

Acknowledging that she has written this story in a way that makes it impossible for any reader who is not the author to understand, Light identifies three options—"to rewrite the story so that it doesn't need explication; to let it stay as is, a monolith of perfect pointlessness, signifying nothing; or to admit that not all texts are self-contained, and just explain the damn thing already" (85)—and ultimately chooses the third. This choice may be partly motivated by the inadequacies of the first two options. To make more transparent the experience of Japanese/American incarceration is to run against the forms of erasure such experience produced that motivate the story's formal experimentation. To leave the story incomprehensible refuses "the responsibility of making that history known, of narrating and explaining it" (85), suggesting that literary experimentation should operate in formal relation to politics and ethics as well as aesthetics. The decision to keep the original text in its failed form in relation to an afterword that

“just explain[s] the damn thing already” suggests, then, that navigating the traumas of abduction requires us to oscillate between that which is too obscured and that which is too obvious, a dynamic fluctuation that stays in motion and cannot be reconciled. In other words, Light chooses two different generic forms—short story and afterword—and makes them alien to each other by pairing them together such that they cannot exist in isolation but must instead enact a tension that draws critical attention to the dissonances they generate between them.

Although I have characterized “Abducted by Aliens!” elsewhere as a “straightforward version” of alien abduction, the nature of Light’s project—to explore “the experience of only half-understanding hidden history” (87)—makes this statement suspect, a half-truth at best. In the conference paper where I first said this, I underplayed the opacity of the story to reinforce my talk’s main point: that questions of identity, authenticity, and memory are at the heart of both alien abduction and ethnic narratives. The affordances of the genre in which I am now writing enable a more nuanced assessment of Light’s aesthetic engagements with the generic frictions between two distinct but overlapping narrative forms—alien abduction and Japanese/American internment narratives—and allow me to linger with the ambivalences produced by their juxtaposition. Even as the most explicit dissonance in the text is engineered by positioning the story and the afterword in nonaligned relation, closer reading reveals that Light employs dissonance as a multilevel strategy. Dissonances, which register both contradiction and overlaps, are generated within the story in myriad ways. The story is recounted by narrative voices that are mostly distinct but also sometimes unevenly hybridized into a “shared voice” (63) that registers ongoing and unresolved efforts to determine control, with authority continually negotiated and compromised. Additionally, Light strategically juxtaposes tropes of alien abduction and material referents to internment without attempting to resolve them, as when she chooses to phonetically render the names of internment camps as the alien-sounding planets and peoples that Kenji encounters during his abduction: that is, **DdzzjJherhoam**, **GGGGGgggggReNaDuhInes**, **HahrTmonTinnians**, and **Min33d9ka**. This collocative act does more than draw attention to how generic conventions shape meaning. It also enables readers to envision how positioning these referents within and alongside unfamiliar frames generates narrative frictions that have broader, conceptual implications for how we understand histories and interpretive practices that remain obscured.

In exploring Japanese/American internment through alien abduction, Light emphasizes both the impossibility of explanations and the ways in which hidden histories continue to shape the epistemological possibilities of the present. As Emiko tells us, “All that is left now are the children, and grandchildren, who are so ignorant as to not even know that there is something they don’t know. There was once a farm; now there is not. There was once a language; now it isn’t spoken. Your reality is not the reality we once knew” (73). The differences before and after Japanese/American incarceration are rendered in absolute terms but that stark differentiation is itself troubled by the narratological difficulties and generic frictions that unspool over the course of the story’s telling, with Emiko admitting her own confusion and suspect authority, catching herself repeatedly “not remembering a detail and so inventing one to bridge the gaps between ideas” (73). In recognizing that “there is a whole vocabulary of abduction that is missing here” (73), Emiko acknowledges invention, suspicion, uncertainty, and incomprehension as the legacies of abduction. There is no resolution regarding or definitive conclusion about the story’s abductions; both Kenji and Emiko have been labeled insane but their “insanity” is juxtaposed against those who believe in “one all-time true story” (75), a proposition that seems almost as unbelievable as the fantastic tales of Kenji’s space travels.

In my early contemplation of alien abduction, I thought such stories offered a useful way of thinking about the frictive engagements—the dissonances—between genre fiction and ethnic fiction. I organized a symposium to explore this question, inviting scholars and writers to engage each other across the critical-creative divide that we only sometimes acknowledge in English departments. While I have never taught a course specifically on alien abduction, my seminars—on Asian American literary and cultural production, contemporary Ethnic American literatures, and speculative fictions—have circled around issues (of capture, return, dissonance, friction) that seemed fundamental to the phenomena of alien abduction. I delivered a conference paper considering these connections, postulating that the post-identitarian turn in Asian American literary studies enables ways of thinking anew the relationship between genre fiction and ethnic literature. Specifically, I argued that attentiveness to the consonances and dissonances between these forms could help us better understand how ethnic American writers draw on “a changing relationship between race and social justice, race and identity, race and history [. . . in order to] invent a new imaginary for thinking about the nature of a just society and the role of race in its construction” (Saldívar 2013, 3, 5).

Over the last decade, the work I have been doing to develop Global Asias has operated in oblique relation to my thoughts on alien abduction. Even though I have not considered my Global Asias field-building explicitly in relation to abduction, questions of allegiance—what Donald Emerson (2008) names as the “terms of enlistment” dictating our professional protocols—have been an integral aspect of this exploration. And I have found that wrestling with these complicated questions of allegiance puts me in the chiaroscuro space that I associate with what happens after one returns from abduction: the disruption of standard operating procedure; the urgency of figuring out new ways of approaching life and labor; and the importance of using generic forms, familiar and unfamiliar, to figure out how to tackle what has been made alien through this experience. Is it possible that what I originally understood to be taxonomically different forms of academic labor might instead be conceptualized as alien forms? And might such alien forms be theorized in nonaligned relation to abduction’s ambivalent afterlives, the fraught but transformative possibilities of rethinking scholarly praxis by being willing to let oneself be captured by different disciplinary methods and forms of knowledge production, and returning to the anchors of one’s scholarly investments willing to reapproach the assumed practices undergirding our scholarly labors?

As should be clear by now, this essay and its arguments are being themselves abducted by *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*’ central concerns with the speculative genres of academic labor. What I initially imagined as a traditional academic essay using alien abduction to think through the relationship between two genres of literature—ethnic fiction and speculative fiction—has while writing expanded to include a different kind of argument. This second argument about the challenges of building the field of Global Asias is still interested in the issues of dissonance and friction animating the original argument. Drawing on the parallel universe of developing Global Asias as a multidisciplinary field of academic knowledge production that examines how alien abduction narratives can help us make sense of the dissonances between different generic forms creates an opportunity to think about literary forms alongside genres of academic labor, and to question the codification of our work into the distinct genres of teaching, research, and service (TRS). By discussing these literary genres and social genres in nonaligned relation, I hope that what I had long assumed to be different forms of academic labor—writing versus teaching, program-building versus scholarly research—might instead be productively conceptualized as alien forms, forms of scholarly engagement that

approach academic genres speculatively to reimagine the conditions in which we work.

In other words, I think what I am doing here/now is using alien abduction as an opportunity to think through different knowledge forms and my own scholarly praxis. Some of these knowledge forms are literary and/or textual; others are social and/or institutional; a few are affective and/or relational; some are simultaneously more than one or even all of these. I am writing this as a literary critic, an Asian Americanist, a teacher, an editor, a Global Asias administrator and scholar, a cancer survivor, a mentor, an outsider, a proponent, and a skeptic. While I have been all these things, I actively resisted writing—indeed, was trained not to—from most of these stances. Immersing myself in the work of building a scholarly praxis that does not let itself be overdetermined by, or limited to, the narrowly defined genres that make academic work institutionally legible has been an opportunity to reimagine genres of writing and labor as alien forms—forms that explore the creative-critical possibilities that generic dissonance generates, unsynthetic forms that draw attention to how juxtaposition creates its own conceptual energies, forms that approach their generic identities speculatively rather than deterministically, forms of writing and scholarly engagement that actively reimagine the conditions of academic labor. In acknowledging the many different positions from which I approach the writing of this essay here/now, the possibilities of an alienizing praxis, one that makes visible and encourages us to do the work of transforming (our work, the genres in which we write, ourselves) into alien form, are rendered more achievable.

Focusing on abduction has led me to something other than what I originally intended: Perhaps alien abduction narratives can be a heuristic for examining the relational nonalignments between different forms of knowledge and practice. If, as this book both argues and enacts, a more capacious scholarly praxis is possible only when we expand our understanding of genre to include both literary and social forms, then this unit—“Alien Abduction, Alien Form”—and this essay share the goal of tracing how the genres in which we write are intimately linked to the genres of academic labor, not deterministically but speculatively. The dossier of materials included in this unit of the book—a symposium poster, syllabi, academic conference paper, scholarly essay—are collated to draw attention to the long arc of scholarly practice. Assembling this unit through collation centers the juxtapositional ethic that motivates Global Asias as a border-crossing endeavor and is an effort to offer a picture of how arguments

get worked through different academic genres, in the process highlighting that the genres through which they manifest are often simultaneously pedagogical, research oriented, and administratively engaged. The writing in this essay reflects a willingness to reason through different modes of composition and registers of analysis, leaving unsynthesized (and thus visible) the different scholarly engagements informing the arguments being made. In these ways, we can perhaps view abduction's transformative possibilities anew: as/through a kind of relational nonalignment whose attentiveness to structural dissonances enables us to engage multiple alien forms simultaneously.

A Structurally Dissonant Praxis

Even as alien abduction narratives are often ways of figuring the racial Other, the broader questions of identity such narratives focalize can also be usefully approached as a way of rethinking the distinctions that separate the alien from the abductee, the abductee from the agent, the agent from the alien. Although binary distinctions easily lend themselves to the dichotomies of self/other, oppressed/oppressor, familiar/strange, what happens when these triangulated positions collapse? What happens when it becomes apparent that, in the words of Shana Bulhan Haydock, “we are, indeed, others” (2019, 44)?

One possible answer to this question can be found in Wesley Chu's *Tao* series, which explores inhabitation as a particular type of alien abduction. Even though these stories are not conventional alien abduction narratives—rather, they are examples of the very specific subset that is the alien-as-bodysnatcher genre—they are interested in reimagining the experience of abduction and considering its implications for how we understand the alien/abductee/agent. In avoiding or rewriting the scenarios we have come to expect of alien abduction (UFOs, physical capture and forced medical experimentation, repressed memories that are recovered through hypnosis), Chu explores abduction's transformative ambivalences to create alternative ways of understanding the possibility of our own alienness, in the process producing a model beyond trauma and transcendence for enacting structurally dissonant praxis.

In *The Lives of Tao* (2013), Roen Tan—an out-of-shape, unambitious, pizza-loving IT office worker—discovers that he has become host to Tao, an alien life-form whose inability to survive in Earth's atmosphere requires it

to live symbiotically in humans. Tao's race, the Quasing, is waging a proxy war for control of the planet and Roen discovers that many notable historical figures were actually inhabited by Quasings. Indeed, most of what he knows as "human" history has been influenced, if not outright orchestrated, by this alien race. Tao has achieved some recognition from Quasings due to what he accomplished through some of his more notable hosts: Zhang Sanfeng (the inventor of tai chi chuan), Zhu Yuanzhang (founding emperor of the Ming dynasty), and Temujin (better known as Genghis Khan, founder of the Mongol Empire). Chu's novels are unabashedly entertaining, fully embracing many popular genres—spy story, political thriller, comics, superhero origin story, action-adventure buddy story, and alien invasion, among others—to produce a series that generally defaults to humor as its primary mode of readerly engagement. While humor (in the form of sarcasm, irony, slapstick adventure, or lighthearted banter) creates alternatives to trauma or transcendence as the expected outcomes of alien abduction, Chu's foregrounding of the relationship between Roen and Tao, and by extension between human hosts and their alien occupiers, produces an opportunity not only to examine the ambivalences inherent in this type of abduction but also to consider the conditions for epistemic transformation that such experiences generate.

The internal conflict between Quasing factions, initially presented as a disagreement about how to produce evolutionary human advancement through conflict, fundamentally concerns the ethics of the human-alien relationship. For the Genjix faction, human hosts are essentially tools that are required for Quasings to engineer advancement so that they can either re-create the technology needed for leaving the planet or remake the planet so that it is more hospitable to Quasing life. The Prophus faction understand the Quasing-human connection in more mutual terms, acknowledging the multidirectional exchanges required to keep both species alive. While the Genjix assume a godlike relation to their hosts, who embrace their existence as "vessels" and name their Quasings "Holy Ones," Tao explains to Roen that the Prophus recognize that they have been transformed by their hosts: "Our relationship with humans is symbiotic. You influence us just as much as we influence you. Over the course of time, we became more human in our reactions and our thoughts" (82).

The vast differences between Quasings and their human hosts generate a fundamentally unequal relationship. Indeed, it is impossible, despite the positive spin presented in Tao's explanation of alien-human symbiotic relation, to believe that the "influence" between host and Quasing could be

balanced. While this is certainly true on a global level, Chu's focus on the granularity of the specific relationship between Roen and Tao, which is also influenced by what Tao has experienced with his previous human hosts, suggests that one way to disrupt the alien/abductee binary is through reimagining their shared possibilities as collaborative agents. Tao's regrets about how he allowed Quasing priorities to corrupt his relationship with previous hosts Temujin and Zhu Yuanzhang lay the groundwork for his current approach of putting his hosts' priorities "at the same level as mine" and undertaking action as "true partners" (448). Significantly, even as Roen and Tao learn to coexist productively, their collaborative efforts are marked by their ongoing differences and disagreements; there is no easy hybridization in this relationship and the dissonance between human and alien perspectives is not resolved or resolvable. In this case, alien abduction is a somatic experience that refigures without eliminating the distinctions between alien and human.

As this essay has been imagining, alien abduction is a genre that indexes varied forms of dissonance, and understanding ourselves as simultaneously alien/abductee/agent can enable us to embrace a structurally dissonant scholarly praxis. Within the cosmology of the genre itself, dissonance stems from a foreboding sense of diminished agency, a distrust of authority, and a conspiratorial response to social threats. As a narrative genre, alien abduction registers forms of social and formal dissonance generated by racialization and racial occlusion, signaling the ways in which the inherent disjunction between perception and reality can elevate into persistent forms of social, political, and psychological dissonance. And as a heuristic, alien abduction can encourage us to explore the possibilities of an alienizing scholarly practice, one that encourages scholars to consider the possibilities of being alien (rather than being expert). In the case of my work with Global Asias specifically, this means, among other things, questioning whether expertise is the only position from which to produce scholarly inquiry and embracing the ongoing epistemic disturbances that working at the intersections and disjunctures between different institutional knowledge forms generates.

Utilizing alien abduction as heuristic entails leveraging its paradigmatic possibilities. As Thomas Kuhn (1962) suggests, paradigms usefully illuminate assumptions, frameworks, principles, and rules; they illuminate or otherwise make intelligible a broader set of dynamics. As Prasenjit Duara (2021b) argues, a paradigm "is both a being or object in the world, but also illumines how other beings process time" (13). In other words, paradigmatic

illumination depends upon approaching intelligibility through difference and divergence to enhance understanding in ways both ontological and epistemological. Accordingly, if we imagine the alien abduction genre not only as a thing in itself (i.e., a story about being abducted by aliens) but as a formal instrument for identifying, understanding, and exploring varied forms of dissonance, then the incongruity of thinking about alien abduction in relation to other unrelated forms and genres—in this case, ethnic fictions and the scholarly praxis of Global Asias—becomes an opportunity to delve into its generativity in times and spaces not immediately obvious.

In working to theorize how alien abduction indexes the dissonant dynamics of the various scholarly engagements I have experienced as a literary critic, a teacher, an editor, and an administrator, I am inspired by Nathaniel Mackey's concept of "discrepant engagement" as a form of critical-creative possibility. According to Mackey (1993), discrepant engagement can be a powerful mode of encounter for both critics and artists:

Rather than suppressing resonance, dissonance, noise, [discrepant engagement] seeks to remain open to them. Its admission of resonances contends with resolution. It worries resolute identity and demarcation, resolute boundary lines, resolute definitions, obeying a vibrational rather than a corpuscular sense of being, "a quality," as Major puts it, "of which sharp contact is / the qualification, a remarkable verb quiver." To see being as verb rather than noun is to be at odds with hypostasis, the reification of fixed identities that has been the bane of socially marginalized groups. It is to be at odds with taxonomies and categorizations that obscure the fact of heterogeneity and mix. (20)

Mackey's conceptual formulation both explains why his study is discussing an unconventional group of writers not normally considered in relation (Black writers from the United States and the Caribbean and the so-called Black Mountain poets) and explores how these writers' literary experiments challenge both formal and social conventions through dissonance, divergence, and disruption. Fundamental to Mackey's emphasis on discrepancy is a belief that the analysis of Black writers must not be limited to questions of identity and representation but should instead, through attentiveness to their engagements with form, acknowledge their epistemic and artistic contributions.

While there are clear similarities and overlaps between Mackey's concept of discrepant engagement and my exploration of dissonant dynamics,

most notably the emphasis on form as a way of registering and challenging conventional knowledge practices, dissonant dynamics explicitly considers how alienness and abduction operate to keep scholarly praxis unstable. My efforts to describe the conditions of Global Asias knowledge production has evolved over time (and will, I am certain, continue to evolve). My earliest writing about this emerging field proposed “structural incoherence” as a way of naming the systemic incompatibilities (between area studies, ethnic studies, and diaspora studies) informing the conditions in which Global Asias operates. As Global Asias became increasingly legible through the success of *Verge* and other GAI projects, I later proposed “structural dissonance” as a concept that draws attention to the fact that the incongruities encompassed by Global Asias do often operate in productive relation. All this work is included in *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* as part of an effort to show the evolving nature of scholarly thinking and how Global Asias is a speculative genre that has enabled me to understand how the intellectual labor of academic knowledge production is inextricably connected to the pedagogical, editorial, and administrative labors that also contribute to its creation. While some might argue that the multiplicity of terms and descriptions dilutes the nature of my scholarly analysis, I think tracking these changes over time helps to work against the totalizing imperatives not only of Global Asias as a term, which can easily be misunderstood to be comprehensive or singular in nature, but also more generally of academic knowledge production as a form of critical consolidation.

Dissonance is thus a way of registering the speculative possibilities of incompatible forms—generic, academic, and social. Although how dissonant dynamics manifest varies accordingly to the specific types of incompatibilities being staged in nonaligned relation, treating alien abduction heuristically helps me illuminate some of the distinctive qualities of its particular form of structural dissonance. Alien abduction as heuristic makes emphatic the significance of being alien, the transformative possibilities of abduction, and the ways in which dissonance (which can be understood as incongruence, inconsistency, disagreement, and discordance but also as a means of drawing attention to the possibilities of the vibrational, the mutable, and the unresolved) constitutes a generative way of understanding my relationship to the worlds in which I operate. In attending to each of these aspects, I begin to get a clearer sense of how structural dissonance works to help clarify the varied genres I have been studying and using in my scholarly praxis. My conceptualization of structural dissonance pays equal attention to its descriptive, theoretical, and practical uses. In other

words, I use structural dissonance variously: (1) to describe the different types of generic frictions I encounter as a literary critic, an editor, and a Global Asias scholar and administrator; (2) to create conceptual space for thinking about the incongruencies that keep speculative forms like ethnic alien abduction narratives and Global Asias open-ended; (3) to build and engineer alternative infrastructures that support the paradoxical goals of enabling Global Asias to achieve legibility while remaining resistant to ossification and critical consolidation; and (4) to calibrate different types of scholarly praxis not only so they operate in nonaligned relation but also so they constellate into alternative forms of scholarly labor that challenge the taxonomy of TRS that academia currently uses so deterministically.

Structural dissonance encompasses a diverse set of uses and approaches that make it difficult to provide a concise and elegant definition (witness the multipart annotation just provided). But its unwieldiness is also integral in nature, emblematic of the circumstances and conditions cultivating dissonance as a meaningful form of scholarly engagement that wrestles with how theory inheres in practice, and vice versa. While dissonance as descriptor and concept can be traced in much of the scholarship I have produced in the last decade, dissonance as a structure for reapproaching knowledge production and scholarly praxis has been equally critical in the evolution of its development.

Emphasizing the importance of dissonance's structural dimension has had implications not only for the scholarly arguments I have been making (about literary and cultural production and the institutional forms of academic practice, two seemingly distinct genres of intellectual labor) but, quite crucially, for the ways I have gone about making these arguments. The attention to the architectural design of academic genres—what as a literary critic I tended to understand as *convention* but what as a journal editor and Global Asias administrator I found more useful to conceptualize as *architecture*—has meant that I have not simply been tracking dissonance as an effect or outcome of specific genres (of literary and cultural production, or of academic labor) but also actively working to build structures that encourage dissonant dynamics to flourish. For example, *Verge* is a platform that invites very different scholars using distinct approaches to enter and be part of a Global Asias conversation without pressuring them to unify or be especially in sympathy. The journal is intentionally designed to keep scholarly differences in nonaligned relation through its juxtapositional, collaborative ethos and the creation of *Convergence* features as nontraditional genres of academic writing and engagement. As I have

been demonstrating, *Verge* is an alien form that approaches Global Asias speculatively to draw attention to how generic frictions create structural dissonance to support the formation of new assemblages of scholarly labor whose value isn't entirely determined by existing institutional definitions of TRS.

Crucially, what I have learned from approaching the academic journal as an alien form that is committed to fostering structural dissonance has also impacted how I produce scholarship more generally. In particular, I have realized in more meaningful ways how scholarly insight is connected to scholarly practice; how the different types of work I do as an academic are all connected as a structurally dissonant praxis; and how important it is to encourage a capacious understanding of academic labor by creating structures that support a profusion of different ways of producing knowledge. Accordingly, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* exemplifies an attempt to put these realizations into practice. Its generically hybrid composition reflects the structurally dissonant praxis that Global Asias promotes and its gargoylian nature hopes to realize the promises of monstrosity that poets like Kenji C. Liu and scholars like Jenny Rice have articulated—that “we find new relationships between the parts” (Liu 2019, 88) and discover that, indeed, “something new is made from strange juxtaposition” (J. Rice 2020, 26). A structurally dissonant scholarly praxis cannot simply be rhetorical or theoretical or practical. It must be committed to engaging all these registers simultaneously, in the process keeping them unconsolidated and in frictive generativity.

Light Years from Home

At this point, it seems I have ventured light years away from where this essay began: the genre of alien abduction. And yet, as we learn repeatedly from such narratives, being light years away can spark transformation. In this case, I hope that revelatory insights inspired by alien abduction can traverse space/time to help me navigate the quantum universes that I inhabit as a scholar, teacher, editor, administrator, mentor, and cancer survivor. Heuristics can be used to describe and diagnose; they can also be used to enable and enact. Alien abduction as heuristic highlights the significance of using alienness to figure the positions we occupy and from which we produce knowledge, acknowledges the possibilities and limits of abduction as a means of resisting totalizing understandings of transformative

impact, and embraces the opportunities generated by structural dissonance to keep knowledge production and scholarly praxis unsynthesized and open to continued transformation.

The question of who/what is alien, a question that perhaps begins with identity but eventually leads to epistemology, engages the ongoing implications of estrangement and incongruency. Abduction raises a different set of possibilities—kidnapping, seizure, appropriation, transformation. Both key terms under discussion, “alien” and “abduction,” thus provocatively enable us to work through the possibilities and limits of dissonant dynamics. Although dissonant dynamics encompass a range of possible characteristics—including inconsistency, disagreement, and discordance—they exist as a form of contrapuntal sensemaking that is worth engaging more consistently if we are interested in dwelling in/with the strangenesses that inevitably mark literary experimentation, unresolved epistemic encounters, and emergent (and thus less visible) forms of scholarly praxis.

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Coda

EDITORIAL DOSSIER

Proposal and Reader Reports

Dear Reviewer—

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this manuscript. The book's experiments with varied genres of academic writing make how to write *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*' coda a real question. To that end, I'm writing this (provisional) coda using a genre that I regularly employ in my work as an editor: the communication with authors and reviewers encapsulated by the editorial response. While I don't want to get ahead of myself, I imagine that the coda that will eventually be included in the book (if you decide that this project is worth publishing) will manifest somewhat differently. This coda is here as a placeholder because I understand that the book needs some kind of conclusion even if the project itself is not meant to be conclusive, and because I am approaching this in the spirit of open experimentation that has shaped *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*.

As the editor of *Verge* and the coeditor of the Global Asias: Method, Architecture, Praxis book series, I am keenly aware of how important the work of manuscript reviewing is to the profession—and equally aware of how invisible and undervalued its contributions to scholarly knowledge production remain when it comes time for academic labor to be assessed. Beyond my deep gratitude to you for your generosity in taking on this unseen labor is recognition of how the editorial review process can be deeply collaborative when it works as intended, a process of shared intellectual discovery, critical synthesis, and conceptual engagement that generates imaginatively capacious scholarship. While the final product tends to be read as individual achievement, an editor sees, encourages, relies upon, and participates in the myriad acts of collaboration that contribute to any form of research writing. Perhaps drawing on this editorial insight and

embracing this part of the process more explicitly can also help us to create more capaciously imagined forms of scholarly praxis.

With this as context, I am trying to imagine a way to conclude this book that makes this process of editorial cooperation more transparent and acknowledges more openly the academic practices that enable scholarly knowledge production. As this book has tried to argue and to demonstrate, editing is an alien form of academic labor that has helped me to realize the ways in which the genres of academic labor that we've inherited are too narrowly constructed and too deterministically deployed. There is incongruity between what I do as an editor and how those labors un/map the genres of teaching, research, and service (TRS). That incongruity is one of the dissonances I explore in this project. It can become an occasion to argue for the importance of making the multifaceted dimensions of scholarly knowledge production legible beyond the narrow definitions that our institutions and profession currently make available to us. It can also serve as a call for the humanities to recognize that scholarship develops in richly diverse ways and to embrace more expansively imagined forms of scholarly praxis by reapproaching TRS not as genres but as forms that we manifest through manifold kinds of writing and practice.

The disarticulation of form and genre has influenced the structure and approach of *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*, most notably in the decision to make scholarly arguments not through "research" genres (conventional monographs, research articles, chapters) but through the diverse minor genres we use as academics (lesson plans, keyword essays, syllabi, conference papers, faculty activity reports, book proposals, abstracts, annotations, PowerPoint presentations, and personal statements). In thinking about which genres to employ for the purpose of writing the book's coda, three possibilities came to mind: the editorial headnote, the reader report, and the author's response to the editor. While these are genres that I regularly encounter and use in my editorial role, they remain generally walled off from some of the (more visible) work I do as teacher, administrator, and scholar. While this insight is not a new realization, it feels newly urgent in the context of the graduate seminar I am teaching this semester: a course on article writing and the profession of the academic humanities. Much of the focus of this seminar is on introducing students to different academic genres and helping them to understand the conventions of scholarly writing. However, even as they become more familiar with the forms and styles of academic writing, my students—sharp, incisive, and thirsty

for information about how to be better writers and thinkers—bemoan the ways in which the workings of the profession remain opaque (this despite a relatively significant effort in my department to share this kind of information through our mentoring program, which I founded and then directed for nine years). We wonder why so much of the effort and experimentation that goes into the work of the academy remains imperceptible to those who desire to enter its ranks. We question whether those invisibilities reflect the institutional priorities determining what kind of work matters, what shapes scholarly praxis should or shouldn't take.

A coda has multiple functions. While it may encapsulate the book's arguments, it also moves beyond summary by centering other interests or possibilities, gesturing toward alternative directions or future involvements, or suggesting ways in which the existing project could be refigured or improved. In many ways, these forms of critical engagement are also what a good reader report provides. For example, in the guidance we offer to *Verge's* external reviewers, we ask readers to begin by providing a critical summary that situates their expertise in relation to the argument, identifies the essay's key arguments and critical concepts, and acknowledges the essay's most successful aspects. By asking reviewers to provide a critical summary before assessing the writing's contributions and scholarship and providing suggestions for revision, we hope to encourage reading an argument on its own terms while recognizing that both authors and reviewers can learn much from the dialogue that the editorial process makes possible.

No doubt the reports you will be writing for this project will recount what you understand to be the book's most significant accomplishments, identify potential weaknesses in approach or argumentation, and offer suggestions for alternative ways of tackling the work's central preoccupations. Thus, I have been wondering: Would your reports, and my response to them, perhaps work as the coda to this strange volume? Wouldn't such a dossier of materials embody some of the characteristics of the chimera as alien form, one that figures through strange juxtaposition a combinatory approach to scholarly knowledge production?

Given *Alien Forms and Minor Genres'* strangenesses, you may be skeptical and that skepticism might manifest through questions, concerns, and pointed critique. I have obviously made some unusual choices about how to present and advance the book's arguments. By working with and through a Global Asias ethos of constellation, juxtaposition, and dissonance, the volume will pose challenges to readers expecting more conventional

approaches. To that end, this book may require clearer expression of the logics behind its construction, approach, and enactments, an articulation that I would hope to provide even more explicitly in my authorial response to your reader reports. Considering that the information a coda could include might be useful in addressing readerly responses to the project's efforts to innovate the genres of academic writing and forms of scholarly praxis, I wonder if creating this coda by centering the genres of editorial labor—the editorial headnote, the reader report, and the authorial response to reviewers—might not, then, be a fitting way to end this book.

This leads me to this latest unlikely proposition, related to but distinct from the trio of unlikely propositions with which I began this volume. Might you be willing to help me make visible the synergetic efforts of the editorial process as a way of supporting the book's central arguments: that a more expansive conception of scholarship involves a willingness to work with/as alien form; that the fundamentally collaborative nature of academic knowledge production should be recognized and made more legible; that treating field formation and alternative genres of academic writing as speculative fictions can help us reimagine the possibilities and value of scholarly labor; and that an alienizing praxis can hopefully lead us to embracing and appreciating the holistic nature of our scholarly praxes?

Even as I propose this, I realize that this proposition might be unworkable. Given the design of the academic peer-review system, this invitation to make the labors of peer review, editing, and revision more visible may be problematic. Does extending this invitation to you compromise your ability to review this project objectively? Will this undermine the integrity of the press's editorial process? Could this alien approach confuse questions of authorship or create other ethical issues? Might I/we create a new structural problem for readers by introducing these alternative genres of writing in place of a traditional coda and asking them to wrestle with the temporal disjunctions generated by review and revision without providing a final resolution?

At this point, I'm left with more questions than answers. Perhaps the published book's coda will manifest as what I'm suggesting here, a dossier of editorial materials that draws attention to the processes of engagement, friction, and shared labor that have made this work—the book, the journal, the Global Asias Initiative, the field of Global Asias—possible. Or perhaps you will have other suggestions for what this coda should look like, different genres through which it can articulate the book's investments and hopes. Maybe this (provisional) coda, written in the form of an editorial headnote, will turn out to be not as provisional in practice as it is in intent. Contemplating

these various possibilities reminds me of what I articulated in the book's first introduction: "Uncertainty is not the register in which I have been trained to demonstrate scholarly expertise, but it is a register that has led me to different ways of conceptualizing and enacting my scholarly praxis."

However this ends, thank you for helping me with this work. I look forward to your reports and your response.

Appreciatively,

TC

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Kenneth Wissoker <kwiss@duke.edu>

To: Tina Chen

Cc: Kate Mullen <catherine.mullen@duke.edu>

Subject: REPORTS!

December 13, 2023

Dear Tina,

I'm delighted to have two superb reports on your manuscript. Both readers are fans of your work and support our publishing the volume. Beyond that, they take different approaches. Reader #1 is thrilled with the experiment and while they have suggestions, they really can't wait to discuss the work with students and colleagues. In addition to their comments and questions in the report they have supplied a marked-up copy of the manuscript with inline suggestions, which I have attached here. For Reader #2, the manuscript was more of a struggle. I would say they liked the idea of the experiment, but struggled with it as a read. They weren't sure about the formal decisions, where including all the previous pieces means conceptual (and more literal) repetitions, and more interestingly, pieces that don't have to do with Global Asias at all—but are more straightforward Asian American literary studies. Reading the manuscript felt to them like reading a tenure or promotion file, which could be more explicitly the genre experiment, but which could also make a less compelling read as a book. I'll be super interested to see what you think. Taken together, the reports seem pretty perfect to me. I think about reports as like the test screening for a film, and here with two invested and different responses, really supportive and honest overall, I think we have just what we need to revise and move ahead.

I'll need you to write a response to both reports in the form of an email letter to me. If you agree with the readers' suggestions you should say so. If

there are issues you think might be best dealt with in another way, please explain your plans. I'll be especially interested in which of the effects the reading produced on Reader #2 you want to hold to ("yes, that's just what was intended") and which you might ameliorate and how. As part of the response, I'll need an estimated word count for the revised manuscript, notes and works cited included. Let me know how many illustrations you will need and a date by which you plan to turn in the revised version. Once I have your response, I'll be happy to request a contract for you.

Let me know if you have questions about the reports or your reply. Will you be at MLA? If so, it would be great to have time to meet in person! I'm so glad we can work together on this book!

Warm wishes,
Ken

Reader #1, Round 1

1. What is the primary contribution and/or argument of the proposed publication? What is the importance of this work in terms of original content or perspective?

This is an astounding work—an innovative and intellectually rich book that challenges us to rethink how we consider academic and scholarly labor in the humanities. This is the book I didn't realize I was waiting for until I read the book proposal / first introduction, and then I realized that it is the book those of us invested in academic publishing NEED TO READ—and if someone had described this book to me and asked me which university press should or would publish it, I would have guessed either Duke University Press or University of Minnesota Press (but I'd hope/assume that Duke would be the ones to jump on publishing this). It makes transparent the various forms of scholarship and intellectual writing that academics are compelled to engage in (and note I am saying "academics" as a way to signal those of us who work inside colleges/universities—which isn't to say other scholars/intellectuals don't publish academic work; Sara Ahmed comes to mind and of course Mimi Khúc's latest, which is also with Duke UP). What is original is that it's a book manuscript and monograph that makes the argument about alien forms and genre not just in its content but through its form, which means it is making its argument about trying to think through the dissonance of form and genre by submitting this and possibly (hopefully) having it published by one of the field's major university publishing houses—which honestly it needs

to be, published by a major university publishing venue, because of its boldness and its inherent critique of academic structures (of what gets counted and hence valued as scholarly and intellectual), as well as its possibly game-changing nature not just in terms of what we count as a monograph or scholarly or intellectual contribution to our various fields/disciplines but how that is, in turn, read and registered by the institutions that we reside in—that we are disciplined into—and that Chen is attempting to undiscipline (and there's much to do with that word “discipline,” which is another key word that perhaps Chen could take up at some later point). All I kept thinking as I was reading this manuscript was how much I wish I could talk to someone about what I was reading—about how I wanted to ask Chen questions and be in conversation with her, about how I wanted sections of this book to be required reading for higher ed. administrators, about how I wanted to organize workshops around the central ideas of “Alien Forms and Minor Genres,” especially in questioning the tripart structure of how we (esp. those of us in Research I universities) are evaluated: research, teaching, service. It's a three-legged stool which in most cases is unevenly weighted toward research, when what Chen shows in “Alien Forms” is that the research is ever present in the teaching and service and cannot and should not be divorced from either/both. And Chen is honestly the perfect person to have written this book—to show us and unveil what has been opaque and hidden and invisible in terms of the academic labor and writing and intellectual work which is not just in the articles and monographs that we privilege but in all the other forms of vital research and scholarship that resides in our pedagogy and editorial work and mentoring.

2. *Would you say that the scholarship that went into the work is (a) superior? (b) adequate? (c) inadequate? Does it cover all the topics it should?*

As I alluded to above, I believe that Chen is the ideal person to write this book, meaning that she has the requisite experience, intellectual acumen, capacious knowledge across a variety of fields/disciplines, and willingness to be vulnerable and open and transparent. The scholarship is enormous—and it's not just in the traditional forms that we are accustomed to in academia and the humanities (though it's definitely there—the references and the scholars she cites are absolutely the people working in Global Asias/Asian American studies/Asian diaspora studies/literary studies/cultural studies/humanities) that one should cite, but it's really only Chen who can synthesize them for the specific argument she is making about alien forms and structural dissonance (among other intellectual interventions).

In terms of covering all the topics it could, I'm certainly satisfied with what is being covered, but I'm also wondering (and I'm not sure where or how this would fit but perhaps it can be gestured to either in the introduction or coda) about the cv and the letter of recommendation—these are also works of academic labor that scholars engage in routinely. We update our cvs and we edit our cvs for different audiences—and we are constantly writing letters of recommendation—and it's the humanities scholars who teach small classes who are asked to write for students in STEM fields and other professional schools because we know them better than the professors in their large lecture classes. So I think gesturing to the cv curation and letters would add to the types of alien forms that academics are asked to do, especially when one is a woman of color working in a field that also is reflected in parts of her identity—that is, Chen is an Asian American woman who works in Global Asias/Asian American studies.

I'm also wondering about genres that are becoming increasingly used in academia—the DEI statement and within personnel files (and I imagine or would hope that once this is under contract Chen will be going up for full professor) the research, teaching, and service statement that one has to craft in order to show mastery in our fields—to show we are demonstrating scholarly rigor. These are also genres that Chen could investigate—though I'm not saying she needs to, only that she may want to think about gesturing to these other genres in academia—ones she had to perform to get tenure and that she will once again need to do for promotion to full and then the post-tenure review (which I'm sure she is doing).

Finally, what I also would wish for (though again I am satisfied with “Alien Forms” as is) is more about Chen as cancer survivor / former cancer patient / person living with cancer. Chen talks about explicitly the ways in which her cancer diagnosis changed the trajectory of how she considered herself as a scholar and the scholarship she wanted to produce, and so I'm wondering what it would look like to see that part of herself, which was such a crucial impetus for the work she did with *Verge*, with *GAI*, and in this manuscript—for that to be front-loaded and centered and central: to make visible the diseases and illnesses and ways in which the personal traumas we carry with us will always impact and affect and effect the scholarship and research we do—that this could be a personal statement or a way of rethinking the research/teaching/service statement that academics have to write to make themselves legible within our academic structures—how would centering and making legible and visible Chen as cancer survivor/

former cancer patient/person living with cancer for us to rethink our relationship with vulnerability and our bodies and our research/intellectual life because they are all organically connected and also part of the structural dissonance that Chen grapples with and lays bare in this manuscript.

I also recognize that this may not be what Chen wants to do—so these things that aren't covered aren't deal breakers, in my opinion, about what Chen needs to revise for publication but perhaps are a function of how deeply engaged I am with “Alien Forms” that I wanted more and more—not because of its deficiencies but because of how I want to rethink all the various genres of academic labor and writing and work that scholars in higher ed are pushed into. I also would love to know more about what this work is like from Chen's point of view as an Asian American woman who works in Asian and Asian American studies—because that is another form of labor that is never visible—the macro and micro aggressions that those of us experience when our fields of study are written on our bodies.

3. How does this work relate to literature already published? Do the citations represent a range of scholarship in the field, including, for example, authors from marginalized groups?

So I appreciate the last question that is being asked—it's to the credit of Duke UP that you want to acknowledge and amplify the work of scholars of color and other minoritized groups. Rest assured that the bulk of scholars that Chen cites are nonwhite or queer or both, or people who face intersectional oppression—I'm also going to guess that the majority (over 50 percent) of researchers that Chen cites are of Asian ancestry (which isn't to discount the Black, Brown, and Indigenous scholars, only to suggest based on surname and my knowledge of the fields she cites that this is the case).

I also alluded to this elsewhere, but Chen is very capacious in her scholarly interests and works in and between multiple disciplines, citing the scholars you'd expect her to cite but also those that she puts into conversation with others in ways that mirror the intervention she is making about dissonance and alien form.

4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this work?

There is no such thing as a perfect work, and I respect Chen too much to pull my punches, especially with a manuscript that is as vital as “Alien Forms”—and yet I cannot think of a weakness, *per se*, in this manuscript. I can imagine that there are readers that are not going to like her intervention—that

will consider the form and content itself to be a weakness—that it is not a traditional monograph and does not follow the various prescriptions we’ve come to expect from traditional humanities monographs. But that strikes me to be its very essence and strength: It is not a traditional humanities monograph. It is deeply intellectual and contains a depth of scholarly rigor that we expect from university press monographs. But its content and form illustrate the central intervention that it is making: dissonance through alien form. There are so many things that I think this manuscript does that are strong and vital and necessary and that, as I stated at the beginning of this review, are absolutely needed in academia, in the humanities, in university publishing, in our systems of higher ed. promotion. The transparency with which Chen writes—inviting us to see the dissonance at work and the incongruencies and the ways in which her decisions privilege editorship and mentorship and teaching and pedagogy, and that all of this work is decidedly and always intellectually rigorous and fruitful and productive work that may not be legible to the powers that be but that nonetheless nurtures Chen and others (me included) and is needed to grow the various fields and to innovate in our disciplines and among our disciplines. This is the book I want everyone to read and then I want to talk with them about it, and I want to be in conversation with Chen about how her own thinking continues to evolve and how she uses the various genres of academic labor to work through these intellectual questions and make her thinking transparent. This is the book that only someone with tenure who is deeply familiar with the culture of R1 universities and university presses and publishing and national and international conferences could have written—someone with deep familiarity of multiple fields that are sometimes at odds with one another but that through Chen’s deft handling are put into conversation with one another—this is the book only someone like Chen could have written that is of such necessary reading and thinking and talking through that I honestly cannot wait for it to be published.

And I know I should try to offer up a constructive critique about what is missing or elided or weak—and I don’t believe in holding back when I respect the scholar as much as I do Chen—but I think because the form is about the undisciplining and unsettling of scholarship there’s really not a critique I can offer, since Chen has already thought of what readers may or may not respond to, especially in the coda (and I have thoughts about the coda—see below).

5. Is the manuscript written in a clear, readable style? Is its organization suitable and effective? Does it contain unnecessary repetition? Should it be cut or expanded, or is it about the right length?

The manuscript is definitely written in a clear and readable style—highly academic and scholarly rigorous and also accessible in the best way—it is written I'd say with Chen's grad students in mind—which also means the way that it is organized, the way it moves from topic to topic and returns to certain phrases and terms and subjects and shows readers not just the main point of "Alien Forms" and dissonance and that which cannot be reconciled or that which is incongruent but also showing us *HOW* Chen arrived here—her process. That is invaluable and not something we typically are shown / that we see—the process of arriving at this work, which itself is an alien form, which is the point of what Chen is doing. I think it's the right length, though I also think Chen could add another part (see above) if she wished, but I am satisfied with the form and length as is.

6. If the manuscript includes images, do they effectively support the book's argument?

Yes—I appreciate the inclusion of images that are embedded in her syllabi as well as the sharing of flyers—it is helpful to see how she is engaging in various forms of citational practices and, especially in terms of the syllabi, useful to see how the work of these images performs a different intellectual intervention and register that complements the words/content of her scholarship.

7. In your opinion, who is the primary audience for this work? Who is the secondary audience?

For any university press it's going to be fellow academics—I mean I know we all want to say we are writing for a general audience but this book is really meant to be read by those who hold PhDs, especially in the humanities and/or in the fields that Chen works in: Global Asias, Asian American studies, Asian diaspora studies, literary studies, the humanities. I do think it should be required reading for any and all higher ed. administrators, regardless of their background—especially for deans and provosts in helping them to think through what "counts" as academic labor. The other primary audience are younger scholars, whether in grad school or untenured or in teaching professor positions—that this is a work that speaks to those who are both within and without the legible structures of academia.

Secondarily I'd say undergraduate students, especially those looking to apply to grad school, would be well served reading this work. And perhaps anyone interested in the humanities, but I wouldn't say this is a general interest book. It has a specific message for a specific audience and I think that's also OK.

8. *Is its language and treatment of the subject suited to course use? If so, what courses?*

I imagine there are many (myself included) who would teach this in a grad class, whether in Asian/American studies, Global Asias, Asian diaspora, American studies, multiethnic/critical race studies, literary studies—and it is definitely written in such a way to be well suited for grad students, since Chen had in mind her own grad students as she was writing it.

9. *What is your overall recommendation? (a) Strongly recommend publication—it is an outstanding work; (b) Strongly recommend publication if revised—it could be outstanding; (c) Recommend publication if revised—it is a good or useful work and should be made available; (d) Recommend resubmission after revision; (e) Not recommend publication.*

I cannot stress enough how significant this book is—it is innovative and in that way keeping with the innovative works that Duke UP is known to publish—to be in the vanguard of university presses publishing works that push the boundaries of scholarship. I'm truly not trying to butter up Duke UP (though I am an admirer of the books that come out of Duke) but rather am trying to think about the best venue for this work. As I mentioned before, the only press I can see being bold enough to publish this necessary work is either Duke or Minnesota.

10. *If the manuscript needs revision: (a) Do you think it needs extensive rewriting or reorganization? (b) What are your specific suggestions for revision?*

Revisions are minor, in my opinion—I included comments embedded in the manuscript, which I'm happy to share with Chen (I'm sending them back with this review). Aside from my embedded small comments on things to potentially revise/add/edit, I'd suggest spending a bit more time with part II to show a trajectory of how Chen's thinking evolved through the various essays/articles that she wrote. It is also not quite true that the book doesn't engage in traditional academic scholarship—the essays written for edited collections and perhaps journals are traditional academic scholarship—which I think is fine and actually necessary to the overall argument that Chen creates. An alien form is not necessarily one that is wholly new/unique

or that entirely breaks from tradition. Some of the pieces in part II are more pedagogically focused but others might have been published in more traditional scholarly journals—this is another source of confusion for me—some of the pieces in part II are contextualized in terms of where they were published but for others it was not clear if they were ever published or in what form they were published and that definitely should be included. Part II is valuable especially for younger scholars to see how one's thinking evolves/changes/gets solidified through writing. That, perhaps, is the constant of this book. There may be different forms but writing is a constant—the writing of conference papers and annual reports to the university.

And let me end with the coda. Because it's not weaknesses and strengths that I think are most interesting to talk about within this genre of the reader report but how reading this book made me think of other genres of academic labor and the conversations I immediately now want to have with other academics, with higher ed. administrators at my university, with graduate students and untenured faculty, and with Chen herself. I hope the press will consider having her either include parts of this reader report or find another way to incorporate the work of reviewing and responding to reviewers' comments.

Reader #2, Round 1

Alien Forms and Minor Genres is a compilation of various forms of writing that hope to reflect and disrupt the inadequate static and fixing genres of academic labor through the established university evaluation rubric of TRS, or teaching, research, and service. The author does this by illuminating and offering/compiling various often unseen or unpublished and published forms of writing and thinking that have gone into the development and contributions of an area/field/approach of study Chen has dedicated much of her life to, called Global Asias. That is, the manuscript makes the case against TRS in favor of illustrating, encouraging, spotlighting other forms of unrecognized labor that cross or exceed these categories. To this end, the book is about academic labor and contributes to critical university studies alongside volumes like *Presumed Incompetent*. Second, this manuscript does this by compiling a suite of the author's work of various kinds as they have gone into helping to create a growing yet un/comfortably diffuse and un/manageable area called "Global Asias," which brings into conversation while also highlighting tensions and incommensurabilities or dissonances

among Asian American studies, Asian studies, and Diaspora studies (and, at times, Native Pacific studies). To this end, the manuscript also speaks to scholars in those fields as well as those interested in field formation and illustrates some of the “what” and “(no)where” or “content” of Global Asias.

The author goes through great and effective lengths to explain these two vectors held within its pages as an illustration of attempting to think of academic labor in new ways, including valuing the undervalued and unseen work academics do (contents include the end-of-year faculty report, a conference paper, syllabi, a flyer for an event). At the same time, the manuscript also has more “recognizable” and “valued” genres of publication, including essays and articles now hoping to be republished here as chapters.

The author advances numerous meanings of the concept of *alien* that holds the book’s contents and aspirations together, including these iterations: (a) thinking about and understanding as alien genres the various types of academic work that don’t fit into TRS; (b) insisting on publishing thought-in-progress over time, such as a conference paper that then becomes a journal article; (c) offering a tactic/approach/orientation to the academy and academic labor as *alien* (being alien to the restricted “normative” forms of TRS or “usual” monographs); (d) Global Asias work by the author and others as creating alien forms of knowledge production and content such as by keeping certain concepts and intellectual products side by side in ways that do not come together, are incommensurate, or are uncomfortable or, draw on a central term of *dissonant*, for the reader; (e) drawing upon alien abduction with a focus on that genre of narration (and the application of “alien” as a trope of Asianness) as concerned not only with the act of abduction but also with the return as a transformed (and possibly traumatized person) as an allegory—I’m not a literary studies scholar, so I may have these terms wrong—for Chen’s way of being in the academy and her compelling call to others to be in the academy in this way; (f) alien abduction is also used as a way for Chen to discuss the genre bending/crossing/miscegenation among ethnic fiction and genre fiction (I think).

So, you can see that this is an unconventional manuscript, a collection of materials including some that are not usually included in, say, Duke books, like the aforementioned faculty review or syllabi, and others that are more familiar, such as the essays and maybe even keywords, except that many of these have previously been published. So this book not only pushes the reader to hold these many items and their impulses together

(held, the whole way, by the gentle and self-aware hand of Chen); it also pushes against publication norms in which presses don't usually reprint so many already published pieces. A large portion of this book has already been published in academic journals and encyclopedia collections. And I still don't know how I feel about that.

The writing is excellent, flawless: It is clear, compelling, smart, and readable. The same goes for the smartness of the content: The reader trusts the author and has learned from these pages.

I can't quite be certain if the organization makes sense, given as it does lead to some contradictions: *Global Asias* is about crossing Asian studies, Asian American studies, and diaspora studies, but a number of essays are "squarely within" Asian American literary studies; these are consolidated in one section, but then there is another essay on alien abduction that comes in the last section. Similarly, there is a section more explicitly pertinent to and illustrative of *Global Asias*, but readers can come across many of these ideas and the same writing elsewhere.

The overall impact of this manuscript while reading it was "I want to go on this journey with you but I'm not sure" and a sense of frustration with the known and evidently purposeful compilation of things that don't often go together—both in the kinds (genres) of writing included but also in the areas they address: For instance, many of the reprinted articles sit squarely within "Asian American literary criticism," having little to do with *Global Asias*. Then there were pieces that were on *Global Asias*, many of these also reprinted from elsewhere, that brought us back to the second main theme of field formation; however, there was significant repetition across these pieces. So reading this was frustrating and at times unconvincing, even as I wanted to see what the payoff was, learn about *Global Asias*, and reconsider my own relationship to academic thinking and writing and working.

The overall impact *since* having read the pages is still ambivalent. I think this kind of book could have an impact in really updating the traditional and boring and expected ways that books are written. I think this could be of high importance, especially for junior scholars who are working toward tenure. That is, it can contribute to the moves within some universities to acknowledge previously un/der/acknowledged work for tenure and promotion, or to give value to undervalued fields of ethnic studies and area studies. This could advance a model of recognizable and valuable work; but what if universities *don't* go this way, and junior scholars *do* model it, and then they don't get tenured? On the other hand, the take-home of what the reader

gains from this book is unclear with regard to content, given that the reader could access many of the ideas on Global Asias from all the (self)cited sources already out there: *Verge* (the journal that the author cofounded and that has published some of this writing), literary studies journals that some of the essays are published in, a coedited volume that the author is creating, et cetera.

The manuscript is compelling but also feels in a number of places like a tenure or promotion review packet. The question, then, is: Is the production of (all kinds of) knowledge by this one scholar (even as one creates knowledge in a community) profound enough and of enough universal or even broad interest to lead to a large enough number of readers? That is: On the one hand, the two foci of the book could draw readers interested in academic labor / critical university studies / knowledge production, as well as those interested topically in Global Asias (which crosses several areas). On the other hand, the repetition of concepts across this submission and the use of the latter (Global Asias) to highlight the former (alien forms of academic genres) can narrow the potential readership. YET it could model the future of academic publishing. OR it could reveal why traditional books are written in traditional ways instead of this way.

I do think Duke should offer the author a contract, but I do think that the press and the author should think about how best to get across the main points of the author. I am excited, confused, and bothered by the collection of materials—and I think that's the author's point! The manuscript reminds me of other innovative forms of books that Duke publishes, such as its excellent *Detours* volumes, which in many ways align with and illustrate the very points of this submission, and also its recent publication *dear elia* by Mimi Khúc.

SOME MORE SPECIFIC COMMENTS:

AGAINST TRS AS A FRAMING DEVICE: I'm wondering if the emphasis on the university's emphasis on TRS is exaggerated in this text to the extent of portraying how it affects the daily, monthly, and even yearly work of academics. That is: TRS is *certainly* high stakes, in that they are the genres through which faculty are (not) given merit raises, get tenure or are fired, and get promoted or not. In addition, the focus on recognized "R" in TRS leads to star status while being stellar in the "rs" portions does not. So, of course, it is important. However, in our day to day, how often or how deeply do these three dimensions of separation inform the way we approach the academy and do our work? When I'm developing a class, I am of course thinking of it as "teaching," but of course I'm learning from it, the topic crosses over into

and is informed by and informs my scholarship, and the mentorship and letters of recommendation I will write and events that I host or participate in as a result of meeting these students are forms of service. However, I still develop and teach the classes. It's the same thing with "research" and "service." While, because of evaluation rubrics and their high stakes, we are compelled to put our genre-crossing and alien forms of work into these normative and fixed and inadequate boxes, I'm not so sure that means that they necessarily constrain us to the extent that they inform a scholar's daily work and approach to the academy.

THE FACULTY REPORT: I think the author could do something really compelling and creative with the faculty report that they submit here, which they use to illustrate the inadequacy of the TRS model (after which a number of the contents of this manuscript "don't fit" within this rubric). Right after the presentation of the "actual" faculty report, or even at the end of the book, in the coda, the author could come up with a really innovative, different document or worksheet or some image that reveals another approach or form or image that reflects the values or forms or potentials or impacts of alien forms. Some of the contents of the manuscript are not alien (the journal article, the syllabus), even if adding them here is unfamiliar (republished articles, publishing syllabi). Some parts of this book reuse existing genres (syllabus, published journal article, the faculty report) but others seem to offer alternatives. How can the author turn normative forms into alien ones to illustrate their points?

REPETITION OF WRITING AND CONCEPTS WITHIN THE MANUSCRIPT AND EXTENSIVE REPRINT OF ALREADY PUBLISHED MATERIAL: There is quite a bit of repetition across the volume, as well as the aforementioned fact that much of these contents have already been published elsewhere and are compiled here (the keywords and the essays, I believe). To that end, this does read ironically or paradoxically as a "critical consolidation," which the author describes Global Asias as working *against*.

The repetition of concepts provides a throughline but also presents a repetition of content and ideas (imaginable ageography, structural incoherence, relational nonalignment, etc.) that are presented too many times, thus making the reader feel as though they are reading here and there about, for example, the author's shift from structural incoherence to collaborative nonconsensus and structural dissonance several times. The question is: Why?

When discussing the self-conscious choice to place conference paper and then formal essay together, writing how it reveals “a picture of how arguments get worked through different academic genres”—possibly say *more* about this; have it (the various forms an evolution of thinking takes) be a throughline so it ruptures the sense that this is a tenure/promotion file.

Regarding previously published essays: Should these be updated? For instance, the essay on “comfort women” / military sex slaves / *halmoni* was written before a large outpouring of work in this area. What would it mean for scholars to read this essay with a current publication date but not realize that there are new citations and knowledge and a different state of the field regarding comfort women, by scholars like Jinah Kim, Liz Son, Amy Stanley, a resource by the *Association for Asian Studies*, the Ramseyer controversy, et cetera? In addition, the discussion of the newness or absence of attention to US militarism, racism, and heteropatriarchy are now fully central to the work on comfort women. This essay had me asking: Why reprint this older essay? How does it illustrate the book’s points? What of recent work on the topic?

Unrelatedly, in this section on “comfort women” / military sex slaves / *halmoni*: The pedagogical applications are not discussed explicitly enough, given the emphasis the essay places on pedagogy.

A different example is how Ruth Ozeki’s work weaves in and out of the various parts of this book, leading to fragmentation and repetition. This could be a conscious choice but more so seems to emerge out of the decision to compile Chen’s various forms of writing over time.

REPETITION WITHIN THIS SUBMISSION: P. 57, p. 137 (Srikanth and Song); p. 180 repeated paragraph content; repeated content on p. 219, p. 223; discussion of *Verge* and its innovative form and content previously discussed and again on p. 225 and again on p. 302; p. 227 content discussed; imaginable ageography on p. 228 already previously discussed in a whole essay; p. 240 “genre mixing” et cetera; bottom of p. 272; p. 299 re: structural incoherence.

SIGNIFICANCE AND REASON FOR ENACTING ALIEN LABOR/FORM/APPROACH: Overall, while I agree with the argument that this is one way to illuminate hidden and alien forms of labor that are not recognized by the academy but that are so central to our production of knowledge and our understanding of the world, I think the author really needs to emphasize and state explicitly *why* we should consider an alien approach to writing and working in such a fashion. That is, please emphasize “why” we should

do this, why we should contest TRS, what emerges when we spotlight other forms of writing and thinking—what are the changes and implications and payoffs (not a great word, but still . . .) of this approach? Not just that we should do it and what it looks like (beautifully revealed here), but *WHY*? I think the author could be much more ambitious about the end results or impacts of this kind of monograph upon academic writing, evaluation, and thinking, and I encourage them to articulate these broad impacts upon the academy more explicitly.

In writing about the structural incoherence of Global Asias—can you say more about why this is helpful? What does it lead to?

Regarding ways to “reimagine the conditions in which we work”: Say *more* about this and about the possible changes and new outcomes that could emerge from disrupting TRS.

ON WRITING AND CITATIONS: I wonder if the author wants to dedicate some portion of this manuscript to the idea, process, craft, and tone of *writing*, especially since they are such an excellent writer. Is there any comment on alien forms of writing: writing in more approachable ways, in self-conscious ways, in autoethnographic ways that speak against the esoteric ways valued by the academy? In addition, I’m curious about the varied citational practices within this text: Parts, like the journal articles, have traditional citations and footnotes (though they are dated because they were written earlier); other entries do not have many citations at all; yet across the text are self-referential citations of the author’s published works. It’s not necessary to address this, but I’m curious about what a literary studies scholar who writes well and across genres can tell the reader about writing tone, practice, and voice.

LIMITS TO DISSONANCE, INCONGRUITIES, INCOMMENSURABILITY? As one reads this manuscript, it is exciting and yet pressures the reader, who does not end with a sense that they have read a traditional research monograph—but that also excites the reader, compelling them to reflect upon all the kinds of academic work that we do that is illustrated on these pages (but that isn’t often brought to light). (Speaking of this, it would be good to have an entry that illustrates the mentorship that is not included in published monographs and that women and people of color, especially those in ethnic studies and other similar fields, take on at higher rates—what would this look like in these pages?) Are there limitations to the unwillingness or the not-ability or the okayness with (not) placing things

not fully in conversation side by side? This is in regard to the kinds of methods, fields, and research that emerge from Global Asias. What if there is “too much” dissonance or lack of confluence such as to get in the way of making sense, understanding Global Asias, linking ideas?

Author does a nice job of returning to the overall volume and pulling the parts together.

NON/CONVERGENCE: There is a central tension of showing how there is a lack of convergence but also that there is clearly one very capable and hard-working and smart person (the author) at the nexus of this. The book makes the case for wanting to develop a structure that allows various alien forms to create a constellation of Global Asias but at the same time illustrates not a structure but rather a person at the center of this important nexus. This book reads as a “critical consolidation.”

THE CODA IN THE INTRODUCTION could possibly come earlier.

THE STAKES OF (SELF)ALIENIZING: I wonder what it means to encourage alienation or alien forms of writing and thought and an alien return to the academy for those who are already alienated from the academy. That is, this takes on risks, especially for untenured scholars, who may face being alien already and then, in taking on this very compelling case to embrace alien genres and forms (publishing a conference paper), risk their advancement. Those alien already to the academy can include first-generation professors, people of color from working-class backgrounds, including Black scholars, in the academy, disabled people in the academy, and others. Is it a privilege to embrace alien forms?

KEYWORDS SECTION: While my sense is that too much of this book includes reprints of existing older work, I like the opening framework of each keyword—the abstract alongside the italicized aside to the reader. Many of the keywords are, as mentioned in the discussion of the genre of encyclopedia entries, much more like literature reviews than writing based on research that advances new concepts and thus an understanding of the world. How is the reader to approach each of these various offerings, and what circle of readers will this overall manuscript speak to?

This compendium of keywords seems to leave off Global Asias and the book’s overall aspiration to somehow place Asian American studies, Asian

studies, and diaspora studies alongside one another (albeit in dissonant ways). There are parts in the keywords where the author could revise them to speak to the aims of this book. The keywords sections also seem to be of quite varying lengths; some read as quite long. In addition the essays end up reproducing many of the forms of writing that it seems the author initially writes *against*. These are traditional essays, articles, and encyclopedia entries.

For example, re: “depth while resisting the formal and aesthetic practices associated with the form”—can you tie it to *this* book?

Re: “The final approach I outline . . .”: Where does this attention speak to the overall book regarding form, alien, Global Asias? Overall, I found that the keywords section may close off certain readers while appealing to those interested in Asian American literary criticism.

Re: “the reader occupies a uniquely important role in constructing the meaning . . .” Can you link this section to the book’s approach re: incommensurability?

Re: “the overlap and incompatibilities . . .”: Use this to refer to this book’s aim, and a claim of the book can speak to the “why” regarding crossing genre and the potential implications of adopting Chen’s orientation to labor and writing.

SMALLER COMMENTS:

- Regarding the Muslim ban: consider naming the PATRIOT Act as well.
- The “not-me/not-not-me” is so compelling and such dis/identification crops up on other pages as well. Highlighting this as a stronger throughline could be helpful.
- To what extent does “Asian American literary and cultural studies” equal or stand in for “Asian American studies”? This question emerges in the essay. There is a known emphasis in ethnic studies on the humanities, articulated in the recent volume by Nadia Kim and Pawan Dhingra on ethnic studies in the social sciences, but there seems to be a lack of acknowledgment of other modes of study in Asian American studies or a sense that what emerges from within Asian American literary and cultural studies is the totality of Asian American studies. (On the other hand, anthropology, along with religious studies, language, and history, is central to Asian studies / area studies.)

- Parts of the discussion of the transpacific seems to erase Pacific Islanders (although not at the end of the essay). The “turn to” signals a turning to by scholars from elsewhere. Just a note to not enact erasure of scholars in and from the Pacific (Ozeki’s text as example may do the same erasure). Similarly, there is a description of the Pacific as a “problem”—to whom?

AND, FINALLY, THE CODA (at the end of which I drew a heart!). This is so compelling and speaks to the reader’s/reviewer’s ego and anxiety! The call for a more transparent illustration of the process of writing, publishing, and revision makes sense in this kind of volume, with its attention to highlighting underrecognized genres of work and the invisible labor of workers. This could have the form that you suggest (some version of reader’s report and author’s response), but that really depends upon the helpfulness, tone, and content of this reader’s report (or the other reader’s report, which is likely to be more helpful!). I mentioned that some document revealing the kinds of labor and genres that go into and come out of mentoring students is another possible missing piece. So, it could work! And so could many other things!

Responses

January 9, 2024

Dear Ken,

Thank you for these extraordinarily helpful reader reports. I am grateful for the ways in which both readers thoughtfully engage with my generic experimentation in *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* and value their different perspectives. I agree with you: Together they offer a perfect combination of approaches! Reader 1’s enthusiasm and excitement is heartening; I delight in their robust support for the arguments and interventions I’m trying to make. And I am equally delighted by reader 2’s willingness to entertain the strangeness of this book despite their skepticism and confusion and uncertainty. I know there are a lot of readers who will share the concerns they articulate. As I noted in my coda, I love how the readers’ generous involvement at this stage allows me to clarify my arguments, improve the book’s structure and approach, and elucidate my critical choices.

I am gratified that both readers recommend publication. Even as they respond quite differently to the book's formal experimentation, their responses suggest that *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*' conjectural approach to different genres of academic writing and academic labor is generatively thought-provoking. I see reader 1's fervor (a deep engagement that makes them "want to rethink all the various genres of academic labor and writing and work that scholars in higher ed are pushed into") and reader 2's ambivalence ("I am excited, confused, and bothered by the collection of materials") as illustrative of how the book's alienizing praxis can create important perspectival shifts. In both cases, readers take inspiration from the project's speculative method and themselves begin to speculate: about other genres (CVs, statement of endeavors, DEI statements) that could/should be approached as alien forms; about why we choose to present our scholarly praxis in the ways/genres we do; about existing academic practices and publication norms; and about ways of perhaps going about the work we do differently. Both readers acknowledge the project's transformative potential, suggesting that the book's arguments and multigeneric approach could "model the future of academic publishing" (reader 2) and create needed opportunities for those of us working in higher education to question how scholarly labor is assessed through the tripartite structure of TRS. Although I am not sure how to engineer this, I am especially tickled by reader 1's exhortation that *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* should be "required reading for higher ed. administrators."

The robust feedback provided identifies a set of issues—both theoretical and tactical—that I will work to address in this next phase of revision. Perhaps unsurprisingly, much of the critique leveled in the reports can be understood in relation to the possibilities and limits of *dissonance*, one of the key conceptual paradigms explored in this project. Indeed, it might be useful to begin by providing here an overview of how most of the critiques articulated in the reports can be understood as concerns about how dissonance operates on formal, argumentative, and conceptual levels. With regard to the book's structure and organization, formal concerns about dissonance are signaled by questions regarding which genres are or aren't included in the volume, whether the collative method employed in crafting the monograph leads to confusion or too much repetition, and apprehensiveness about a lack of confluence perhaps getting in the way of making sense of Global Asias as an intellectual endeavor. Argumentatively,

dissonance registers as skepticism—about using TRS as a “framing device” for the book’s arguments about genres of academic labor and academic writing, and about the inclusion of essays focused on Asian American literary criticism in a book that is ostensibly about Global Asias—but also as possibility, with reader 1 encouraging me to be even more explicit about the embodied dissonance of being a “cancer survivor / former cancer patient / person living with cancer” and how that connects to the other kinds of dissonances characterizing my scholarly praxis. Questions about the limits of dissonance are also at the heart of the conceptual criticism leveled by reader 2, who asks if *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* is paradoxically a book that reads as “critical consolidation” despite its characterization of Global Asias as a method and approach that works to keep knowledge unconsolidated.

These are all excellent observations and I am grateful for the opportunity to engage with the underlying uncertainty that dissonance provokes. You note in your editorial headnote, Ken, that you are particularly interested in hearing my response to the effects of the reading produced on reader 2—that is, the ambivalence and skepticism generated by the book’s dissonant character, method, and mode of composition. I have more than one response, in part because dissonance as method and outcome yields multiversal possibilities and such multiplicity contributes to rethinking the conditions of possibility that enable the kind of speculative worldbuilding that *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* encourages. More concretely, one rejoinder is that, yes, dissonance leads to experiences of uncertainty (not just in reading, but also in writing) that run counter to the authoritative expression that we have come to associate with how expertise manifests in academic scholarship, so ambivalence and skepticism in reaction to the book’s unusual compositional aesthetic is not unexpected. Such responses are actually necessary to jump-starting the alienizing praxis that *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* ultimately hopes to enact. Crucially, the reader’s generous engagement with the manuscript despite their misgivings illustrates how their skepticism, like my own, leads to speculation about different ways in which we can make a more expansive scholarly praxis visible.

Another way to respond to the reader’s reaction is to note that these effects/affects are themselves valuable opportunities to clarify how dissonance does or doesn’t work in this project and to explain the logics animating some of the unconventional choices I’ve made in writing this book. In this regard, let me address specifically what I consider the two most pressing critiques raised by reader 2’s report: (1) the function and purpose of reprinting (without updating) previously published essays in this volume,

several of them focusing on Asian American literary criticism even though this is a book that is ostensibly about Global Asias; and (2) the confusion about how dissonance operates in relation to critical consolidation. I appreciate the ways in which reader 2 wrestles with how *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* challenges publication norms, particularly in its inclusion of previously published work and its inclusion of work that highlights the incongruity between Asian American literary and cultural studies (the field in which I was originally trained) and Global Asias (the multidisciplinary, transfield arena of scholarly knowledge production that I have been working to develop over the last decade). Reader 2's very legitimate concerns are animated by both a discomfort with how the book's composition refuses to comply with standard operating procedures in academic publishing and a question about how the incongruity between the fields of Asian American literary studies and Global Asias may undermine the book's purported focus. I could address these issues by rethinking the book's composition, but such a decision would, essentially, generate a different book and subvert the ways in which I have chosen to integrate form and function in exemplifying *Alien Forms and Minor Genres'* arguments about the overlaps and disjunctions between genres of academic labor and genres of academic writing. Tellingly, despite reader 2's uneasiness with the book's organization and approach, *they do not recommend writing this book differently.*

I take this, then, as an opportunity: to be clearer in explaining the reasons to compose the book through constellation and to be more explicit in articulating how including previously published work advances the book's project. Perhaps such elucidation should begin by referencing reader 1's very helpful observations about how the practice of *returning*—to previously published work and to “certain phrases and terms and subjects”—is operative on two different levels and also somewhat distinct from *repetition*. Namely, this recursive mode of composition is meant to foreground “HOW Chen arrived here—her process,” and it exemplifies how approaching the monograph as an alien form by centering mentorship produces a way to highlight the multifunctionality of the writing we do. According to reader 1, “That is invaluable and not something we typically are shown / that we see—the process of arriving at this work, which itself is an alien form, which is the point of what Chen is doing.” In response to reader 2's pointed questions about the essay on ethical alienation and critical consolidation using the figure of “comfort women” / military sex slaves / *halmoni*—“Why reprint this older essay? How does it illustrate the book's points? What of recent work on the topic?”—let me expand on reader 1's observation and

suggest that the decision to republish work without revising or updating it, even in circumstances like the one noted by reader 2 regarding the Ramseyer controversy, involving comfort women in Japanese brothels during the 1930s and 1940s, is indeed because such inclusion is in service to a goal distinct from that animating the essay's original publication. Put more directly: I chose not to update or revise the essays published in part II of the book, because they are not included to present my latest research discovery on the subjects and objects they examine. Instead, collating them as originally written (while adding brief introductions to explain some of the thinking motivating their production and/or some of the thinking their production motivated) enables readers to trace the unfolding, uneven, and unexpected ways in which these pieces of writing were also fundamentally a part of the process of working through, toward, and around the principles of Global Asias scholarly praxis. In this way, the pieces that are ostensibly about Asian American literary criticism are also about Global Asias, because my academic training and interdisciplinary engagements as an Asian American literary critic inevitably impact my relationship to and understanding of what it means to be working as/through Global Asias as an alien form. In embracing an infrastructural approach to field formation, I have always been focused less on Global Asias as *content* than on Global Asias as *method*, *architecture*, and *praxis*.

Which brings me to the second issue I would like to engage before outlining my plans for revision: the question of how the project's investment in dissonance operates in relation to critical consolidation. Reader 2 has misgivings, asking "does this [the book] read ironically or paradoxically as a 'critical consolidation' which the author describes Global Asias working *against*?" This is a fair question, and one that requires a more extensive exploration of what consolidation entails. If we are conceptualizing consolidation as the act of bringing things together, then on some level this project is a form of consolidation. The choice to constellate the different genres and forms of writing and labor this volume includes—book proposal, faculty activity report, lesson plans, keyword essays, research articles, encyclopedia entries, abstracts, personal statements, symposium poster, conference paper, syllabi, editorial headnote, reader reports, and this authorial response to reader reports—literally brings documents that operate in temporal disjunction (e.g., abstract, conference paper, research article) or spatial disjunction (symposium, course, journal article, administrative report, book) together into the shared space of the monograph, a genre usually reserved for a very narrowly defined sort of scholarly activity

and expression. But what I describe as critical consolidation involves epistemic meaning-making, the concretizing of knowledge practices, and the ossification of scholarly praxis into singular genres of expression. Keeping this definition in mind, I do not think *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* reads as a book that works to critically consolidate its arguments about Global Asias, scholarly praxis, and genres of academic labor and writing. Instead, it attempts to demonstrate how my scholarly praxis as/through the alien form of Global Asias constitutes a “differentially coherent” intellectual endeavor. The book’s methods—constellation and juxtaposition—are designed to lean into generic frictions, to encourage proximity without resolution. These methods can lead to dissatisfaction of the sort expressed by reader 2—“what if there is ‘too much’ dissonance or lack of confluence such as to get in the way of making sense, understanding Global Asias, linking ideas?”—but that dissatisfaction also makes evident that this project actively works to resist critical consolidation even as it collates a diverse set of materials into nonaligned relation, in the process producing certain unstable forms of coherence.

With all this as context, I propose focusing my revision efforts in the following ways:

- As both readers noted, the book invites readers to imagine all academic genres of writing and labor as alien forms. Given space limitations, I cannot be comprehensive in demonstrating how this works but, really, comprehensiveness is not the point. Rather, providing select examples of conventional genres academics are asked to work within—some literary, but others social or pedagogical or institutional—and showing how I employ or deploy them as alien forms is meant to inspire readers to think about what this would look like in their own practice. This relationship between *me* as the writer and *you* as the reader thus operates not in the mode of imitation or mimicry but instead as speculative possibility. Reader 1 apprehends precisely this type of relation when they suggest that “centering and making legible and visible Chen as cancer survivor / former cancer patient / person living with cancer [can help us] to rethink our relationship with vulnerability and our bodies and our research/intellectual life because they are all organically connected and also part of the structural dissonance that Chen grapples with and lays bare in this manuscript.” I agree with this suggestion and propose revising the manuscript to add a preface using the genre of the statement of purpose, which could be useful not only in framing the book’s project and approach but also in orienting readers to the generic

experimentation that the book embraces. Given the significance of the personal statement in facilitating transitions in academic life—when applying to college and graduate school, to professional development programs, and for promotion—it seems that beginning a book about transitioning my scholarly praxis with a statement of purpose that recognizes the pivotal role that my illness played in generating an awareness of the possibilities and limits of existing as, and working through, alien forms would be fitting.

- Reader 2 argues that while dissonance can be generative, “too much” dissonance can be unproductive. To that end, they recommend elevating a description of what I am hoping to accomplish in the book’s third section, which is explicitly designed to provide “a picture of how arguments get worked through different academic genres,” into an argumentative throughline for the book and using it to “rupture the sense that this is a tenure/promotion file.” Even as the suspicion that the book is playing with the genre of the tenure/promotion file might lead to questioning the generic imperatives of the academic monograph, the earlier points made about how critical consolidation works in relation to dissonance makes *Alien Forms and Minor Genres*’ incongruity with the tenure/promotion file significant and also worth highlighting. While I think different readers will have wildly varying assessments of what constitutes “too much” dissonance (the discrepancy in response between the reader reports being a case in point), working through the manuscript again to highlight the throughline suggested by reader 2 could helpfully provide some additional signposting without overexplaining how the book “works.” Much of this emendation would have to happen in one/some/all of the introductions and then strategically reinforced in the other sections of the book, although I will not rewrite the previously published essays included in part II for the reasons listed above. I think resisting the temptation to smooth over discrepancies or explain too much is important, in part because working as/through alien form is supposed to work differently for each individual and the book is not so much trying to get everyone else to do what I do (!) but instead to ask us to be open to the varied ways and the multiple genres through which scholarly praxis is enacted.
- Finally, both readers express extraordinary support for the proposal I articulate in the provisional coda: that the book conclude with a dossier of editorial materials related to its review so that readers can see and

appreciate and learn from the collaborative engagements that peer review enables. To that end, I propose that in addition to the note to readers I wrote in the provisional coda, we include your editorial headnote, the two reader reports solicited by the press, and this letter of response. I know this is, again, disruptive of publication norms but given the book's investments in disruption (itself another form of dissonance), I feel (and both readers agree) that such a coda would provide a felicitous conclusion to a book that embraces its chimeric nature as alien form.

Considering the revisions I'm proposing above, I estimate the final draft to come in at 100,000 words, including notes and works cited. It will include somewhere between eighteen and twenty images (that is, if I can secure all necessary permissions). I will complete revisions within two months, so you should expect a final draft of the manuscript by no later than the end of the first week of March 2024.

As I turn my attention to the work of revising this manuscript for final submission, I will keep in mind a word used by reader 2 to describe this book: *paradoxical*. Even as I don't agree that *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* paradoxically consolidates knowledge while arguing for the importance of keeping knowledge forms and praxes unconsolidated, I think paradoxicality could be another way to think about the dissonant practices that this project engages and promotes. The paradoxicality of *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* takes many shapes. It criticizes higher education's deterministic use of TRS to assess academic labor while fervently believing that TRS are at the heart of our scholarly mission. It argues that we should question the genres of academic labor and academic writing not by generating new forms but by approaching existing forms though an alienizing praxis, an approach that reinforces the importance of genre in enabling sensemaking and worldmaking. It is being presented to readers as a monograph even though it contends that we should be skeptical of the traditional academic monograph, a genre that inadequately represents the diversity of scholarly accomplishment.

Paradoxicality draws attention to contradiction, disjunction, and incongruity. Through its arguments and its compositional practice, *Alien Forms and Minor Genres* embraces these types of frictions to illuminate some of the conventions and assumptions that undergird how we conceptualize and assess scholarly labor. Although such frictions can be enlightening, they are not uniformly revelatory. In light of this (pun intended), I have been thinking about the paradoxicality at the heart of the act of making

something transparent. Even as I am hoping to include a dossier of editorial materials as the book's conclusion, a move that is part of the labor of making institutional processes and forms more transparent, you and I both know that to make this happen, there will be many collaborative exchanges (between author, editor, the press, and the readers) that readers will not see. In other words, making something transparent always involves a complex dynamic between visibility and invisibility, translucency and opacity. *Alien Forms and Minor Genres'* efforts to make academic structures and practices more transparent thus entail making visible the multiple, unevenly jumbled acts and forms of labor contributing to the production of TRS as institutional forms and showing how this work, deeply part of academic life and worthy of recognition as such, is often obscured and unrewarded.

Yours,

TC

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To: Kenneth Wissoker <kwiss@duke.edu>
Cc: Kate Mullen <catherine.mullen@duke.edu>
Subject: REPORTS!
January 30, 2024

Dear Ken—

Thanks so much for meeting with me yesterday! It was fun to think with you about ways to improve the manuscript and I am excited about starting the revision process.

Just so we are on the same page, let me recap some of what we discussed and lay out my new revision plan. I appreciate how you encouraged me to think through ways of streamlining the book's second section. While I really want to show readers how some of the concepts and approaches that became part of my Global Asias praxis were being worked through, sometimes in somewhat obscured ways, in the keyword essays I have been writing over the last decade, I agree that this can be demonstrated differently. To respond more robustly to reader 2's concerns about readability and to take advantage of the opportunity you so astutely pointed out—that there are a variety of ways to achieve my goals here and it might not be necessary or most effective to ask readers to read through all of those previously published essays to understand the book's broader arguments—I think it could be generative

to reapproach that section by using those essays as material that I can rework for the book. Such reworking would not involve rewriting or updating the essays (as reader 2 originally suggested) but instead treating them as an archive of materials that I can use to make visible some of the processes that contributed to my thinking about/around Global Asias, to illustrate some key aspects of Global Asias praxis, and to investigate the evolving shapes and contours of scholarship that is committed to reimagining itself as/through alien form.

I'm still not entirely sure what this will look like, but part of the excitement is trying to figure this out. Preliminarily, I think this section could offer three different ways of working with the materials in question. Specifically, I could (1) provide the abstracts and brief contextualizing statements I included with first draft of the manuscript; (2) write a new piece (I'm not sure yet which generic form this will utilize) that discusses some of the key characteristics and concepts of Global Asias work (i.e., relational nonalignment, imaginable ageography, structural dissonance, nonconsolidation, generic friction, and alien form) by drawing attention to how the keyword essays helped me to begin to articulate and work through/with dissonances (both within and between Asian American literary studies and Global Asias); and (3) revisit one or two of the essays with an editorial eye to make visible how they connect to my evolving engagements with field formation.

Beyond this major reworking of the book's second section, I plan on following through with the other two revisions suggested in my first response: adding a preface written in the genre of the statement of purpose and including a dossier of editorial materials to serve as the book's coda.

Given how I'm proposing to rewrite part II, it is a little harder to provide an accurate word count for the revised manuscript. I'm thinking 70,000–80,000 words? And I probably need three months to get this all done, so perhaps a May 15 manuscript delivery date?

I hope this sounds OK. I'm grateful for your willingness to collaborate with me on this book and appreciate, so much, your help in making it better.

Cheers,
Tina

.....

To: Kenneth Wissoker <kwiss@duke.edu>
Cc: Kate Mullen <catherine.mullen@duke.edu>
Subject: Overview of Revisions
March 27, 2025

Dear Ken (and dear readers)—

Thank you again for your generous engagement with this project! The combination of enthusiasm and skepticism in the reports and editorial feedback was incredibly generative. By giving me a clear sense that there are important arguments that this book is making but also asking me to rethink the inclusion of my previously published keyword essays in the book's second part, your collective advice challenged me in some unanticipated (but thought-provoking) ways.

Although revisions have taken me much longer than anticipated, I think the volume you now hold in your hands is a much better book because of how your critique tasked me to rethink my initial approach—and to embrace fully the disjunctions and synergies between forms of academic labor and genres of academic writing. Our collaborative involvement in this process of review and revision pushed me to be more systematic about the project's use of unconventional genres of academic writing. Your responses showed me that, despite the claims made in the book's first part about disarticulating form from genre, I was not fully committed to experimenting with how to use alien forms of writing to work through the project's main claims—and that I needed to be more honest about tackling the challenges of making the book's arguments through “nonresearch genres” of writing.

These realizations led me to rethink the book's second section, which is now completely different from what I submitted in the first draft. Radically rewriting section two—by replacing the original set of keyword essays with new writing that foregrounds other minor genres of academic writing like the statement of purpose, the annotated bibliography, abstracts, PowerPoint slides, and the narrative statement of endeavors that one needs to write when going up for review and promotion—allowed me to move the project's emphasis on the relation between form and function beyond provocation and toward more explicit articulation and enactment. Additionally, such rewriting enabled me to delineate more concretely the book's argumentative claims about a more expansive scholarly praxis by introducing two important new concepts—the minor genres of academic writing and the shadow archive.

I very much appreciate how all of you are actively thinking with me about how to make this project more effective and compelling. In this round of revision, I focused on clarifying the book's main arguments and illustrating how they work through prosaic genres of academic writing that are considered distinct from research production; developing new concepts and sites of engagement to draw attention to the varied modes and locations that a deterministic understanding of TRS obscures; and making visible the diverse kinds of intellectual cross-pollination that happens between the different types of alien forms that Global Asias (and in this instance, the GAI) creates. Encouraged by reader 1's suggestion that I include more alternative types of academic writing and reader 2's invitation to consider "turn[ing] normative forms into alien ones," I decided to develop the argumentation through minor genres of academic writing such as the annotated bibliography, the PowerPoint slide presentation, and personal statement. Using these genres made it possible to approach the previously included work as part of a larger archive of materials out of which to generate (even more) alien forms of writing.

Additionally, reader 1 asked me to center more explicitly my experience "as cancer survivor / former cancer patient / person living with cancer" in order to encourage readers to "rethink our relationship with vulnerability and our bodies and our research/intellectual life because they are all organically connected and also part of the structural dissonance that [this project] grapples with and lays bare." Utilizing the different kinds of narrative statements that we are often tasked to write at critical junctures of our professional advancement—the statement of purpose when applying for a program and the statement of endeavors when going up for promotion—allowed me to integrate some of this information and connect it more systematically to the forms of academic labor and trajectory of career development that I had been discussing in relation to Global Asias scholarly praxis. Finally, I decided to include some of the materials produced during the editorial review process as the book's coda, since I think that kind of transparency will further support the attention to "the process of arriving at this work," which reader 1 identified as an especially valuable aspect of *Alien Forms and Minor Genres'* composition.

I deeply appreciate your openhanded engagement with this project and look forward to hearing your thoughts about the revised manuscript!

Gratefully,
Tina

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Appendix

TEXT OF POWERPOINT SLIDES

Slide 1

MINOR GENRES OF ACADEMIC WRITING AND THE SHADOW ARCHIVE
AN ARGUMENT ABOUT SCHOLARLY PRAXIS

Slide 2

AN ARGUMENT

The capaciousness of scholarly praxis is often not reflected by higher education's deterministic use of teaching, research, and service [TRS] as generic categories of academic labor. Scholarship and conceptual arguments emerge from intellectual engagements that span the gamut of scholarly activity. Attending to the minor genres of academic writing and the shadow archive encourages us to conceptualize our work as alien forms, composite assemblages of academic labor that reflect the dimensionality of scholarly praxis by working through a diversity of genres.

Slide 3

Two Different Uses of GENRE DETERMINISTIC

- A deterministic understanding of genre focuses on defining and taxonomizing academic work.
- Work is slotted into a category which then determines the merit and decipherability of the labor that it includes.

SPECULATIVE

- Shifts critical attention from *belonging* to *use value*.
- Approaches genre in ways that exceed taxonomy, focusing on its speculative potential in catalyzing a praxis that actually recognizes how scholarly knowledge production can, and should, combine research, teaching, and service orientations.

Slide 4

Differentiating Genre and Form

GENRE

- Types of academic writing that can be conceptualized both deterministically and speculatively.

FORM

- Patterns of academic practice and expectation whose performance might also become the grounds from which to imagine a new set of shapes and priorities for institutional life.

Slide 5

Can GENRES and FORMS be the same? YES

Can GENRES and FORMS be different? YES

How might disarticulating FORM from GENRE allow us to think differently about the relation between academic labor and academic writing?

Slide 6

TWO KEY SITES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CAPACIOUSNESS OF SCHOLARLY PRAXIS

- MINOR GENRES OF ACADEMIC WRITING
- THE SHADOW ARCHIVE

Slide 7

Minor Genres of Academic Writing

Slide 8

Defining the Minor

- 1986: *The three characteristics of minor literature are the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation.* (Deleuze and Guattari)
- 1996: *The minor is not a theory of the margins, but a different way of working with material.* (Katz)
- 2005: *When we juxtapose **minor** with **transnationalism**, a new field of meanings emerges with an array of combinations of issues that depart from existing notions of “minority discourse.”* (Lionnet and Shih)

Slide 9

Defining the Minor

- 2017: *The minor creates or unearths new or unexpected, if tangential, trajectories.* (Sharp)
- 2020: *Minor feelings occur when American optimism is forced upon you, which contradicts your own racialized reality, thereby creating a static of cognitive dissonance.* (Park Hong)
- 2021: *The task of the minor is to rethink the terms, conditions, and operations that define not only whom or what we value but also how we value.* (Yapp)

Slide 10

Alien Forms uses the **minor genres of academic writing** to describe the peripheralization and undervaluation of the many types of writing we do as academics.

Slide 11

CAN MINOR GENRES OF ACADEMIC WRITING ADVANCE SCHOLARSHIP?

Slide 12

SOME OF THE MINOR GENRES USED IN *ALIEN FORMS*

Abstract * Faculty Activity Report * Syllabus * Annotation * Concept Note
* Book Proposal * PowerPoint Slide * Editorial Headnote * Grant Proposal

* Statement of Purpose * Lesson Plan * Conference Paper * Mission Statement * Program Overview Statement of Purpose * Editor's Introduction * Reader Report * CFP * Interview

Slide 13

Introducing the Shadow Archive

Slide 14

The shadow archive

- Academic institutions tend to privilege (and reward) a very narrowly conceptualized type of writing and scholarly expression.
- The capaciousness of scholarly praxis cannot be accounted for by the visible archive of scholarship and intellectual activity generated through publication alone.
- It is important to find a way to inventory and assess the diverse forms of scholarly writing, thinking, and engagement that lead to humanities scholarship.

Slide 15

The shadow archive

The shadow archive describes the plethora of documents—many of them composed using minor genres of academic writing—that an expansively conceptualized scholarly praxis generates.

Slide 16

The shadow archive

- Naming and making legible the work housed in the shadow archive is part of an effort to disarticulate **forms** of academic labor from **genres** of scholarly writing, and to exemplify how Global Asias creates opportunities to draw attention to the capaciousness of scholarly praxis that deliberately exceeds the institutional taxonomies currently used to assess academic labor.

- To alter the academic landscape and create viable alternatives to the models of valuation it currently supports, we must engage more robustly with the complexity of scholarly practice and consider diversifying how we write about the work we do as humanities scholars.

Slide 17

A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

What happens if you treat major and minor genres of academic writing in relation and you work to make visible the labor that is often relegated to the shadow archive?

Slide 18

Major Genres, Minor Genres, Visible Archive, Shadow Archive all contribute to Academic Labor

Slide 19

Published Writing

- “Agency/Asiancy”
- *Verge* 1.1 Editors’ Introduction (with Eric Hayot)
- “The ‘Comfort’ of Critical Consolidation: Pedagogy, Ethical Alienation, and Asian American Literary Studies”
- “(The) Transpacific Turns”
- “Global Asias—On the Structural Incoherence of Imaginable Ageography”
- “Global Asias: Method, Architecture, Praxis”

The Shadow Archive

- *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* journal proposal
- English Department Mentoring Program
- Global Asias MAP book series proposal
- Tactics & Theories Project

- Global Asias: Contemporary Asian and Asian American Art exhibit
- Luce Foundation concept note and grant proposal

Slide 20

Published Writing

- “The Asian American Novel”
- “Waymarks: A Reader’s Guide” (w/Charlotte Eubanks)
- “Acts of Suspension” (w/Charlotte Eubanks)
- *Global Asias: Tactics & Theories*
- *Alien Forms and Minor Genres: A Speculative Handbook of Academic Labor*

The Shadow Archive

- Japan Foundation partnership and Cultivating Early Career Networks (CECN) program
- NEH Summer Institute grant proposal
- Global Asian Studies (University of Tokyo) interview
- Global Asias Writing the Profession (GAWP)
- Global Asias: Institutional Form, Alien Form project

Slide 21

Global Asias As/Through Alien Form

Slide 22

DEFINITIONS

Unconventional volumes of scholarship that explore the possibilities of scholarly writing by embracing multiple genres, situating knowledge production both within and beyond academic contexts, locating authorial expertise in bodily as well as intellectual sites, and cross-pollinating knowledge across disciplinary and field boundaries through writing that is both critical and creative.

Slide 23

Forms of writing and professional enactment that (1) engage the genres in which they are working speculatively, (2) leverage the conceptual possibilities of generic frictions to create structural dissonance, (3) challenge the distinctions that disarticulate research, teaching, and service orientations, (4) embrace the synergistic possibilities of cross-pollinating epistemologies and practices across institutional taxonomies of scholarly labor, and (5) support the formation of new assemblages of scholarly labor whose value isn't overdetermined by existing institutional definitions of TRS.

Slide 24

A form of academic labor whose incongruency with existing determinative definitions of TRS opens up new possibilities for utilizing it in speculative, worldmaking ways.

Slide 25

EXAMPLES

- *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*
- Global Asias: Method, Architecture, Praxis book series
- Global Asias: Tactics & Theories
- Global Asias: Institutional Forms/Alien Forms

Slide 26

“And all of it is alien because it leverages the incongruency between academic labor and existing determinative definitions of TRS to open up the speculative, worldmaking possibilities of Global Asias knowledge production.”

Slide 27

Thank you
Tina Chen
tcg3@psu.edu

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Index

Page numbers in italics refer to illustrations.

- "Abducted by Aliens!" (Light), 161–62, 197–99
Abductions (Choi), 162–63
Abel, Jessamyn, 137
abstraction, 12
academia, 5, 7–8; administrators of, 15, 217, 221, 233; advancement in, 15, 25, 37, 67, 215, 225–26, 238, 243; minority faculty roles in, 21; values of, transforming, 40; writing's role in, 119–20, 217, 228–29. *See also* institutional forms; institutions; labor
academic publishing: alien forms in, 216–17, 224, 226, 235, 238–39; transparency in, 31–32, 212–13, 232, 239–40, 243
academic writing: development of, 10–11, 119–20, 206, 212–13, 222–23, 228, 236, 241–43; faculty activity report as, 21–22; hierarchies in, 22; monograph dominating, 3, 5, 25, 26. *See also* genres
"Acts of Suspension" (Chen and Eubanks), 123–25
advocacy work, 20
aesthetics (keyword), 178, 184
African American soldiers, 189–90
agency, 60, 68, 90–91, 115
"Agency/Asiancy" (Chen), 60, 79, 90–91, 117
ageography, imaginable, 60–61, 96–97, 107, 130, 132, 144–46
alien, the, 16; American identity and, 194; cancer as, 38–39; hybridity of, 62; as immigrant or other, 165, 188, 191–93; Latino/a as, 192; the self as, 38, 67, 202–4, 224, 230; *Tactics & Theories* as, 102
alien abduction, 16, 160, 186, 224; and abduction, generally, 193–94; ambivalences of, 196–97; and conspiracy thinking, 195–96; dissonances of, 198, 199–200, 203–5, 207–9; Global Asias work and, 200, 204, 206–7; heuristic reading of, 186–87, 206–9; and immigrant experience, 162–63; and Japanese American internment, 162, 197–99; racial aspects of, 161, 164, 188–89, 191–93, 204; slavery and, 192; and structural dissonance, 186–87, 202–4, 206–9; tropes of, 161, 187–88; and unstable praxis, 206
Alien Asian, 167
alienation, 17, 60, 163, 167–68; from the academy, 230; ethical, 94; race and, 191–92
AlieNation: Asian American Literatures (course), 165–68
Alien Form: Genre and the Production of Ethnic American Literatures, 158
alien forms, 11–12, 16, 40–41, 46, 201–2; in academic publishing, 216–17, 224, 226, 235, 238–39; of collective praxis, 42, 99–100, 106, 112–15, 117–18, 129, 131–32, 134–35, 139; *Convergence* features as, 35; defining, 48–49, 50, 59, 80–81, 121, 222–23; embodiment and, 91; envisioning, 50–51, 59–63; examples of, 82, 125–26, 213–14; GAWP as, 120–21; Global Asias inviting, 86–87, 93–94; mentoring and, 111–12; normative forms becoming, 227, 243; as privilege, 230; regenreing generating, 114; as speculative, 28–29, 100, 200; the "why" of, 228–29
Alien Forms and Minor Genres (Chen): audience of, 14–15, 221–22; cancer in, 218–19, 234, 237–38, 243; coda to, 211–12, 213–15, 223, 232, 238–39, 243; critical consolidation in, 227, 230, 234, 236–37; dissonance in, 206, 208, 220–21, 223–24, 233–34, 237; genres absent from, 218, 237; goals

Alien Forms and Minor Genres (Chen) (*cont.*)
 of, 4–6, 8; illness in, 218–19; images in,
 221; keywords in, 230–31; as paradoxical,
 239–40; publication norms challenged by,
 225–26, 235; relation of, to other projects,
 123; repetition and returning in, 215,
 226, 227–28, 234–36; republication in,
 224–25, 227–28, 230, 234–36; revisions
 to, 222–23, 237–39; structural dissonance
 of, 9–10; weaknesses in, 219–20. *See also*
 reader reports
 alienizing praxis, 34, 38, 95, 201–2, 233, 239
 allegiance, 68, 97, 133, 200
Americanah (Adichie), 177, 183
 American Historical Association (AHA),
 25–26
 Andersen, Chris, 12
 annotated bibliography, 84–85, 126, 243
 aphasia, 117
 architecture. *See* infrastructure
 archives, as inventional, 10, 62
 area studies, 14, 50, 131; and critical ethnic
 studies, 85–87, 100, 109, 133, 138; siloed
 from diaspora studies, 109, 143–44, 146–47
Area X (VanderMeer), 169, 171, 175
 Argersinger, Jana, 31
 Arndt, David, 13
Arrival (film, dir. Villeneuve), 169, 176
 Asia: beyond East-West binary, 144, 147;
 fluidity of, 105, 153; particularity of, 91; un-
 dermining unified notions of, 129, 149n2
 Asia–Latin America, 141
 Asian América, 109
 “Asian America,” 165
 Asian American literary criticism, 225,
 231–32, 235
 Asian American literatures: alien abduction
 and, 162–63; course on, 165–68; genre fic-
 tion and, 162; “post-identity,” 159–64, 199
 “Asian American Novel, The” (Chen), 61,
 118–19
 Asian American studies, 6, 29, 68, 86, 109,
 138, 140; ethics in, 94–95; humanities
 focus of, 231–32; service work in, 89; and
 the transpacific, 95–96

Asian American subjects: as “double
 agents,” 68; legibility of, 118
 Asiancy, 90–91
 Asian diaspora studies, 6, 29, 33, 91, 109,
 136, 138, 140, 142–44, 146–47
 Asian studies, 6, 29, 86, 91, 109, 138, 140
 Asia Shorts, 122, 139, 143
 “Asias Reinvented,” 105, 106
 assemblages of labor, 30, 96
 Association for Asian Studies (AAS), 107, 128
 asymmetry, 60–61
Atomik Aztex (Foster), 177, 183
 authenticity (keyword), 178, 182

 Bacalzo, Dan, 140
 Ball, Cheryl, 32–33
 Barrios, Jacqueline, 130
 Bazerman, Charles, 32
 Beebee, Thomas, 28
Behind the Curtain of Scholarly Publishing
 (Giberson), 32–33
 Berlant, Lauren, 11, 88
Best We Could Do, The (Bui), 165, 167
 bildungsroman (keyword), 178, 181
Bird King, The (Wilson), 169, 174
Black Sun (Roanhorse), 169, 174
 body, the: alien forms and, 91; as authorial
 site, 12, 48, 59, 80; vulnerability of, 219,
 237–38, 243
 border crossings, 40
 borderwaters, 147
 boundaries, disrupting, 69, 143, 146–47
 Boyer, Anne, 11, 38
 Boyer, Ernest, 5, 23–24, 40
 Bradley, Omar, 189
 Brown, Bridget, 195
Buddha in the Attic, The (Otsuka), 165, 166
 Burgett, Bruce, 60
 Burns, Christy, 164
 Butler, Octavia, 151

 Camacho, Keith, 133
 cancer, 38–40, 67–68; in *Alien Forms*, 218–19,
 234, 237–38, 243; scholarship changed by,
 90–91, 116–17; service work and, 89

- canonicity, 95
 captivity narratives, 194
 cartography, 130
 Castiglia, Christopher, 194
 Champagne, Duane, 12
 "Chapter Six" (Jones), 169, 174
 Chen, Kuan-hsing, 13, 130
 Chen, Mel, 12
 Chen, Mike, 186
 chimera creation, 62, 103, 111–12, 213
 Chin, Elizabeth, 11
 Chinese Exclusion Act, 166
 Choi, Chiwan, 162–63
 Chu, Wesley, 202–4
 Chua Beng Huat, 130, 149n2
 Chuh, Kandice, 88, 159
 Chun, Stephanie, 99
 circulatory histories, 13, 130
 citizenship, 188–89, 193
 codas, 211–14
 Cold War, 86, 109, 130, 161; racial dimension
 of, 188, 189–90
 Coleman, Leo, 137
 collaboration, 31–32, 34–37, 38, 41–42, 99,
 100–101, 131; acts of suspension and,
 101–2, 124–25; beyond institutional
 boundaries, 146–47; and community of
 care, 125; editing as, 9, 30–31, 99, 106, 117,
 139, 153–54, 211–14, 240–43; in humani-
 ties, 116–17; in mentoring, 111, 137; in
 summer institutes, 113–14; and support
 of others, 106
 collaborative lectures, 178
 "‘Comfort’ of Critical Consolidation, The"
 (Chen), 60, 94–95, 228
 "comfort women," 94–95, 228, 235–36
 Computing Research Association, 42–43
 concept mapping, 50, 58
 conference campaign, 172
 conspiracy thinking, 195–96
 constellation, 16, 17, 100, 135
 Contemporary Ethnic American Litera-
 tures: Reading Beyond Race (course),
 160, 177–85
 conventions. *See* genres
 convergence, 230
 Convergence, 9, 34–36, 87, 99, 117, 122, 140–41
 conversation, power of, 116, 135
 Cornett, Michael, 31
 Cortiñas, Jorge Ignacio, 192
 Council of Editors of Learned Journals
 (CELJ), 31
 countermapping, 130
 coverage, 102
 crisis in the humanities, 13
 critical consolidation: in *Alien Forms*,
 227, 230, 234, 236–37; defining, 46–47,
 236–37; dissonance and, 236–37; field
 formation and, 133, 145–46; relational
 nonalignment and, 139–40; resisting, 34,
 48, 92, 94–95, 108, 119, 132, 133, 145–46
 critical fictions, 118
 critical studies, 11–13, 29, 138
 cross-pollination, 7, 12, 48–49
 Cultivating Early Career Networks (CECN)
 project, 110–12, 137
 CV, 218
 Davies, Peter Ho, 187–89
 Dayrit, Cian, 130
 Dean, Jodi, 193, 195
 decolonization, 139
Deep, The (Solomon), 169, 174
 DEI statement, 218
 Deleuze, Gilles, 73, 93
 Deng, Weiling, 130
 Derrida, Jacques, 15, 18, 160
 Dhingra, Pawan, 231
 diaspora studies. *See* Asian diaspora
 studies
 difference, 131, 204–5
 Dimock, Wai Chee, 160
 Dirlik, Arif, 132
 disability and illness. *See* cancer
 discipline vs. field, 133–34, 142
 "discrepant engagement," 205–6
 displacement, 147
 dissonance, 9–10, 90–91, 187, 224; in
 alien abduction stories, 198, 199–200,
 203–5, 207–9; critical consolidation

dissonance (*cont.*)

and, 236–37; limits to, 229–30, 234, 238;
smoothing over, 238; and speculative
possibilities, 17, 45, 68–69, 200–201,
206–8, 234; as strategy, 198, 205–6,
216–17, 220

“double agents,” 68

“double diaspora,” 147

Duara, Prasenjit, 12–13, 129–30, 204

Dubrow, Heather, 27

Dudziak, Mary, 190

Duke University Press, 216, 222, 226

editing, 30–33, 38, 40, 116–17; as alien form,
33–34; as collaboration, 9, 30–31, 99, 106,
117, 139, 153–54, 211–14, 240–43; as field
formation, 31–32, 153–54; foreground-
ing process of, 213–14; as supportive of
others, 21, 31–32, 99, 106

editorial pedagogy, 32–33, 99

editors, influence of, 31–32, 211–12

editor's introductions, 79, 91–94

Education of Little Tree, The (Carter), 177, 182

elaboration, 41–42

Emergency Skin (Jemisin), 169, 174

Emmerson, Donald, 97, 133–34, 200

emotion, “minor,” 93

encyclopedia articles, 95–96

endeavor statement, 67–69, 151–52, 233,
242–43

epistemic asymmetry, 95

epistemic colonialism, 130

epistemological nonconsolidation, 116

epistemologies, Global Asias, 36–37, 116,
119, 130

Erasure (Everett), 177, 181

Espiritu, YẾN Lê, 140

ethics, 94–95

ethnic fiction, 11, 160–64; authors challeng-
ing conventions of, 177–78, 186–87; and
speculative fiction, 11, 160–64, 186–87,
199, 200, 224

ethnic studies, 14, 50, 100, 231–32

Eubanks, Charlotte, 9, 36, 79, 97, 99, 101–2,
108, 111, 113, 123–25, 135, 143, 149n2

evenness, 102

evolution of thought, 94–95, 206–7, 220,
222–23, 228, 236

Executive Order 9981, 189

expertise and mastery, 101–2, 134–35, 204

“Exuberant Forms,” 104, 106

Eyman, Douglas, 32

faculty activity report, 21–22, 227; labor as
valued in, 22, 27; speculative, 29, 85

field consolidations, 118–19

field formation, 3, 6–7, 12–13, 30, 95–96,
224, 225; critical consolidation and, 133,
145–46; editing contributing to, 31–32,
153–54; GA1 as, 37–38, 140; service work
as, 7; as speculative fiction, 17, 155–56,
214–15; *Verge* as, 93–94, 140, 153–54.

See also infrastructure

field vs. discipline, 133–34, 142

field work, 92, 115

forced migration, 147–48

form (keyword), 178, 184

forms: genres differentiated from, 28,
71–72, 212; proliferation of, 16–17;
structural dissonance and, 47–48

framing and facilitating discussion (2F), 179

freer agency, 68–69

Frow, John, 28

Fukushima, Annie Isabel, 148

futures, alternative, 9

gargoyles, 62

generic friction, 10, 16, 22–23, 68, 81, 92,
200, 237; in alien abduction stories, 162;
in Asian American literatures, 160–64,
186–87, 198–99; defining, 47; structural
dissonances created by, 30, 47–48, 59,
119, 121, 186–87, 208

genre (keyword), 178, 184

genre criticism, 27

genre fiction. *See* alien abduction;
speculative fictions

genre poaching, 160, 177–78

genres, 3–8, 155; architecture of, 207;
arguments worked through, 10–11,

- 126, 200–202, 228, 238; distinctions between, 170; diversifying, 34, 42, 44–45; experimental, 11–12, 34–35; hybrid, 5, 15; participation in, 28; previous approaches to, 5; as speculative fictions, 3, 17, 28–30, 39, 44, 71, 155, 200–201, 207–8, 214. *See also* teaching, research, and service (TRS)
- “George Dee Magic Washer,” 166
- Giberson, Greg, 32
- Girl with All the Gifts, The* (Carey), 169, 175
- Global Asian Studies (GAS) interview, 115–18
- Global Asias, 4, 8, 45, 223–24, 225; in the AAS, 128; alien forms invited by, 86–87, 93–94; art exhibition, 103–7; as conceptual infrastructure, 33, 135, 136–37; epistemologies of, 36–37, 116, 119, 130; formation of, 6, 12–13, 27; vs. Global Asia/s, 148n1; as infrastructure, 14, 136–37, 142, 146, 236; infrastructure for, 33, 48, 86–87, 89–90, 97–100, 107–11, 116, 135–37, 207; institutional forms of, 82; iterations of, 129–32, 133, 138–39, 236; multidisciplinary of, 133–34, 136, 140–41; as speculative endeavor, 9, 29–30, 68–69, 92, 97; structural dissonance in, 9–10, 17, 107, 116, 187; as term, 138; totalizing potential of, 145–46, 206; and transpacific studies, 132–33
- “Global Asias and Japan Studies,” 112, 137
- Global Asias: Contemporary Asian and Asian American Art*, 103–5, 106–7
- Global Asias Initiative (GAI), 3, 7, 19, 33; as alien form, 37–38, 100, 153–55; concept note and grant proposal, 108–10; as field formation, 37–38, 140; as laboratory, 41; mentoring infrastructure of, 110–12; summer institute of, 112–15, 122, 154–55; *Verge* as engine of, 135
- Global Asias: Institutional Form/Alien Form*, 121–23, 139
- “Global Asias: Method, Architecture, Praxis” (Chen), 61, 99, 107–8, 127
- Global Asias: Method, Architecture, Praxis (Global Asias MAP), 35, 82, 108, 149n2; alien nature of, 99; proposal, 97–100
- “Global Asias: On the Structural Incoherence of Imaginable Ageography” (Chen), 96–97
- Global Asias Summer Institute, 101, 112–15, 122
- Global Asias: Tactics & Theories* (Eubanks and Chen), 35–36, 82, 100–103, 108, 131–32, 155; as convergence, 101; introductory materials to, 123–25; summer institutes and, 113, 115
- Global Asias Writing the Profession (GAWP), 36–37, 119–21
- globalization, 12–13, 129, 131, 178, 183
- Gold Diggers* (Sathian), 165, 168
- Gordon, Avery, 11, 94
- grounded relation, 137–38
- Guattari, Félix, 73, 93
- Hartman, Saidiya, 11
- Hashimoto, Jacob, 104
- Hau’ofa, Epeli, 132
- Haydock, Shana Bulhan, 202
- Hayot, Eric, 79, 85, 91, 149n2
- Hendler, Glenn, 60
- Henry Luce Foundation, 108, 109
- Hill, Barney, 161, 187–88
- Hill, Betty, 161, 187–88
- Ho, Engseng, 13
- Hong, Cathy Park, 74, 93
- Hopkins, Budd, 196
- Hoskins, Janet, 132
- Houser, Heather, 12
- How Alike Are We* (Kim), 169, 174
- How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe* (Yu), 169, 176
- Huang, Betsy, 160, 164
- Huang, Yunte, 132
- Huat, Chua Beng, 13
- “Hull Case, The” (Davies), 187–89, 190–91, 192
- humanities, 41; Asian American studies focusing on, 231–32; conversation central to, 116; letters of recommendation and, 218; vs. sciences, 24–26, 41
- human trafficking, 194

- humor, 203
- hybridity, 5, 15
- Ianetta, Melissa, 32
- identity: American, 194; bias and, 219;
hypostatic, 205, 209; as keyword, 178, 182
- imaginable ageography, 60–61, 96–97, 107,
130, 132, 144–46
- immigrant experience, 162–63, 165, 188,
191–93
- incommensurability, 47, 139–40, 231
- incongruency, 30, 33–34, 44–45, 49, 59, 82,
126
- Indigeneity, 132–33
- infrastructure, 9, 34, 48; for collegiality,
89–90; genre and, 207; Global Asias as, 14,
136–37, 142, 146, 236; Global Asias requir-
ing, 33, 48, 86–87, 89–90, 97–100, 107–11,
116, 135–37, 207; labor of creating, 152–53;
limits of, 128–29; for mentoring, 110–12
- Ink* (Varvoulas), 169, 176
- Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia
(IASA), 115
- institutional forms, 36–37, 68, 79, 119;
activity report reinforcing, 22, 240;
analyzing, 28–29, 207; creation of, 47,
113, 121–23, 143, 152; incongruency and,
30, 34; mentorship as, 89. *See also* teach-
ing, research, and service (TRS)
- institutionalization, 46–47, 68, 95, 122–23,
133, 139–40, 146
- institutions: constraints of, 7, 27, 42, 44,
68–69, 85, 143; disruption of, 7, 37,
68–69, 90, 116, 119, 121–23, 126, 128, 143,
145–46, 149n2; imperatives of, 4, 26
- inter-Asian dynamics, 130
- Interrupted Journey, The* (Fuller), 187
- In the Distance* (Diaz), 177, 185
- inventory, 129
- “invisible labor,” 20, 21
- isolation, 120
- Jameson, Fredric, 295
- Japanese American internment, 162, 167,
197–99
- Japan Foundation, New York (JFNY),
110–12, 137
- Japan studies, 110, 137
- Jeon, Joseph, 159
- Jones, Stephen Graham, 158
- Kaneko, Jun, 104, 105
- Kang, Laura Hyun Yi, 94
- Katz, Cindi, 73, 93
- keyword essays, 84, 90–91, 179–80, 240–41,
242
- keywords, 33, 35–36, 46, 60–61, 119; in *Alien
Forms and Minor Genres*, 230–31; in course
syllabi, 178–79, 180; critical genealogies
of, 60; and keyword projects, 179–80; in
Tactics & Theories project, 100, 102
- Khanna, Ranjana, 8
- Khúc, Mimi, 11
- Kim, Jiyeon, 115
- Kim, Junyoung Verónica, 141
- Kim, Nadia, 231
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall, 11
- King, Tiffany Lethabo, 12
- knowledge formation, 6–11; agency and,
68; beyond academia, 12, 59; in human-
ities vs. sciences, 24–26; locations of,
87; naturalization of, 144; the neoliberal
university and, 131; transfield, 33–34, 97,
100–101; unconsolidated, 102
- Korean War, 189, 190
- Kress, Susan, 25
- Kuhn, Thomas, 204
- Kwan, SanSan, 140
- Labaree, David, 5, 24
- labor, 3–4, 13–15, 41–42, 134–35;
administrative, 4; architectural, 152–53;
assemblages of, 30, 96; and generic
friction, 47, 81, 239; inventorying as, 129;
new models of, 6–8, 27, 155;
“regenreing,” 46, 61; visibility of, 78, 112,
232. *See also* collaboration; teaching,
research, and service (TRS)
- language, 73, 93, 138
- Le, Dinh, 104–5

- Le, Nam, 160
 Lee, Chang-rae, 162
 Lee, Fred, 134
 Lee, Jerry Won, 98
 Lee, Rachel, 90
 LeMenager, Stephanie, 12
 Lepselter, Susan, 191–92, 195
 Lerner, Mitchell, 189
 lesson plans, 44–45, 61, 103, 172
 letters of recommendation, 218
 Levine, Caroline, 6, 28
 liberal arts colleges, 13, 24
 Light, Claire, 161–62, 197–99
Light Years from Home (Chen), 186
 Lionnet, Françoise, 73, 93
 literary and cultural studies, 14
 literary criticism, 3, 6
 Liu, Hung, 105
 Liu, Ken, 158
 Liu, Kenji, 208
Lives of Tao, The, 202–4
 locatedness, 102, 124
 Lora, Àlex, 192
 Lowe, Lisa, 188
 Luey, Beth, 31–32
 Lukin, Josh, 160, 178
 Lye, Colleen, 159

 MacArthur, Douglas, 189
 Mack, John, 196
 Mackey, Nathaniel, 205
 mapping, 130–31
Marrow Thieves, The (Dimaline), 169, 176
 mastery and expertise, 101–2, 134–35, 204
 Matsuda, Paul Kei, 32
 Matthew, Patricia, 21
 Melley, Timothy, 195
 mentoring, 3, 7, 14, 19, 21, 30–31, 40; ben-
 efits and pitfalls of, 88–89; centering,
 89–90, 99, 102; “cohorts,” 88; inequitable
 rates of, 229; infrastructure for, 110–12;
 isolation addressed by, 120
 mentoring programs, 19, 79, 87–90, 106,
 110–12
 method, as keyword, 33

 methodology: chiasitic, 131–32; of
 disobedience, 42. *See also* collaboration
 migration and movement, 13, 86, 105, 130,
 131, 147–48, 153
 Minakata Kumagusu, 141
 minor, the, defining, 73–74
 “minor feelings,” 93
 minor genres, 8, 10, 16, 48, 72, 92, 242–43;
 annotated bibliographies as, 84–85;
 defining, 93. *See also* shadow archive; and
 specific genres
 minority discourse, 73, 88
 “minor-ness,” 93
 minor networks, interactions between,
 73, 93
 minor transnationalism, 93
 Modern Language Association (MLA), 25
 Moffett, Joe, 160
Mongrels (Jones), 177, 184
 Morinoue, Hiroki, 104
 Moser, Drew, 23
 movement. *See* migration and movement
 “Moving Stories,” 105, 106
 Murakami, Takashi, 105
My Favorite Thing Is Monsters (Ferris),
 177, 184

 Nappi, Carla, 42
 narrative statement, 67–68, 242–43
 nation, 86
 Native American colonization, 192
Native Speaker (Lee), 162
 Newitz, Annalee, 161, 188
 Nguyen, Viet Thanh, 92, 132
 nonalignment. *See* relational nonalignment

 objects and contexts, 137–38
 object status, 90
 Onaga, Lisa, 140
On Such a Full Sea (Lee), 162, 165, 168, 177,
 184
 open-access publishing, 100, 109, 149n2
 optimism, American, 74
 Orientalism, 190
 Oxford History of the Novel in English, 118

- Oxford Research Encyclopedia (ORE), 96
- Ozeki, Ruth, 118, 228, 232
- Pacific Islanders, 232
- Pacific Ocean, 95–96, 132–33
- Palmer Museum, 103, 107
- “Paper Menagerie, The” (Liu), 166, 169, 174
- paradigms, 204–5
- paradox, 239–40
- Parrish, Paul, 25
- particularity vs. universality, 91
- pedagogy, 6–7, 212–13, 221, 222, 228, 239; of editing, 32–33, 99
- pedagogy portfolio, 172
- peer review, 214
- People in the Trees, The* (Yanagihara), 177, 182
- permission, praxis of, 42
- personal statement, 67, 218, 238, 241, 243
- personhood, complex, 94
- personnel files, 218
- place, 138; imaginary, 47, 142; structural incoherence and, 47, 142
- Plumb, J. H., 13
- Plummer, Brenda Gayle, 190
- Poet X, The* (Acevedo), 177, 181
- political immediacy, 73
- political science, 133–34
- polyvocality, 10
- population movement. *See* migration and movement
- postracialism (keyword), 178, 185
- Powell, Malea, 32
- PowerPoint slide presentations, 70–83, 242, 243
- praxis, alienizing, 34, 38, 95, 201–2, 233, 239
- Presner, Todd, 130
- productive elaboration, 28
- program-building, 30–31, 40
- promotion and tenure, 25, 37, 67, 215, 225–26, 238, 243
- public scholarship, 172–73
- race: alien abduction and, 161, 164, 188–89, 191–93, 204; alienation and, 191–92; in Cold War, 188, 189–90; course on “reading beyond,” 160, 177–85; “minor feelings” related to, 93; in US military, 189–90
- racialization, Asian American, 159, 168
- Ramseyer controversy, 236
- reader reports, 212, 213–14, 215–16; dissonance in, 220–21, 223–24, 233–34; as genre, 223, 232–33; from reader #1, 216–23; from reader #2, 223–32; response to, 232–40; revisions suggested in, 222–23, 227–28, 229–32; speculation in, 233
- Ream, Todd, 23
- Recent Alien Abductions* (Cortiñas), 192
- refusal, politics of, 42
- “regenreing,” 46, 61, 114–15
- relational nonalignment, 9–10, 14, 46, 47, 101, 107, 128, 132, 138, 201–2; incommensurability and, 47, 139–40; and self-reflexive critical practice, 135
- representation (keyword), 178, 182
- research creation, 4, 173; privileging, 22–23, 26, 217; refusal to privilege, 4, 7, 23–24
- research university, 24
- Rice, Jenny, 10, 34, 62, 103, 208
- Rice, R. Eugene, 23
- Rieder, John, 29
- Ringuette, Dana, 25
- Risteen, Nicholas, 136
- Roberts, A., 161
- Roberts, Brian Russell, 147
- Roebuck, Kristin, 148
- Rojas, Carlos, 33, 137
- Rosario, Nelly, 158
- Rose, Dell, 195
- Ruano-Ramirez, J. A., 140
- Ruskola, Teemu, 86
- Said, Edward, 96, 133
- Sakai, Naoki, 144
- Saldívar, Ramón, 164, 199
- Schnitzer, Jordan, 103, 106
- scholarly praxis, capacious, 25, 26–27, 42–43, 44–45, 70, 85

- scholarship, 23–24, 74, 76–77, 225–26;
 alienness of, 59–60, 224; “doubly
 decentered,” 86; expansive definition of,
 24–25, 26–27, 40, 71; historical, 25–26;
 legibility of, 34, 77; migration in, 147–48;
 opaque quality of, 14–15, 213. *See also*
 labor; minor genres; shadow archive
 science fiction. *See* speculative fictions
 “Secret Lives of the Nine Negro Teeth of
 George Washington, The” (Clark),
 169, 174
seeds, the (Nocenti and Aja), 169, 175
 self-reflexive critical practice, 134, 135
 Selinger, Vyjayanthi Ratnam, 141
 “semiotic precarity,” 98
 service work, 4, 6–8, 25, 88–89, 106. *See also*
 editing; mentoring
Severance (Ma), 165, 168
 shadow archive, 8, 10, 72, 76, 85; making
 visible, 78, 85, 98, 127, 148, 242–43; minor
 genres comprising, 77, 98; published
 writing’s relation to, 79
 Sharp, Chris, 74, 93
 Sharpe, Christina, 11, 12
 Shigematsu, Setsu, 133
 Shih, Shuh-mei, 73, 93
 Shimomura, Roger, 105
 Shu, Yuan, 133
 Singh, Julietta, 11
 singular narratives, 118–19
 “Skygypsies” (Dimacali and Bumanglag),
 168, 169, 174
 slides, 178
 So, Richard Jean, 133
 Sohn, Stephen Hong, 161
Something Sinister (Charara), 165, 167
 Song, Min Hyoun, 95
 Sonoda, Shigeto, 115
 speculation, 8–9, 172
 speculative fictions, 3, 11, 17, 39–40, 87,
 96–97, 151, 170; and ethnic fictions,
 11, 160–64, 186–87, 199, 200, 224; field
 formation as, 17, 155–56, 214–15; genres
 as, 3, 17, 28–30, 39, 44, 71, 155, 200–201,
 207–8, 214; social realism and, 186, 193
 Speculative Fictions: Worldbreaking,
 Worldtaking, Worldmaking (course),
 169–76
 speculative forms, 28–29, 47–48
 speculative genres, 98, 125; vs. determinis-
 tic, 27–29, 40–42, 44–46, 49, 71, 200–201,
 207–8; TRS as, 27, 29, 40–41, 45–46, 49,
 56–57, 151–56; TRS disarticulated by, 98,
 156, 200–202
 speculative possibilities, 17, 45, 68–69,
 200–201, 206–8, 234
 speculative worldmaking, 4, 57
 Spivak, Gayatri, 13, 149n2
 Squier, Susan, 12
 Srikanth, Rajini, 95
 Stanton, Domna, 25
 Stewart, Kathleen, 11
 “Story of Your Life, The” (Chiang), 169, 176
 strangeness as method, 34
 stratification, 5
 structural dissonance, 9–10, 13, 24, 46, 107,
 132; alien abduction and, 186–87, 202–4,
 206–9; alien forms causing, 48, 81; defin-
 ing, 47–48, 207; generic friction creat-
 ing, 30, 47–48, 59, 119, 121, 186–87, 208;
 in praxis, 202–8; and TRS, 22–23, 30–31,
 39, 48–49, 81, 207–8; in *Verge*, 9–10, 122,
 141, 142–43, 207–8
 structural incoherence, 24, 47, 141–42, 206
 suspension, 101–2, 124
 Suzuki, Erin, 132–33
 syllabi, 224; for *AlieNation: Asian American*
Literatures, 165–68; for *Contemporary*
Ethnic American Literatures: Reading
Beyond Race, 160, 177–85; course discus-
 sion in, 170–71, 179; keywords in, 178–79,
 180; for *Speculative Fictions: Worldbreak-*
ing, Worldtaking, Worldmaking,
 169–76
 sympathy, 60–61, 118–19
 tactical skepticism, 4, 12
 tactics, theories and, 113, 131–32
 Takamori, Akio, 105
 Takenaga, Barbara, 104

Taken: 12 Contemporary UFO Abduction

Narratives (Stanton), 187, 188

Tale for the Time Being, A (Ozeki), 177, 183

Tan, Chang, 103, 106

Tangsinmunkong, Pattajit, 115

Tea (Houston), 165, 166

teaching, research, and service (TRS), 3; as

alien forms, 30–32, 46, 59; as assessment, 5–6, 22–23, 25–28, 32–33, 41–42, 49, 233, 239; as deterministic, 27–32, 33, 44–45, 49, 52–53, 70, 99, 106; disability, illness, and, 39–40, 218–19, 234; editorial labor as, 32–33, 212; hierarchies of, 5–6, 8, 112; limitations of, 18–23, 25–26, 27, 29, 40–42, 151, 155–56, 239, 243; reader #2 on, 226–27, 228–29; regenreing, 46, 61, 106, 114–15; as scholarship, 23, 206; as speculative genres, 27, 29, 40–41, 45–46, 49, 56–57, 151–56; speculative genres disarticulating, 98, 156, 200–202; and structural dissonance, 22–23, 30–31, 39, 48–49, 81, 207–8. *See also* labor; minor genres

tea time, 178

tenure and promotion, 25, 37, 67, 215,

225–26, 238, 243

Teo, Grace, 140

theory and practice, 45, 46, 207

They Called Us Enemy (Takei), 165, 167

thick mapping, 130

This Is How You Lose the Time War (El-Mohtar and Gladstone), 169, 176

Thomas, Sheree Renée, 158

Tibaldi, Antonio, 192–93

Tiger Flu, The (Lai), 169, 175

Tin, CoCo, 130

Tiravanija, Rirkrit, 105, 144–45, 145, 150n10

transnationalism, 73, 93; as keyword,

178, 183

transpacific studies, 132–33, 232

“Transpacific Turns, The” (Chen), 60–61, 95–96

transparency: in academic labor, 14–15; in publishing, 31–32, 212–13, 232, 239–40, 243

tribology, 164

Tromly, Lucas, 188–89, 193

Truman, Harry, 189

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt, 11

Tuck, Eve, 12, 42, 139

Turin, Mark, 141

uncertainty, 17, 215

Uncle Sam Kicks Out the Chinaman (cartoon), 166

unconsolidation, 50–51, 60

undisciplining, 12, 46–47, 217

universality vs. particularity, 91

university, 5, 13, 24, 131

unsettling, 141

Untitled 2008–2011 (the map of the land of feeling), 144–45, 145, 150n10

US Armed Forces, integration of, 189–90

use value, 28, 71

US-Japan Junior Scholars Networking Project, 111

Verge: Studies in Global Asias, 6–7, 9–10, 19, 33–34, 46, 97–98; as alien form, 82, 153–54, 208; cancer and, 38–39, 116–17; concept-mapping, 50; *Convergence* feature of, 9, 34–36, 87, 99, 117, 122, 140–41; conversational qualities of, 140–41, 142–43; development of, 133–34; as field formation, 93–94, 140, 153–54; as GAI’s engine, 135; imaginable ageography and, 144–46; as infrastructure, 109; introduction to, 79, 91–94; Portfolio, 107; proposal for, 85–87; relational nonalignment in, 139–41, 207–8; structural dissonance in, 9–10, 122, 141, 142–43, 207–8; TRS and, 152, 153–54

Wacks, David, 147

Warashina, Patti, 105

“Waymarks: A Reader’s Guide” (Eubanks and Chen), 123–25

We Are Living Things (film), 192–94

West, the, 144

Western intellectual frameworks, 130

Whitehead, Colson, 162
Wierzbicka, Anna, 24–25
Wild Beauty (McLemore), 169, 175
Wilson, Rob, 132
Wissoker, Kenneth, 215–16, 234, 240
writing programs, generally, 120
writing studies, 32–33
“writing the profession,” 37, 119–20

X-Files, The, 192
Yamashita, Karen Tel, 158
Yang, K. Wayne, 12, 42, 139
Yano, Christine, 107, 127–28
Yapp, Hentyle, 74, 93
Zone One (Whitehead), 162, 177, 184

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