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Christ Ke Ha'i Mo'olelo:

Race, Christology and Pacific Islander Storytelling

A thesis presented for the degree of
Masters of Arts in Theology at Whitworth University

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Abstract

Christianity's unique contribution to racial justice discourse is its Christocentric interpretation of what it means to be human. And yet, one impulse of contemporary, justice-oriented Christian scholarship is to mimic secular critical race theory — lapsing into racial taxonomy and binary even to describe Christian ethnicity. This thesis takes J. Kameron Carter's *Race: A Theological Account* and Brian Bantum's *Redeeming Mulatto* as contemporary examples of how this method plays out in Christological claims.

In addition, critical race theology tends to focalize the transatlantic narrative of racialization that surfaces in the legal, sociopolitical sphere. The limits of this discourse are made plain in the presence of Christians of mixed ethnic heritage: those who are not “racially categorizable” or cannot locate themselves in the transatlantic narrative. The goal of this thesis is to address the experience of these individuals, and propose a Christological hermeneutic and lexicon that frees any reader to think of Christian ethnicity *apart from* race.

As such, this thesis steps away from critical race methodology and takes up literary analysis as its primary mode of theological reflection. It looks to the literature of mixed ethnic heritage: Natasha Trethewey's *Bellocq's Ophelia* (poetry), Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead* (fiction), and Eun Ji Koh's *The Magical Language of Others* (multilingual memoir). These three works separate what I call “racial ideological inheritance” from ethnic identity, posing specific questions to certain reigning concepts of Christian ethnicity.

Lastly, through the theologies of Justo Gonzalez, Jung Young Lee, Clive Pearson and Riasitone Ete, I propose a transpacific migrant Christology through a Hawaiian vocabulary, which defines Jesus Christ as *Ke Ha'i Mo'olelo* — The Great Storyteller. In light of Jesus' life, the Church holds an urgent storytelling vocation; Christian ethnicity, or the Gospel's depiction of the believer's relationship with the world, is a matter writing all people from all generations into God's family through embodied storytelling.

Statement of Integrity

I have composed this thesis and carried out the research which it represents. This thesis has not been accepted in any previous application for a degree. All quotations have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.



Lauren Kahanaakealohanokawaimakaokalani Padilla

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No 'oukou pākahi ko'u mahalo palena 'ole, mau a mau —
My gratitude for each of you multiplies beyond borders and beyond time.

Ho‘o Makaukau

(Hawaiian; to prepare, to make ready)

E Hō Mai ka ‘ike mai luna mai ē
 O nā mea huna no‘eau O nā mele ē
 E hō mai
 E hō mai
 E hō mai ē

*Grant us knowledge from above
 The knowledge hidden in the chants*

*Grant us
 Grant us
 Grant us¹*

In the summer of 2020, the catalytic events shaping the secular discourse of racial justice were the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and the Black Lives Matter protests. “I can’t breathe” and “Say her name” were reignited into national rallying cries. H.E.R.’s protest song “I Can’t Breathe,” its music video exhibiting footage of the BLM protests and a dense wall of the names of the Black deceased, won Song of the Year in the 63rd Grammy Awards.² The Christian discourse followed suit. The Porter’s Gate released a rendition of “O Sacred Head Now Wounded” on their record *Lament Songs* with the opening lyric “*O sacred neck now wounded...*”³ In June, the *New York Times* published an article by African-American New Testament scholar Esau McCaulley, “What the Bible Has to Say About Black Anger,”⁴ and McCaulley rapidly became a prominent voice in the forum of biblical justice. Whitworth Campus Ministry Staff read McCaulley’s *Reading While Black*

1. Kanāka‘ole, Edith Kekuhikuhipu‘uoneo‘naali‘iokohala. “E Ho Mai.” A chant of entry into a learning space.

2. H.E.R. “I Can’t Breathe.” RCA Records, single, 2020, studio recording.

3. The Porter’s Gate. “O Sacred Neck, Now Wounded” Jon Guerra and Matt Maher, 2020, Integrity Music, track 2 on *Lament Songs*, 2020, studio recording.

4. McCaulley, Esau, “What the Bible Has to Say About Black Anger” *The New York Times*, June 14, 2020.

shortly after its publication that Fall, in preparation for hosting him as the inaugural Emmaus Scholars Lecturer.⁵ Also familiar to CMS by then were Brenda Salter McNeil (*Roadmap to Reconciliation*⁶), David Swanson (*Rediscovering the White Church*⁷), Daniel Hill (*White Awake*⁸), Michael Emerson and Christian Smith (*Divided By Faith*⁹), James Cone (*The Cross and the Lynching Tree*¹⁰), and others who are known for their work to contextualize racial justice and identity in Christian theology. There is much to be lamented, and celebrated, and much to be suspicious of as George Floyd's story continues to unfold; the conclusion of Derek Chauvin's trial in April 2021 initiated another wave of complex discussion to which Christians have made swift contributions.

Christian Wiman writes that "To every age Christ dies anew and is resurrected within the imagination of man."¹¹ While Wiman issues this remark as a firm scolding, it is also his confession of our particular need of Christ across all time and geography. The current ethos of social justice and academic theology in the U.S. suggests that Warner Sallman's *Head of Christ* has "died anew" and is now resurrected within the modern imagination "with a 'recrucified' black body hanging from a lynching tree."¹² Through their writing, the authors mentioned above faithfully search for Christ and respond to injustice in our distinct time and geography.

But Wiman also warns that our resurrections of Christ, when taken too far, can obstruct the Scriptural witness to Christ's presence in *every* "permutation of humanity."¹³ When the lynched

5. Whitworth's "Emmaus Scholars Program" is a one-year residential undergraduate program, an "intentional Christian community of faith, learning, and justice." See: Whitworth University, "Emmaus Scholars Program," Seely G. Mudd Chapel, <https://www.whitworth.edu/cms/administration/chapel/emmaus-scholars-program/>

6. McNeil, Brenda S. *Roadmap to Reconciliation*. (InterVarsity Press, 2015)

7. Swanson, David W. *Rediscovering the White Church: From Cheap Diversity to True Solidarity*. (InterVarsity Press, 2020)

8. Hill, Daniel. *White Awake: An honest look at what it means to be white*. (InterVarsity Press, 2017)

9. Emerson, Michael O., and Christian Smith. *Divided by Faith: Evangelical religion and the problem of race in America*. (Oxford University Press, USA, 2001)

10. Cone, James H. *The cross and the lynching tree*. (Orbis books, 2011)

11. Wiman, Christian. *My Bright Abyss: Meditation of a Modern Believer*. (Macmillan, 2013), 10.

12. Cone, xv.

13. Wiman, 10.

Christ becomes more a *definition* of Jesus of Nazareth than a hermeneutical tool — and I later pursue the argument that a version of this is occurring — we do the gospel’s “infinite cultural translatability” a disservice in our time.¹⁴ Cone writes:

The cross can heal and hurt; it can be empowering and liberating but also enslaving and oppressive. There is no one way in which the cross can be interpreted. I offer my reflections because I believe that the cross placed alongside the lynching tree can help us to see Jesus in America in a new light, and thereby empower people who claim to follow him to take a stand against white supremacy and every kind of injustice.¹⁵

Cone himself takes his own measures to present the lynched Christ as just one permutation among many — white supremacy as just one form of injustice among many — claiming and releasing Christ and the cross in the same motion.

In the thesis that follows, I aim to bring to the surface what Wiman suggests about Christology: it is always on some level lyrical. It perhaps cannot be done apart from human emotion and imagination. James Cone’s lynching tree may be one of the best examples of lyrical imagery in theology, born from the intimate connection between Jesus and his followers. This thesis explores another unique lyric at the heart of our polemic racial discourse — the lyric to which this author stands witness.

In 2020, one of Campus Ministry Staff’s chief initiatives was to inform its student leadership on biblical racial justice. This was an established part of Campus Ministry’s longer term DEI strategy, but it was timely, and after that summer the strategy was amended to prepare leaders to minister to students who were being deeply affected by the current events: for their pre-semester training in August 2020, those thirty-plus student leaders participated in a newly drafted retreat where the focus was framing the work of racial justice in their lives as disciples of Jesus. They were asked in one of their first sessions, for example, to engage David Swanson’s plenary talks from the 2019 Whitworth

14. Bediako, Kwame. *Jesus and the gospel in Africa: History and experience*. (Orbis Books, 2004), 16.

15. Cone, xix.

Ministry Summit on the legacies of slavery and redlining in the modern segregated church.¹⁶

Swanson argues that the continuation of de jure segregation into de facto segregation in our churches is an example that the Church is still being “disciplined by race.” It was shortly after this conference that Swanson synthesized and expanded on the themes of these talks in *Redisciplining the White Church*.

In this first session of the retreat, the leading staff member and most of the students were White Americans. It is not surprising that the implicit audience was “we as White people.” Because of the lecture’s basis in Swanson’s work, the talk held an implicit premise that racism in the U.S. is principally anti-Black. As a result, the talk’s indictments of racialization (albeit constructive and new to many of the students) were embedded in a lexical quagmire of racial binaries: White slave-holders vs. Black slaves, rich Whites vs. poor Blacks, etc.

This issue of vocabulary at the retreat was not merely incidental or habitual, but conspicuously rooted in the referenced authors’ shared historiographical gestures. Swanson derives his argument from anti-Black segregation policy in the twentieth century; Brenda Salter McNeil begins with a missionary experience with Jamaican people in Britain; Emerson and Smith investigate the role of White American evangelicalism in White-Black race relations. Without necessarily tracing their arguments back to the Atlantic Slave Trade, these authors invest their theological reflections in examples of racialization that emerge from the Atlantic and in the context of a European empire.¹⁷

This discussion is absolutely necessary, but it is only a fraction of the narrative of racialization in the U.S. — a country whose ethnic history is also transpacific. To project the narrative of racialization

16. Swanson, David, “Whitworth Ministry Summit 2019” June 24-27 2019, Whitworth University, conference plenary, recordings available on the Whitworth Office of Church Engagement SoundCloud: <https://soundcloud.com/user-262465439/sets/whitworth-ministry-summit-2019>

17. Portuguese anthropologist Cristiana Bastos notes, while also naming exceptions, that the Atlantic remains a primary reference point for literature on plantations, enslavement, racialism, post-empire diasporas, and reconfigurations of racism. Bastos points out that through the twentieth century, Hawai’i’s sugar economy had stronger ties to the Hawaiian monarchy and to Christian missionary descendants than to any European empire. Bastos, Cristiana. “Plantation Memories, Labor Identities, and the Celebration of Heritage,” *Museum Worlds* 8, 1 (2020): 25-45.

out of the Atlantic as *the* meta-narrative of race in the U.S. risks undermining the Pacific and Asian migrant perspective, the dominant non-White perspective in many West Coast communities.¹⁸ It was possible that Ministry Staff’s canon of justice- and race-oriented Christian literature was, in its undertow, riding rather than resisting the modern narrative of racial difference.

Perhaps none of this would have been immediately apparent or problematic if not for the six students at the retreat who were of mixed ethnic heritage. Of the six, only one had African-American ancestry and two had European ancestry. The rest identified with Asian American or Pacific Islander heritage. In the narrative of anti-Black racism, which was the focus of the discussion, where should the student with Korean ancestry see herself? How should she conceptualize advocacy? Reparations? Minority identity? In light of these students’ theological self-questionings, it was apparent that the material inadvertently placed their personal stories of ethnicity outside of the “main” narrative of racialization. Moreover, there was no model of participation being offered specifically to non-White, non-Black students of color.

These self-questionings are not unique to Christian racial discourse. At one end of the spectrum of any kind of racial advocacy is a fear of cultural appropriation that advises activists not to cross into other racial groups’ lanes of activism. But the compulsion to militantly guard one’s cultural expressions, too, savors of racial purist ideology. We may even read that compulsion as an extension of White nationalism. These “stay in your lane politics,” as poet Cathy Park Hong calls them in *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*, can only viably recruit from pools of pure ethnic specimens, which merely disintegrates the intricate overlaps of human experience that we call “ethnicity” back into social strata. Perhaps the only difference is that people of color get to draw the lines instead of White people. In this model, “cultural appropriation” lists itself in the catalogue of

18. For more comprehensive accounts of Asian-American/Pacific Islander history see: Takaki, Ronald T. *Strangers from a Different Shore : A History of Asian Americans*. Updated and Rev. Ed., 1st Back Bay ed. Boston: Little, Brown, 1998; Kim, Hyung-chan. *Dictionary of Asian American History*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); Hinnertshitz, Stephanie. *Race, Religion, and Civil Rights : Asian Students on the West Coast, 1900-1968*. Asian American Studies Today. (New Brunswick, New Jersey; London, [England]: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

racialization's economic side-effects: "we have internalized market logic where culture is hoarded as if it's a product that will depreciate in value if shared with others; where instead of decolonizing English, we are carving up English into hostile nation-states."¹⁹ Just as in the economy of marketable "multiculturalism" (in which non-White creatives are rewarded when their work is stamped with stereotypical exotic idioms and imagery) lane-lined activism treats race like a valuable intellectual property.

As an example of this lane-lining, we can observe the "model minority" myth that stands as a well-known hurdle for Asian-Americans wanting to engage racial justice. Asian-American historian Madeline Hsu describes the myth as a lasting product of the fictive, "celebratory narratives" of Asian-American success that depict them as quiet, complaisant and industrious, above racism and reproach. In reality, Hsu asserts, immigration policies like the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 were used to reward migrants who were "capable of, and even ideally suited to, participating in American democracy and capitalism," and penalize those who were not.²⁰ Cathy Park Hong echoes this wryly:

When America welcomed "the degraded race" back in 1965, it was because they were enmeshed in an ideological pissing contest with the Soviet Union. The United States had a PR problem. If they were going to stamp out the tide of Communism in poor non-Western countries, they had to reboot their racist Jim Crow image and prove that their democracy was superior. The solution was allowing nonwhites into their country to see for themselves...Asian American success was circulated to promote capitalism and to undermine the credibility of black civil rights: we were the "good" ones since we were undemanding, diligent, and never asked for handouts from the government. There's no discrimination, they assured us, as long as you're compliant and hardworking.²¹

Similar to Hsu in her claim that the model minority narrative "served neoliberal ends,"²² Hong suggests that in the mythological, model minority formula, the Asian American's ability to transcend class was used to back White America's political innocence and superiority — a coping mechanism

19. Hong, Cathy Park. *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*. (One World, 2020), 101-02.

20. Hsu, Madeline Y. *The good immigrants: How the yellow peril became the model minority*. (Princeton University Press, 2017), 4.

21. Hong, 22.

22. Hsu, 22.

for the violent history of anti-Blackness. Elsewhere in *Minor Feelings*, Hong writes about an incident where a certain “racial awareness mediator” told a client that “Asians are next in line to be white.”²³ Within this history of being White-America’s ideal immigrant, a Korean-American student doing ministry at a private, Primarily White, Christian university might not see herself as — or *be seen as* — “POC enough” to engage in racial justice on the same plane as White or Black Christians reckoning actively with the legacies of Black slavery.

On the other end of the spectrum, those who are both non-Black and non-White are sometimes met with a popular solidarity argument that “any action taken in the name of racial justice by a subordinated activist is in the interest of all racial groups.”²⁴ Viraj Patel pushes against this peculiar notion of a “binary model of allyship,” which romanticizes the image of Blacks, Asians, Whites, and Hispanics marching together behind a rally banner. Pursuing racial justice for Asian-Americans likely cannot “start with the fight against anti-Blackness” in the precise way such activists might argue:²⁵ Ronald Takaki makes it clear in *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* that anti-Asianness has been historically inflicted with different weapons, and on different cultural and geopolitical fronts.²⁶

Non-binary allyship is a dynamic to explore *within* our pan-ethnic categories as well: the contrasting histories of migration and racialization between, for example, Japanese-Americans and Filipino-Americans require us to imagine racial justice in particulars and not in pan-Asian

23. Hong, 18.

24. Patel, Viraj S. "Moving toward an inclusive model of allyship for racial justice." (*The Vermont Connection* 32, no. 1 (2011): 9), 80.

25. This was a statement posted by the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Maryland. "The Fight Against Anti-Blackness and the Pursuit of Cross-Racial Solidarity: Asian Americans in Racial Justice Work." *Asian American Studies Program*, The University of Maryland, 12 Oct. 2020, www.aast.umd.edu/eventsinput/2020/9/23/asian-americans-in-racial-justice-work.

26. For a thorough, disaggregated comparative of the racial experiences of these migrant groups, see: Takaki, Ronald T. *Strangers from a Different Shore : A History of Asian Americans*. Updated and Rev. Ed., 1st (Back Bay ed. Boston: Little, Brown, 1998). Takaki has published several ethnographies from the perspective of marginalized migrants, including migrants from Asia, Africa, Mexico, Europe, Ireland and Russia.

generalities.²⁷ This complex picture of the consequences and systems of racism toward the groups comprising the non-White aggregate suggests that our paradigms and strategies for racial justice should be at least as varied. A broader culture of racial justice wouldn't hurt, but there is no blanket model for activism that will turn the tide of racialization.

I speak of these histories and current sociopolitical dynamics in detail in order to bring the theological backdrop of the Campus Ministry retreat to the fore. In particular we should note that we (Campus Ministry) know the most about and tend to centralize the Atlantic narrative of racialization among our student discussions. As a result, the racial experiences of people in the middle of the “racial spectrum” are sometimes left oblique to the discourse of biblical racial justice — even if invited to the table. While we assess our implicit canon of justice-oriented biblical scholarship, we might also ask whether we are allowing *critical theories* of race to dictate our understandings of racialized humans — rather than allowing the diverse people of God to interrupt racialization.

Christianity's unique contribution to racial discourse is its Christocentric interpretation of what it means to be human: in the creation narrative, humans are created “in the image of God,” and in the New Testament, Paul defines Jesus *as* “the image of the invisible God, the one who is first over all creation.”²⁸ Paul's “Christocentric transformation of the Old Testament's understanding of the human vocation” is the basis for looking to the person of Jesus as the true human being who defines and reveals humanity.²⁹ In light of this unique wisdom, Christian scholars and activists have a

27. See Gamalinda, Eric. "Myth, Memory, Myopia: Or, I May Be Brown but I Hear America Singing." *Flippin': Filipinos on America*. Ed. Luis Francia and Eric Gamalinda. Philadelphia: Temple UP (1996): 1-5; Strobel, Leny Mendoza. "A personal story: becoming a split Filipina subject." *Amerasia Journal* 19, no. 3 (1993): 117-130. Filipino-American identity, especially in light of Spanish colonization, is often associated with amnesia, erasure, and cultural accommodation.

28. Genesis 1:26; Colossians 1:15-16 All Scriptural references henceforth are from the CEB.

29. Grenz, Stanley J. "Jesus as the Imago Dei: Image-Of-God Christology and the non-linear linearity of Theology." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 4 (12, 2004): 618; Robinson, Fr Dominic. *Understanding the Imago Dei: The Thought of Barth, von Balthasar and Moltmann*. (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2013).

commensurate responsibility to foreground the *imago dei* of Jesus Christ in our anti-racist discourse.³⁰ Should we succeed in this task, we still might rhetorically contradict ourselves when — whether from the pulpit, in our writing, or around the dinner table — we default to taxonomies derived from secular notions of race-based identity and ethnic purity. Language matters; a reconciliatory paradigm couched in the language of racial difference and/or racial purity does not pose an adequate challenge to the racial imaginary. In the case of Swanson’s or McNeil’s work, that implicit paradigm is Black advocacy. As J. Kameron Carter writes in critique of Cone’s Black liberation theology in *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, such tactics too readily “leave whiteness in place.”³¹

A Christological, Literary Departure from Critical Race Theory

I have alluded to the fact that Christian racial justice discourse has lexical and historiographical tendencies that link it to Critical Race Theory (CRT). That is, they share a vocabulary and have similar research strategies. While I will speak briefly in terms of the work of CRT scholars, we should keep these resonances in mind because they suggest that the tendencies (and limits) of CRT could also become *our* limits as the Church, as far as our theology of racial justice goes.³²

CRT is a young field according to most scholars, stemming from Critical Legal Studies and radical feminism in the 1970s. With its roots there, CRT tends to focalize “high” socio-political documents such as state legislation and school curricula, and “low” documentation: blogs and other

30. For example, the importance of the notion that humans are “image bearers” is central to David Swanson’s indictments of historic slavery in the U.S. in *Rediscipling the White Church*. Though it is not as abundant as one might expect, there is a considerable body of literature that sets out to draw a Christocentric formula for social justice, emphasizing the inherent value of all human lives according to the *imago dei*. Dempster, Murray W. “Pentecostal social concern and the biblical mandate of social justice.” *Pneuma* 9, no. 1 (1987): 129-153; Grenz, Stanley J. *The social God and the relational self: A Trinitarian theology of the imago Dei*. Vol. 1. Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

31. Carter, J. Kameron. *Race: A theological account*. (Oxford University Press, 2008), 192.

32. To name the basic tenets of Critical Race Theory would be redundant here because of the argumentative overlap with the theological scholarship visited earlier in this section. My focus here is on a critique of the formal qualities of CRT scholarship — for in-depth outlines of CRT’s tenets, however see: Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. *Critical race theory: An introduction*. Vol. 20. NyU press, 2017; Valdes, Francisco. *Crossroads, Directions and a New Critical Race Theory*. (Temple University Press, 2002).

internet sites, talk-radio programs. For example, Delgado and Stefancic's 2001 edition of *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* was revised and republished in 2017 in light of "two economic downturns, an outbreak of terrorism...the onset of an epidemic of hate directed against newcomers," and the election and reelection of its "first black president," among other historical developments.³³ Delgado observes that CRT scholarship has expanded most in the fields of education, sociology, health care, and theology, which suggests that it has not necessarily progressed far from its roots in law in the past fifty years.

CRT also derives from Critical Legal Studies its method of juxtaposing narratives and counter-narratives: "well-told stories describing the reality of black and brown lives can help readers to bridge the gap between their worlds and those of others."³⁴ This statement postulates a "reader" who is White and an "other" who is Black or Brown — and furthermore, a reader who begins with the worldview that there *is* a "gap" between their life, and Black and Brown lives. Moreover, the contexts of knowing, sharing, and storytelling preferred by CRT are the same contexts in which people of color have been historically silenced or disbelieved: courtrooms, open-source statistics, major news outlets. As a result, CRT's arguments and narratives are often synthesized *by* White people, *for* White people's learning, or — at least — according to the White perspective. David Swanson's *Redisciplining the White Church* and Daniel Hill's *White Awake* are two theological examples of this type of "caucusing."³⁵

Another note on CRT's literary methodology: its traditional range of objects of study — legislation, talk-shows, speeches, newspapers, websites — suggests a disciplinary demarcation of

33. Delgado, xxi. "First black president" would in many contexts suggest that Obama is a descendant of enslaved people, though Obama is of mixed, second-phase immigrant heritage.

34. Delgado, 47.

35. The term "caucusing" is currently used to describe race- and ethnicity-based affinity groups that are part of an organization's antiracism/DEI strategy. For research on the benefits and criticisms of this strategy, see Blitz, Lisa V., and Benjamin G. Kohl Jr. "Addressing racism in the organization: The role of white racial affinity groups in creating change." *Administration in Social Work* 36, no. 5 (2012): 479-498; Varghese, Manka, Julia R. Daniels, and Caryn C. Park. "Structuring disruption within university-based teacher education programs: Possibilities and challenges of race-based caucuses." *Teachers College Record* 121, no. 6 (2019): 1-34

“narrative” and “storytelling” from creative literary works. The focus is on the narrative of race that has formed in the explicitly political, legal, or social sphere. For example, Degaldo and Stefancic appropriate the techniques of narrative analysis and the well-known lenses of literary criticism³⁶ for “legal storytelling,” and yet do not engage creative works of fiction or non-fiction in their particular study.³⁷

We need not throw out CRT’s canonical narratives of race and the material realities from which they arise. But if our hope is to address racialization in the U.S. in all its complexity, or to de-center Whiteness and platform non-White literary expressions in racial discourse, then we may need to press further than CRT. With the goal of furthering the advances of Christian CRT scholars like David Swanson, this thesis turns specifically to the creative sphere — to the genres of poetry, fiction, and memoir, and to characters who reckon intersectionally with racial identity.

There are two advantages to literary analysis in this context. The first, which I have already suggested, is that through literature we can exit the psychically distant “historical” accounts of race that CRT gravitates toward. In literature, as Chinese postcolonial and film scholar Rey Chow writes in her poststructuralist description,

...the modus operandi is not to speak about something expressly even when one feels one must, in a manner quite opposite of the clarity and forthrightness of theoretical argumentation. The more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art.³⁸

36. Degaldo cites Jean-Francois Lyotard as a postmodernist voice on the value of marginalized voices, and describes the slippage of meaning that can occur in legal storytelling as an occurrence of Lyotard’s *différend*. Valdez cites literary, film, and feminist scholar Diana Fuss’s “Race: Under erasure? Post-Structuralist Afro-American Literary Theory.” *Essentially Speaking* (1989): 73-96.

37. Valdes draws liberally from the writing of legal experts who take the methods of literary scholars and apply them to the courtroom, including Culp, Jerome McCristal, “Autobiography and Legal Scholarship: Finding the Me in the Legal Academy,” *Virginia Law Review* 77 (1991) and Johnson, Alex M. “Defending the Use of Narrative and Giving Content to the Voice of Color: Rejecting the Imposition of Process Theory in Legal Scholarship,” *Iowa Law Review* 79 (1994) Similarly, Degaldo roots an entire section of his book on the literary lens offered in Amsterdam, Anthony G., and Jerome Bruner. *Minding the law*. Harvard University Press, 2000. Degaldo also authors “Storytelling for oppositionists and others: A plea for narrative.” *Michigan Law Review* 87, no. 8 (1989): 2411-2441.

38. Chow, Rey. “The Interruption of Referentiality: Poststructuralism and the Conundrum of Critical Multiculturalism.” Parker, 790.

Chow explains that literary discourse is a phenomenon which, at its best, achieves what the “platform for direct proletarian announcements” cannot: political “hiddenness” which “specializes in indirection.”³⁹ By Chow’s definition, literature lends itself to generating discussion. This contrasts with historical accounts that are persuasive by design (such as those that are crafted for the courtroom) and are often intended to close discussion.

The second advantage to engaging creative works here is that theology and literature have existing cooperatives wherein literary works are used as objects for theological reflection. For instance, Jan Frans Van Dijkhuizen’s *A Literary History of Reconciliation* — while not an explicitly Christian literary criticism — launches from Christian theology:

In Christian theology, the term ‘reconciliation’ has a more specific meaning relevant for the questions which this book examines: ‘The action of restoring humanity to God’s favour, esp. as through the sacrifice of Christ; the fact or condition of a person’s or humanity’s being reconciled with God.’ Reconciliation, in this sense of the term, is equivalent to forgiveness of one’s sins by God. This suggests how deeply our notions of interpersonal reconciliation are indebted to the vocabulary of Christian theology. As will hopefully become clear in the course of this book, reconciliation between sinful human beings and God has served as an important template for interpersonal reconciliation since at least the early modern era. Nowhere is this more clearly visible than in the discourse of ‘forgiveness’ so frequently encountered in modern-day culture.⁴⁰

The premise behind Van Dijkhuizen’s endeavor is that literary depictions of reconciliation are invaluable to the past, present, and future of their origin cultures because they reveal *and* shape that culture’s methods of and ideas about reconciliation. Above, he alludes to a central tenet of Christian faith: the reconciled relationship between us and God is our proton and eschaton for interpersonal relationship as the Body of Christ. For the believer, all literary depictions of injustice/conflict and conflict resolution/reconciliation, including those addressing racialization, can point back to this fact.

39. Chow, 790.

40. Van Dijkhuizen, Jan Frans. *A Literary History of Reconciliation: Power, Remorse and the Limits of Forgiveness*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), “Introduction.”

Literature, Van Dijkhuizen argues, synthesizes the inevitability of interpersonal conflict with the human imagination, yielding a record that can in turn reveal a culture's reconciliation paradigms. Van Dijkhuizen writes that the potential for conflict generates, for all of us, a "pressing need to construct narratives of conflict resolution: to imagine the various ways in which conflicts can be settled."⁴¹ What Van Dijkhuizen suggests here is that literary expression does not always (or even *usually*) depict our ideals of reconciliation, political or interpersonal, so much as it makes us think critically (and in our case, theologically) about how humans do, and could better, respond to conflict.

Van Dijkhuizen examines literature across four centuries and four geopolitical areas in his effort to show that paradigms of reconciliation are not universal or timeless. He quotes David Blight: "... reconciliation is, of course, a noble and essential human impulse. But it must be understood within *historical time*."⁴² By extension, perhaps we can only imagine a useful paradigm of "racial justice" if we first imagine "race" in historical time. I have already begun to center our discussion on a sidelined piece of this history, in the transpacific narrative of racialization. Whereas Van Dijkhuizen uses literature to deepen the concept of reconciliation, this thesis's literary selections provide a historicizing stumbling block to racial logic that deepens our understanding of ethnicity/humanity. This prepares us for the Christological task of aligning our Christian ethnicity with the *imago dei*. In the way Van Dijkhuizen's literature does not depict ideals of reconciliation, our objects of study do not depict ideal race relations but rather expose the sin of racism when juxtaposed with the Gospel.

To gesture once more to Campus Ministry's mixed-heritage student leaders, Japanese-European-American theologian Kenji Kuramitsu provides a theological basis for approaching Scripture from the mixed perspective in arguing that Jesus Christ was the ultimate mixed-heritage stumbling block. I explore this idea in full later in this thesis. Kuramitsu offers a model of theological exploration that contravenes those that (explicitly or implicitly) figure "White theology" as a required basis for

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

learning other, optional “contextual theologies.” We access a richer theological discourse, Kuramitsu argues, when we approach “White theology,” too, as “contextual theology” in dialogue with the rest. In this model, non-White and mixed-heritage perspectives are not accidentals of CRT, Christian theology, or the Christological enterprise. They are pitches in the Pentecostal chord. In contrast to the Christian scholars we have visited so far, Kuramitsu inaugurates his historiography of racialization from the perspective of the visually non-categorizable. In the generative context of the literature of mixed-heritage identity, that is where I also begin.⁴³

My literary analysis in Section I opens with mixed-heritage poet Natasha Trethewey’s collection, *Bellocq’s Ophelia*. Trethewey’s “octoroon” character Ophelia is a sex worker in early-twentieth century New Orleans. Marketed as a mixed-race prostitute, Ophelia navigates a context driven by the problematic racial binary. However, the form of the collection grants access to Ophelia’s racial identity as she understands it: both externally/visibly and privately/invisibly. Trethewey also writes Ophelia’s parents, giving us a starting place for imagining racialized characters contiguously with their ethnic predecessors. This way, we can study racism as an ideological inheritance rather than as a fact of existence.

Racial ideological inheritance is the main object of study moving to our reading of Jack Boughton, the prodigal son character of Marilynne Robinson’s *Gilead* quartet, set in the twentieth-century midwest. In *Jack*, this main character (a White man) and his wife (a Black woman) are expecting a child, and they find their respective (Christian) families aligned with the same notions of racial purity and segregation that drove historic anti-miscegenation policies. Importantly, we see through Jack and Della that racialization is also an *intra*-racial affair; as ideologically deviant, prototypical “mixed” people, they reckon with the mixed existence within racially homogenous communities even before their mixed child is born. Robinson’s cast of characters also traces the

43. Kuramitsu, Kenji “Critical Mixed Race Christology” (workshop lecture, Reformation Project, Kansas City, Kansas, Nov. 7, 2015).

correlations between Protestant theology and racialization; among the underlying tensions of the novels are shifts in Protestant attitudes toward racial politics over the course of four generations.

Bringing the conversation into the present, and expanding on the dynamics of intergenerational ethnic identity, I engage Korean-Japanese-American poet Eun Ji (E. J.) Koh's memoir *The Magical Language of Others*. Koh's Asian migrant heritage and the importance of her multilingual upbringing lead us out of the transatlantic narrative of racialization. Along with her observations of the visual performance of Asian identity, Koh brings the oral, linguistic performance of identity to the fore. In Koh's writing, the primary signifiers of ethnic identity are linguistic heritage, learning, and bonds, and so, although Koh was raised in California, "Americanness" is a tertiary ethnic concern to spoken language and intergenerational influence within the immigrant family.

These three literary works provide the context and operative concept of ethnicity for the theological criticism I initiate in Section II. Moving toward my own Christology of Christian ethnicity, I engage the ideas of two contemporary Black theologians who compare the dual nature of Christ to that of the "tragic mulatto." First I engage J. Kameron Carter, who asserts in the Prelude of *Race: A Theological Account* that Jesus is "mulatto," in that he represents the "intersection" of God with the world. We find that Carter's use of the mulatto metaphor affects his Christological points with the diction of "purity," "impurity," and "division" that is native to racial logics as depicted by Trethewey and Robinson.

Secondly I engage Brian Bantum, who expands this tenuous metaphor in *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity*, and initiates our discussion of the ecclesiological implications of a "mulatto" Christ. Bantum begins his theology of mulattic identity by superimposing the "tragic mulatto" archetype of twentieth-century fiction onto the figure of Christ — an archetype which is complicated by the literary readings of mulatto identity in Section I. In his subsequent description of the Body of Christ as a "mulatto people," Bantum proposes an inwardly constructed hybrid

consciousness initiated by our baptismal “rebirth.” As Carter does in his arguments, Bantum recodes the gospel narrative in racial language. Additionally, what we will see is that the internality of this model limits our ability to discuss the body of Christ as a *politically, outwardly* hybrid people. In other words, one limit to both Carter and Bantum’s Christologies of hybridity is that they fixate on Christ’s internal composition of human-divine, rather than examining the hybrid quality of Jesus’ interpersonal, embodied life.

As counter-theologies to Carter and Bantum, I draw on Justo L. González’s *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*, Jung Y. Lee’s *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology*, and Risatisone Ete’s Christology from the Samoan migrant perspective. To begin, I unpack González’s “*mestizo*” theology, given from the Hispanic-American perspective. Rather than basing his Christology on secular anthropology by describing Jesus as *mestizo* in composition, González bases his exegesis of Christ on the Gospels and then uses this Christology (Christ “for others”) to frame his Hispanic ecclesiology (the Church as a “*mañana* people”). Through González, our theological geography opens to the Spanish-speaking church, and also provides a Christological model that centers Scripture and places anthropology further down on the chain of knowing.

Lee’s theology of marginality brings our theological reflection back to the realm of transpacific migrant heritage that E. J. Koh ascribes to the present of mixed-heritage identity in the U.S. Crucially, Lee’s notion of the “hyphenated Jesus-Christ” found in the Gospels, the Christ of the marginalized, provides a distinctly non-racial concept of Christ as a mixed-heritage individual. The goal of steering our theological discussion from Carter and Bantum all the way to Lee is to de-center the metaphysics of Whiteness, racialization, and racial purity in our Christology. The literary analyses of Section I function to deepen the narrative of racialization presented in CRT; in Section II, we read Lee’s and Gonzalez’s theologies together to deepen and revise the Christological method and concepts of ethnicity taken by Carter and Bantum.

The pipeline from the theological ideas of Section II to the Christology I draw in Section III is this aforementioned concept of *hyphenation*, which Australian theologian Clive Pearson uses to compare Lee's Asian-American theology of marginality to Riatison Ete's migrant Pacific Islander Christology. In light of Pearson's observations, I redefine hyphenated identity from the perspective of the second-generation Pacific migrant, and use it as a Christological tool for exegeting Jesus' mixed heritage and hybrid life in the Gospel of Luke.

More specifically, Ete's and Pearson's work provide the foundation for harnessing the lyrical aspect of Christology in the context of the Pacific and Asian diaspora. As a transpacific migrant from Hawai'i, I immerse my exegesis of Luke in Hawaiian vocabulary and describe Christ as *Ke Ha'i Mo'olelo*, a storyteller. Hawaiian *mo'olelo* (stories) were historically, and still are, access points to the divine. These storytelling traditions developed alongside other formational (even sacramental) practices; just as the Gospel calls believers to a distinct life as the Body of Christ, *mo'olelo* contained explicit imperatives for embodied community life. The Gospel narrative releases the nationalistic underpinnings of this Hawaiian vocabulary, allowing it to take on the greater inclusivity of the Gospel. At the same time, the Hawaiian perspective offers the Christian discourse of racial justice a linguistic model for figuring our Christian lives as assertions of the common origin, present, and future of all people according to Christ's reconciling power.

One point on terminology: Portuguese historian Cristiana Bastos consistently uses the term "racialization" instead of "race" in her plantation ethnography in order to "emphasize the dynamic nature of the historical race-making process and to keep distance from the knowledge of "races" produced by racialist pseudosciences."⁴⁴ I accompany Bastos in this practice moving forward. For the same reason, as well as to remind the reader that racial ideology is passed down and not inherent

44. Bastos, 27.

to the human psyche, I opt for “mixed-heritage” as an alternative adjective to “mixed-race” in my own formulae.

One point on grammar: I capitalize the ethnic categories “Black” and “White” in the same way we routinely capitalize other categories — Asian-American, Japanese, Filipino, etc. Peggy Pascoe takes this deviation from the grammatical norms in her history of miscegenation law in order to “show ‘Black’ Americans as a group of men and women with a wide variety of skin colors and backgrounds,” and in the case of “White,” to “mark the category that so often remains unmarked, and taken for the norm.”⁴⁵

Eight Asian-American people were murdered in Atlanta, Georgia just as I began drafting the Christology in the final section of this thesis. In the weeks following, Stop Asian Hate activism turned heads and set stages for Asian-American and Pacific Islander storytellers, especially those of second- and third-generation identification. Both tragedy and fortuity surround the fact that the storytellers and theologians whose work I centralize in my movement toward Christology come from the Asian and Pacific diaspora.

45. Pascoe, Peggy. *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation law and the making of race in America*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 2009, pp. 14

I. Kaona

(the veiled message of a story or song)

This section contains a literary analysis of three creative works from three different genres. As stated, our literary discourse is part of the theological and Christological task of this thesis, and takes the place of the sociological grounding typically offered in CRT-driven theological responses to racialization. The three works I have selected work together to distance us from the racial binary, and offer an intersectional and intergenerational view of ethnic identity. As a collective, they also de-center the White perspective on racial experiences and prepare us to engage the transpacific, non-Black narrative of racialization.

Natasha Trethewey's poetic breakdown of the racial binary

Trethewey's poetry collection, *Bellocq's Ophelia* is named after E. J. Bellocq, a photographer who worked in New Orleans in the early 20th century.¹ Bellocq is now best known for his posthumously published series of eighty-nine images of the mixed-race prostitutes of Storyville, New Orleans' Red Light District. The cover of Trethewey's collection features one of these "Storyville Portraits" — "a very white-skinned black woman" — a mulatto, quadroon, or octoroon [who] would have lived in one of the few 'colored' brothels' in New Orleans."² Ophelia, as Trethewey names her, is the main

1. Trethewey, Natasha. *Bellocq's Ophelia*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2002.

2. Rowell, Charles Henry, and Natasha Trethewey. "Inscriptive Restorations: An Interview with Natasha Trethewey." *Callaloo* 27, no. 4 (2004): 1023-034. The term "mulatto" remains the most recognizable as a racial category in contemporary language. Like the terms "quadroon" and "octoroon," "mulatto" is one of several orders of blood quantum. Kenji Kuramitsu explains in his lecture that the stretching of the historic racial taxonomy into orders of blood quantum allowed racial ideology to exert control even over those who initially could not be neatly categorized. For two regional histories on blood quantum legislation and its consequences, see Kauanui, J. Kehaulani. *Hawaiian blood: Colonialism and the politics of sovereignty and indigeneity*. (Duke University Press, 2008); Schmidt, Ryan W. "American Indian identity and blood quantum in the 21st century: A critical review." *Journal of Anthropology* 2011 (2011).

character and consciousness of the collection. In this character, and through ekphrastic, epistolary, and lyrical form, Trethewey explores the circumstances of mixed-race women in the early 20th century. Trethewey explains the choosing of Ophelia's name in the first poem of the collection, "Bellocq's Ophelia":

1 In Millais's painting, Ophelia dies faceup,
 2 eyes and mouth open as if caught in the gasp
 3 of her last word or breath flowers and reeds
 4 growing out of the pond, floating on the surface
 5 around her. The young woman who posed
 6 lay in a bath for hours, shivering,
 7 catching a cold, perhaps imagining fish
 8 tangling in her hair or nibbling on a dark mole
 9 raised upon her white skin. Ophelia's final gaze
 10 Aims skyward, her palms curling open
 11 As if she'd just said, *Take me*.

12 I think of her when I see Bellocq's photograph —
 13 a woman posed on a wicker divan, her hair
 14 spilling over, Around her, flowers —
 15 on a pillow, on a thick carpet. Even
 16 the ravages of this old photograph
 17 bloom like water lilies across her thigh,
 18 how long did she hold there, this other
 19 Ophelia, nameless inmate in Storyville,
 20 naked, her nipples offered up hard with cold?

21 The small mound of her belly, the pale hair
 22 of her pubis — these things — her body
 23 there for the taking. But in her face, a dare.
 24 Staring into the camera, she seems to pull
 25 all movement from her slender limbs
 26 and hold It in her heavy-lidded eyes,
 27 her body limp as dead Ophelia's
 28 her lips poised to open, to speak.

Ophelia's name is an allusion to John Everett Millais' painting of Shakespeare's character, Ophelia — floating on the Denmark river with a bouquet of wildflowers, singing, before she drowns, just as in Queen Gertrude's description. Connecting her poetry to visual art and theater, Trethewey bases her exploration of mulatto experience on a matrix of visibility and performativity. By convention, the scene of Ophelia's death in the fourth act of *Hamlet* occurs offstage, but Millais

brings it “onstage” by interpreting that description in his known style of historical and mimetic realism. Trethewey’s comparison reveals that Millais’s and Bellocq’s works have similar literary effects. Ophelia’s death was not written to be experienced in this visual way, and yet Millais makes it so; the lives of the Storyville women were separate from the public sphere, and yet Bellocq’s photographs were literal and figurative “exposures.” Millais’ rendition of Ophelia from offstage to onstage closed the psychic distance between the audience and the death of the female character; though Bellocq’s original intentions were by no means innocent, he documented an industry of dehumanization in New Orleans. His work now stands as a testament to that period of the racialized sex industry.

To be clear, Trethewey does not sanction these two artists’ work so much as she refocuses the audience on the experience of the women they depict. Lines 5-9 remind the reader of the other side of Millais’ canvas, where Trethewey imagines a real woman would have been posing as a reference. Millais may put Shakespeare’s Ophelia onstage but Trethewey puts her in a body, inviting the reader to think of Ophelia’s death in a newly vivid way. Similarly, Trethewey draws attention to how Bellocq’s photographs still withheld agency and humanity from the women: “how long did she hold there, this other / Ophelia, nameless inmate in Storyville...?” As a whole, the comparison between Millais and Bellocq is a signal to the reader to pay attention to the relationship between gaze and object. Even while the form makes the reader complicit in the act of looking, the lyric asserts and reasserts that the object was a living woman: “her body / there for the taking. But in her face, a dare / ...her lips poised to open, to speak” (21-28).

Following this introductory poem, Trethewey’s collection is in three parts. Part I contains one poem, about the short time Ophelia remains unemployed in New Orleans. Part II contains Ophelia’s fourteen “Letters from Storyville,” in which Ophelia writes to others about her life in the brothel. Part III is Ophelia’s “Storyville Diary” of ten poems. Every poem of the collection is dated, from

which we gather that Parts II and III are set in the same two-year period of Ophelia's adult life; two renditions of the same time period, one private and one shared. Trethewey explains that Part II, the collection of Ophelia's letters, emanates the mixed individual's "exterior self or selves — the various selves that we might try on for an audience."³ This is manifest in the freedom of form, length, and tone between letters; a sense of constant self-revision or modification emerges as Ophelia addresses one recipient then the next. Then, Trethewey states, the diary form of Part III navigates a "private interior landscape, the landscape of the psyche when it is kept for the self."⁴ Ophelia's self-conception is meant to feel more "intact" in this third section, and as such the form and tone are more unified. Each poem in Part III is fourteen lines long, for example, and many of them draw on Ophelia's childhood memories.

The externally-focused Part II actually begins with the words of Ophelia's employer, not Ophelia herself. In "Countess P—'s Advice for New Girls," Trethewey characterizes the social and professional context in which Ophelia is trying on these "various selves." The reader is given a clearer sense of the realities that Ophelia faces as she lives and writes:

Empty

- 1 your thoughts — think, if you do, only
- 2 of your swelling purse. Hold still as if
- 3 you sit for a painting. Catch light

- 3 in the hollow of your throat; let shadow dwell
- 4 in your navel and beneath the curve
- 5 of your breasts. See yourself through his eyes —

- 6 your neck stretched long and slender, your back
- 7 arched — the awkward poses he might capture
- 8 in stone. Let his gaze animate you, then move

- 9 as it flatters you most. Wait to be
- 10 asked to speak. Think of yourself as molten glass —
- 11 expand and quiver beneath the weight of his breath.

3. Rowell, 1029.

4. Ibid.

- 12 Don't pretend you don't know what I mean.
 13 Become what you must, Let him see whatever
 14 he needs. Train yourself not to look back.

The Countess's "advice" is not advice at all, but a string of commands: look, see, learn, empty, hold still, wait, think. Most of these commands are restrictive, requiring either restraint or inaction. The Countess imagines the women with "empty minds" not just "as if you sit for a painting" but catching light (8-9) as if they *are* paintings. The series of imperatives takes a tonal shift at line 19, "Don't pretend you don't know what I mean." This new "Don't," while still a restrictive command, adds a warning, jeer, or reprimand. Then comes the actionable command "become what you must" in line 13, which rewrites each previous command as part of a prerequisite process of unbecoming in order to be "whatever / he needs."

Following the objectification of the woman in lines 8-9, the Countess's descriptions suggest not the Countess' gaze but the man's, and the man not just as an observer but as an artist. The woman is a "painting," the contour words "long and slender" and "arched" describe the female body "captured in stone," and the final poetic moves link the tactile and visual ("animate," "move as it flatters you," "let him see whatever he needs") as in boudoir or in filmmaking. The Countess's character becomes synecdochical for the brothel culture she describes and for the Storyville district as an institution when she appears again in "December 1910," and "January 1912."

Trethewey's collection is just as concerned with the "outside world" and locating its cultural overlap with the interior of the brothel. The following is from "Letter Home" written to her mother four weeks after her departure, but *before* she finds work at the brothel:

- 1 Though I dress each day
 2 in my best, hands covered with lace gloves
 3 you crocheted — no one needs a *girl*
 4 ...
 5 I sit watching —
 6 though I pretend not to notice — the dark maids
 7 ambling by with their white charges. Do I deceive anyone?
 8 Were they to see my hands, brown

9 as your dear face, they'd know I'm not quite
 10 what I pretend to be. I walk these streets
 11 a white woman, or so I think, until I catch the eyes
 12 of some stranger upon me, and I must lower mine,
 13 a *negress* again.

Even before she is employed by the Countess, Ophelia is animated/controlled by the gaze of passersby. Ophelia acknowledges her performativity with the words “I pretend,” but the word “pretend” in this poem (lines 6 and 10) used differently from in “Countess” (line 12). In “Countess,” “pretending” is primarily to act the willing sexual creature; in “Letter Home” Ophelia is passing as White. Her performance here is not sexual, but racial. Ophelia “pretends not to notice” because a White woman would not be unsettled by the image of a dark maid with a white charge. She pretends to be “a white woman” in public, wearing gloves because she imagines that her brown hands would incriminate her. Ophelia calls herself a *negress*, naming an interior self and exterior gaze that is highly gendered *and* racialized. Furthermore, the reality that Ophelia cannot publicly perform Whiteness unless she carefully conceals her Blackness exposes the visual fetishes of racialized societies even apart from the sexual context.

Trethewey traces Ophelia’s racial performance even farther back in time, to her girlhood managing appearances between her Black mother and White father. “March 1911,” Ophelia’s Storyville diary reads:

1 It troubles me to think that I am suited
 2 For this work — spectacle and fetish —
 3 A pale odalisque. But then I recall
 4 My earliest training — childhood — how
 5 My mother taught me to curtsy and be still
 6 so that I might please a white man, my father.
 7 For him I learned to shape my gestures,
 8 Practiced expressions on my pliant face.

This poem offers clear parallels between Ophelia’s self-conceptions in childhood and adulthood. For example, it is as a young girl, “shaping her gestures” to charm her father, that Ophelia first learns to “Think of herself as molten glass” (“Countess” line 17). It is in her childhood, at her

mother's instructions to "curtsy and be still", that Ophelia learns to mold her behavior to satisfy White men. Her experiences at the brothel with the Countess and male customers are not firsts, but echoes of her early childhood.

The continuity of Ophelia's life of racial passing becomes clear in this poem as well. Going back to Line 3: Ophelia's specification "*pale* odalisque" identifies the role of pigmentation to her profession, and like the word "negress" is gendered and racialized. Then in line 6: Ophelia prioritizes the distanced racial qualifier "a white man," no definite article, over the filial identifier "my father." The general term "white man" creates relational distance between Ophelia and her father, and its specific reference to a racial identifier suggests Ophelia's non-White-identifying psyche. If her parentage were not already obvious, the absence of qualifiers in describing her mother suggest her mother's Blackness as well. A similar stance toward and between her parents appears in "Naming", also a diary entry:

1 My own name was a chant
 2 over the washboard, a song to guide me
 3 into sleep. Once, my mother pushed me toward
 4 a white man in our front room. *Your father,*
 5 she whispered. *He's the one that named you, girl*

A second time, Ophelia dissociates herself and her mother from her father by calling him "a white man." In this poem the words "your father" are not even hers, but her mother's, augmenting the filial detachment. Ophelia's mother's attempts to train her to impress her father, to mold her to the image of the females in her father's White world, are also reiterated. This has become a habit by the time Ophelia is an adult, "walking these streets as a white woman."

In other words, Ophelia partially inherits White identity and status and her mother places an expectation on Ophelia to perform that identity. She also inherits her mother's ideologies of black inferiority or subjection to light-skinned people's approval: though she *is* White, she speaks and acts from an inferior, non-White-identifying psyche. This child Ophelia is taught, and seems to

understand that she is somewhere in between: the “pliancy” of her face is an image of demureness, but it also denotes the racial, social pliancy she is expected to make use of. Just as Ophelia claims her name for herself as a comfort “guiding her into sleep” (line 3), her mother recodes “Ophelia” as her father’s signature on her identity, a mark of ownership (lines 4-5).

Returning to the present of the narrative, the reader can observe that Ophelia’s childhood of racial performativity only continues, under a more vulgar gaze. For example, in “August 1911”:

1 In the parlor today,
 2 A man resolved to find the hint
 3 That would betray me, make me worth
 4 The fee. Her wore a monocle, moved in
 5 close, his breath hot on my face.
 6 I looked away from my reflection —
 7 Small and distorted — in his lens.

Ophelia’s “small and distorted” image in the customer’s monocle again signifies the unbecoming, and self-shrinking that the profession requires of her. As in “Countess” and “March 1911,” Ophelia is “animated by” something other than herself, allows her image in the mirrored parlor to be defined by a looker other than herself, and the customer is the lording presence for whom Ophelia holds still. Additionally, though, Ophelia sees this as a specifically racialized, and psychologically hostile sexual encounter. The customer in this poem scrutinizes her body for racial features that will “betray” her Blackness. That word “betray” imagines that Ophelia’s black body is as much her “enemy” as the customer who attempts to out her.

The grave tone of the poems in the later part of the narrative, like “August 1911,” allow us to look backward and see how Trethewey suggests Ophelia’s change in conscience. For example, “December 1910,” the first poem in Part II, depicts a similar dynamic of race and power, but Ophelia meets it with a certain resiliency:

with the highest bidder, / He did not know to call me / *Ophelia*.” The silent interposition of the name is an act of resistance — unspoken to the man himself, but enclosed like an inside joke to this letter’s recipient, Constance. The gown may be borrowed, but “Ophelia,” she has owned since birth. Whatever power this man is given to expose her physically, her true name remains concealed from him by the end of this poem.

The whole of Trethewey’s collection explores the layers of disclosure, exposure and concealment that Ophelia manages because of her racialized context. Ophelia’s letters and diary bear witness to the fetishization of Whiteness and Blackness in the Storyville brothel that results in the very notion of racial “mixture.” However, Trethewey puts the tools for self expression and witness in Ophelia’s hands, and the collection’s concluding image is of Ophelia

...no longer listening; she’s forgotten
 he’s there. Instead she must be thinking
 of her childhood wonder at seeing
 the contortionist in a sideshow — how
 he could make himself small, fit
 into cramped spaces, his lungs
 barely expanding with each tiny breath
 ...
 She thinks of her own shallow breath —
 her back straining the stays of a bustier,
 the weight of a body pressing her down.
 ...

 This is how
 Bellocq takes her, her brow furrowed
 as she looks out to the left, past all of them.
 Imagine her a moment later — after
 the flash, blinded — stepping out
 of the frame, wide-eyed, into her life.

The layers of disclosure and concealment are part of Ophelia’s subversive process of writing and performing the self. Engaged in the ongoing process of critical self-conceptualization, Ophelia uses the page to preserve her life and learns from Bellocq how to use a camera. Although there is no material escape for Ophelia, her writing at times works against the exteriorly wrought racial and

sexual determiners. In the autobiographical act, the racialized exterior identity forced on Ophelia by the brothel meets the resistance of her hidden, owned, and inherited identity.

In terms of a theory of ethnic identity, the story world of Trethewey's collection and the character of Ophelia depict the scope of the effect of racialization on both the individual and her community. The agency of Ophelia's hidden self-conception traces the continuity of her gendered, racialized life from her childhood into her adulthood. Ophelia's diary entries reveal that her childhood experiences negotiating her parents' expectations are repeated in the brothel, and that her ability to perform race and to meet the standards of her customers begins with the racial discipleship of her parents. As a result of their racialized imaginations, Ophelia and her ethnic predecessors attach their identities to the internally fracturing, externally divisive politics of race. This dynamic of ethnic community is one that we will see literarily contrasted when we later turn to the Luke's Gospel.

Marilynne Robinson's breakdown of racial purity in a Christian setting

Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead* quartet⁵ addresses similar themes of racialization to *Bellocq's Ophelia*, but with a multi-generational scope and with the dynamic of racial predecessorship in the present of the narrative. We look particularly at the effect of racialization on the lives of Jack, a White man, and his wife Della, a Black woman. Like Ophelia, Jack and Della's lives are plagued by the politics of racial purity, especially where it imagines the "mixing" of "races" as an offense in sexual relationships.⁶ Additionally, Jack and Della are depicted defying the ideologies of their respective,

5. Robinson, Marilynne. *Gilead*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004

—, *Home*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008

—, *Lila*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2014

—, *Jack*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2020

6. Juxtaposing Ophelia's circumstances with Jack and Della's, we find that racial logic somehow excuses racial mixture outside of the institution of marriage (e.g. in prostitution) but not within it or where there is a mixed-race child expected.

racially homogenous Christian communities. They are “racially pure” individuals who have chosen a “miscegenated,” mixed life that, in light of Trethewey’s work, was only permissible outside of marriage. Over the course of the series, the reader is given access to the progression of Protestant beliefs about race that precede the life of Jack and Della’s mixed child.

The *Gilead* series orbits the shared history of two families from Gilead, a fictional all-White town of 1950s Iowa. The story world is originally introduced from the perspective of John Ames, a Congregationalist minister. Ames is longtime friend to Robert Boughton, a retired Presbyterian minister; Rev. Boughton is father to Glory Boughton, who narrates *Home*, and Jack Boughton, narrator of *Jack*. The first three novels, *Gilead*, *Home*, and *Lila* are broad in scope, slowly revealing the web of relationships, comparisons, and contrasts between the Ames and Boughton families especially as it concerns Christian beliefs about interpersonal forgiveness and acceptance.

Through the original trilogy Jack is figured as a Prodigal Son character, a scoundrel and “reprobate” among his siblings since his boyhood, and arguably the only main character who rejects Christian faith altogether. The reader finds out at the end of *Gilead* that, in a culminating event of destructive and isolating behavior, Jack had scandalized his family by having a child with a young girl then abandoning them both. Shortly after, Jack leaves Iowa and does not return for twenty years.

Jack’s return to Iowa is an inciting event of *Gilead* and *Home* especially; the ramifications of Jack’s past actions for his community in Gilead are a unifying strand of the narrative present of the series. Many aspects of Jack’s life are revealed throughout *Gilead* and *Home* — his time in prison, his consequent poverty and alcoholism, his life as a vagabond, his more recent marriage to Della, a Black woman from Memphis residing in St. Louis, and their young son, Robert. However, the reader of the fourth novel, *Jack*, is given a higher resolution picture of Jack’s circumstances from his own perspective. In *Jack*, Robinson fleshes out some of the events of the ellipses marked in the original

trilogy: the time period after Jack's exilic childhood and before his turbulent homecoming in middle-age.

In *Gilead* and *Home*, the story of Jack's marriage and his motive to assess whether Gilead could in fact be a home to his interracial family⁷ are largely withheld until the closing chapters. But in *Jack*, set in streets of St. Louis and far from the Boughton household in Gilead, the details of Jack's past slip into ellipsis and periphery and the discord sown by his marriage to Della takes the fore. With *Jack*, therefore, the reader more concretely experiences the reality that Jack returns to Gilead several years after the birth of his and Della's child; they still have not found a permanent home. The fourth novel centers Jack's theological and ethical struggles as the husband and father in a mixed-race family, in a society with entrenched anti-miscegenation laws.

It is not so much that the original trilogy lacks a racial narrative, or that a racial narrative is newly fabricated in *Jack*. Rather, that narrative appears intentionally understated by the all-White context, theological questionings, and domestic focuses of the Ames and Boughton families at the center of *Gilead*, *Home*, and *Lila*. The series does, as a whole, contain an extended theological investigation of race relations in the Midwestern and Southeastern U.S. from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. In the first novel, *Gilead*, the narrator John Ames looks as far back as his grandfather's radical abolitionist and Civil War history. Van Dijkhuizen, who analyzes the *Gilead* series as part of his literary history of reconciliation, explains that:

The socially progressive, self-sacrificing – if also violent – Protestant activism which he [Grandfather Ames] embodies held out a politico-religious promise of a post-racist America that, the novels suggest, was abandoned during the Reconstruction era. This failure of Reconstruction has produced the genteel but politically indifferent, and therefore reactionary, mid-twentieth-century Protestantism of John Ames and Robert Boughton. Their version of Protestantism revolves around a depoliticized understanding of forgiveness, in which individual domestic transgressions are seen as more pressing, and as more urgently requiring both divine and interpersonal forgiveness, than systemic racial injustice.⁸

7. Unlike Memphis and St. Louis, Iowa held no anti-miscegenation laws in this time period

8. Van Dijkhuizen, "The Prairie Still Shines like Transfiguration?: Forgiveness, Theology and Politics in Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead* Novels."

Ames's father rejects his grandfather's politicized version of Christianity with such force that Ames — even having had no proximity to the original racial conflict — shies away from acknowledging social justice issues like racism in his ministry. Panning the camera to the Boughton family in *Home*, Robinson begins laying out the effects of this domesticated, depoliticized Protestantism on Jack's life. As Jack grapples with the racial conflicts of his time, the reader observes him as part of a fourth theological/ideological generation; the first three generations are represented in the chain of intergenerational shifts between John Ames, his father, and his grandfather. Robinson frames Jack's and Ames' stories as two proximal strands in a broader narrative of the racialization of Protestant belief.

Boughton's political indifference to anti-Black violence becomes a point of suppressed conflict between himself and Jack, who is secretly married to a Black woman. In a scene where Jack, Glory, and their father see on TV a group of Black demonstrators being beaten by police, Boughton's response is, "There's no reason to let that sort of trouble upset you. In six months, nobody will remember one thing about it...It wasn't so long ago that everybody was talking about Senator McCarthy. It's television that makes things seem important, whether they are or not."⁹ Boughton's palliative response indicates his apathy toward the racial violence onscreen; for Boughton, the violence is something temporary, something unfamiliar that he can avoid by turning it off with a remote. For Jack on the other hand, as the reader will know, this violence is a present reality — not only because of his marriage to a Black woman but because he himself has suffered physical violence at the hands of unsympathetic people.

In another, similar scene, Boughton says, "I have nothing against the colored people. I do think they're going to need to improve themselves, though, if they want to be accepted."¹⁰ Boughton's racist remark puts the responsibility for "change" (more specifically, conformity to the standards of

9. *Home*, 98.

10. *Home*, 155.

White approval) on the racial other, while the measuring stick for acceptance remains in his hands. When Jack shuts off the news of the Black protest on the screen, Boughton says, “Young people want the world to change and old people want it to stay the same And who is to judge between thee and me? We just have to forgive each other...But I hope we don’t have to argue. I don’t like the shouting and I don’t like the swearing.”¹¹ In this case as well, Boughton exemplifies Van Dijkhuizen’s claim that Ames’ generation is characterized by their fixation on domestic transgressions rather than systemic injustices. Jack suppresses any true response in fear of too badly upsetting his father, “sad and frail.” Glory, intending to comfort Jack but instead exposing her own political indifference and ignorance of Jack’s relational ties to St. Louis, says, “None of that will be a problem for you if you stay here.”¹²

Gilead and *Home* both picture Jack’s otherness as a product not of his marriage but of something within the Boughton home. Just as Ophelia’s racial/social discipleship begins much earlier in her life than the brothel, Jack’s position among the cast of Boughton siblings highlights an intrafamilial otherness that precedes the otherness of miscegenated life. Jack explains to Della, for example, that even she is more like his siblings by nature than himself, taking an outsider’s perspective on his sisters’ coming-of-age:

You don’t seem like someone who would have much to regret. I mean, I have sisters like you. I told you, four of them. They teach and play piano and remember everybody’s birthday and send thank-you notes. When I was a kid, I thought it was an amazing thing to watch. One after another, passing from childishness into impeccability. A long time ago, of course, but people like that don’t change.¹³

This description alludes to the setting of *Home*, and how Glory becomes Jack’s primary caretaker from the moment he appears at their doorstep by keeping check on his drinking and giving him household tasks. Robinson also writes Jack a foil in his brother, who is altogether successful, well-groomed, intelligent, and kind: “Teddy with his crisp hair and his groomed hands, his soft brown

11. *Home*, 98.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Jack*, 52

sweater and his tortoiseshell glasses. He was mild and reassuring in every way he could be, by nature, habit, and intention.”¹⁴ Teddy and Glory’s interactions with Jack in midlife suggest a long history of caring for, covering for, and yet being unable to fully understand their youngest brother.

Jack’s interfamilial otherness is especially explored in his experience as a theological outsider. Although Jack *is* a member of the Boughton family, he is the only member of his family who does not believe in God. It is a combination of Jack’s White identity, and his identity as a non-Christian, and his struggle to free himself from his family’s expectations that carry forward as burdens on his marriage. Therefore, the chain of ideological shifts in the Ames line through to Ames and Robert Boughton’s generation remains relevant to us because these two men’s refusal to extend their compassion beyond the interpersonal and domestic and into the political and systematic has real consequences for Jack: the true intensity of these scenes is realized in how Jack’s pressing search for a home for his mixed-race family, within the geography of anti-miscegenation law through the midwest and southeast U.S., is derailed by the Protestant political indifference of his hometown. Jack becomes a minority voice even as a member of his family, an ethnically and racially homogenous community, because as a result of his cross-cultural loyalty to Della, he cannot conform to their Christian ideologies. He especially cannot support their domesticated, depoliticized, segregationist vision for racial reconciliation in Christian America.

These familial dynamics of *Gilead* and *Home* exert thematic pressure from the periphery when in *Jack* we are transported into a majority-Black setting from the perspective of the same White character. In *Jack* the reader begins to see how the combination of his physical Whiteness, his atheism, and the mannerisms and verbal timbres of the ministerial life that he inherits during his childhood in the Boughton household ethnically excludes him from both “Whiteness” and

14. *Home*, 256.

“Blackness.” Jack is outcast in this setting because “White” and “Black” majority culture are depicted in Robinsons novels as specifically “Christian.”

Part of Jack’s ethnic identity is that he still attends to the clockwork of Midwestern White Protestant proprieties — shaving, matching his jackets and ties, calling Jesus “the Lord,” standing from his seat upon a person’s entrance, pulling on the knees of his trousers as he sits, his no-sir’s and yes-ma’ams. When Della first encounters Jack, she mistakes him for a minister because of his attire and he has to correct her. However, in a condition where alcoholism perpetuates his joblessness and poverty, these habits are presented more strongly as coping mechanisms: “To distract himself, he made plans and acted on them. The haircut, first of all...His shoes were polished, and polished again.”¹⁵ Similar occurs in a scene staged in the parlor of Della’s home, where Jack and Della are waiting for all of her family to gather for dinner and it is apparent by the bustle in the house that Jack’s presence is a disturbance. Leashed to the habit of standing from his seat when someone enters a room, he stands and sits several times as one family member after another intrudes upon the space to have their say. In this scene, the gesture does not represent hospitality extended by Jack, but hospitality withheld from him. These behaviors that can be read in one setting as symbols of White power or status in one setting are actually burdens to Jack.

As a poor White man in a Black city, Jack draws a Black gaze that is exclusionary, albeit sympathetic. One Sunday, Jack is actively avoiding the crowds gathering at the doorways of the city’s many churches, and happens to stop near the entrance of a Black church to examine his frayed hat — people begin dropping change inside as they file into the sanctuary, thinking that Jack is a beggar:

But he, as a white man in the black city, felt conspicuous, that is, more likely to come up anecdotal somehow, so that this foolish episode would have an echo...people would say, Who does that old hat belong to? And the answer would be, You remember that skinny white man that was out begging in front of the church last week, last month, last year? And the story would live on and reach her [Della] finally.¹⁶

15. *Jack*, 86.

16. *Jack*, 300.

Jack returns to the church the following Sunday intending to redeem the first humiliating instance and “put himself in the way of some moral edification.” He finds himself in front of the pastor of the church, Samuel Hutchins:

Jack could see that the minister was taking his measure, so tactfully it was almost painless. There was the frayed cuff. He didn't cover it with his hand, but he could feel that slight, hard smile forming — I know what you see, I know what you think...The man was trying to decide how to speak to him.

Hutchins' tolerance but ultimate rejection of Jack re-evokes his father Boughton's unsavory attitude toward the theological and racial other, and thus a similar relational tension emerges. Even so, Hutchins does not seem to hang his hat on theism so much as he does the sovereignty and integrity of Black Christians. Although he infers his opinion that Della ought to have her “accomplishments, and also her Christian character” matched in a partnership, his more final point is about following anti-miscegenation law:

...a fine young woman has decided she is in love with you. Her life up to this point has been sheltered enough that she doesn't really know the kinds of things that can happen when laws are violated. And what can you do for her? You can be loyal to her. That's worse than useless in the circumstances, unless you decide the loyal thing would be to leave her alone...Did you think I would put a little sprinkle of holiness on this arrangement of yours, maybe help you convince that good woman that it really is some kind of marriage?¹⁷

Hutchins insinuates that while Jack may have no problem breaking the law, the most loyal course of action would be to help ensure that Della can remain in right standing with the law and with her own ethnically homogenous community. In the end, Della's father also withholds his blessing from their “unmarriage.”¹⁸

The sum of Jack's experience residing on the boundary between two racially and theologically homogenous groups can be read as an ethnicity of exile. Jack imagines himself as the stranger

17. *Jack* 227.

18. *Jack*, 271. In this scene, Jack is imagining the real potential consequences of their marriage on Della's life, including that, if found out, she would likely lose her job, the respect of her church, and the harmony of her family. The options for forming a real relationship with his son are also bleak. He finishes, “Ah, Jesus, the loneliness of it all.”

entering his father's church, who "would have stepped out of loneliness, moved by hope of nostalgia, then slipped back into loneliness, forgotten as soon as he was gone."¹⁹ He wonders why, in his life, there are "infinite number of ways to feel awkward" — "a theological question having to do with man's place in the universe."²⁰ He also projects himself into a future of loneliness and rejection in his relationships with his wife and son, who he would only see them "by stealth, by the cover of night." Jack predicts that "he would always be half a stranger to [his son], a puzzle to the child, an embarrassment to the boy, then an object of resentment to the man, very likely."²¹ Jack's own prodigal life, a form of orphanhood, traces itself consistently back to his estrangement from his father and threatens to seep into the life of his child.²²

Robinson and Trethewey's literary worlds both depict the impact of historic racialization on White-Black race relations in the twentieth century. In that specific context, racial hybridity is especially understood in the lexicon of "miscegenated" relationships and "mulatto" children. At the end of *Jack*, both Jack and Della hold this experience of estrangement. Between the de-jure anti-miscegenation laws and with the de-facto separationist laws of Della's nuclear family, Jack and Della are having a "mixed-race experience" although they do not come from a "mixed" background in the strictest sense. Because of their decision to diverge from their racially, theologically homogenous community's notions of racial purity and segregation, Jack and Della are rejected by both sides of the racial binary and relegated to "miscegenated" space. Still, the characters who live these miscegenated, mulatto lives validate the integrity of "mixed" existence and expose the farces of racial purity.

19. *Jack*, 165.

20. *Jack*, 300.

21. *Jack*, 270.

22. — and, by extension, the circumstances surrounding the death of his mother. Jack is the only sibling who does not return home when news goes out of his mother's failing health. He does not go home for the funeral, either.

Furthermore, Robinson's careful depiction of shifts in Protestant racial politics and expressions of racial justice over several generations allows us to interpret Jack and Della's circumstances as part of a complex theological, ideological legacy of anti-Black racism in the U.S. In this legacy, their countercultural care for one another shapes the life of the next generation, their son. Robinsons offers to the reader's imagination a situation where two individuals have the risky opportunity to function according to something other than racial politics, to which the Church/theological voice in the backdrop offers no consolation.

E. J. Koh's digression from White-referential American ethnicity

We turn now from the transatlantic narrative of racialization and its ripple effects in the 1900s Southeast and Midwest U.S., to E.J. Koh's memoir of multilingual Asian migrant experience, *The Magical Language of Others*.²³ Looking closely at Trethewey and Robinson's picture of ethnic identity begins our work of joining an array of binaries into a more nuanced matrix — an intersectionality of identity — that includes predecessorship, gender, and faith. Koh helps us to further expand that notion as an American, Korean, Japanese, and multilingual, individual whose focus is not on Blackness or Whiteness, but on the effect of language on personhood. The reader is asked to imagine Koh's selfhood as a linguistic heritage — an ongoing dialogue between herself and her linguistic predecessors — and in this way the performance of identity is distanced from racial appearance.

Koh's memoir is especially an answer to the book-sleeve's question, "Where do the stories of our mothers and grandmothers end and ours begin?" and she uses her skills as a poet and translator to make memory ring out with the voices of grandmother, mother, and daughter. She takes her time laying out the map of her ancestry: her paternal grandmother was born to Japanese parents and

23. Koh, E. J. *The Magical Language of Others*. Portland: Tin House Books, 2020.

raised in Korea; her mother was born and raised in Korea; Koh herself and her elder brother grew up in California after her parents returned to South Korea for her father's career.

Koh partitions major movements of the memoir with Korean-to-English translations of letters sent to her by her mother, followed by scanned images of the original letters. Koh notes in the introduction that she could scarcely read them as a child and never wrote any reply; it was only following her graduate training in poetry, and then in translation, that Koh was able to unearth the contents of her mother's letters and reread them into her childhood memories. The basic choreography of Koh's work — continual motion between image, translation, transcription, and narrative — gives poetic form to Koh's real experience of learning to use language to navigate cross-cultural adversities as an individual of mixed heritage.

Koh does not use her memoir to explore her Asianness as a contrast to American Whiteness as Trethewey does with Blackness and mulatto-ness in *Ophelia*. This is, in part, an effect of how much of the memoir is *not* set on the Mainland U.S., but abroad in Japan. Even so, it is not necessarily suggested that race visibility is less operative in her life. Koh does include memories of being outed by her physical race identifiers while in Japan:

“My schoolteacher in Shinanomachi said, ‘The workers are confused. They wonder if you’re truly American or Korean. To them,’ my teacher explained, ‘from your single-mindedness and your downward eyes and the rising tip of your nose, you are Japanese.’”²⁴

Koh suggests in this scenario that “Americanness” hinges not on physical or cultural Whiteness (as in *Ophelia*'s case) but on standards of Japanese-ness or Korean-ness. Koh naturally possesses physical traits that allow her to “pass” as an insider (in this case, her nose), and also, whether by coincidence or by practice, acts the part as well (single-mindedness, downward eyes). This aligns her with these Japanese natives' stereotypes of “native” behavior and appearance.

24. Koh, 79.

While the character of Ophelia fixates on the visual and performative nature of her race, Koh as a language-learner and translator prods at the audial — what it means, for example, for her Korean peer to tell her that she “sound[s] like an American... Other times, you’re just like a Korean.”²⁵ For their different focuses, *Ophelia* and *The Magical Language of Others* give well-rounded picture of racial stereotypes that have been conflated with, but are not necessarily even related to appearance. In both narratives, “looking,” “sounding,” or “being” a certain way reveals only part of the person’s full heritage.

Elsewhere Koh writes, “You know my grandmothers,’ I said, and pointed at my nose, a habit I had picked up when I lived in Japan. ‘I’m an accumulation of their lives” (189). In its delivery, this statement integrates her Korean and Japanese ancestry with her experience as an American foreign exchange student: the Koreanness of her maternal line, the buried Japaneseness of her paternal line, and the Japanese gesture for indicating the self (pointing to the nose) acquired as a granddaughter generations later. By re-expanding reductionist statements (e.g. “They wonder whether you’re truly American or Korean”) in this way, Koh leaves the impression that Koreanness, Japaneseness, and Americanness are, for her, inextricable.

Koh’s particular investigation of transpacific, intergenerational ethnicity also allows her to adjourn to the topic of American Whiteness; the language of racial visibility in her context is not about pigmentation on the White-Black spectrum. Rather, appearance for Koh is a metaphor for generational differences between first-, second-, and third-generation migrants. For example:

“I was my mother’s daughter. The same face except for subtle differences one would notice on close study. Though her lips were fuller, my eyes were wider. Her brows framed her face gently while mine bordered my face like a box. I shaved the arches of my eyebrows to soften them like hers. I looked like my mother, my mother looked like her mother, but no one would say I looked like my mother’s mother.”²⁶

25. pp. 127

26. pp. 81

One can read these sentences as an evocation of the cultural gaps that appear between generations when one generation is raised in a different majority culture from the previous generation; though some family resemblances may remain, generational differences can pose intraversable barriers between the first and third generations of immigrant families.

Koh's depiction of her maternal line in here also presents an extended response to the Okachimachi workers' question of whether she was "truly American or Korean." The answer is essentially that her primary self-conception is not as American or Korean, but rather as "her mother's daughter." By answering a "What-are-you" question in a way that undermines the binary that is presented to her, Koh brackets the questions of racial difference and in turn questions the personal merit of defining Koreanness, Japaneseness, or Americanness in light of one or the other.²⁷ This move impairs the request for a self-definition that is contained by her individual life or appearance — one which we could easily imagine being used to confirm or disconfirm a preconceived notion of "Japanese" or "American." Additionally, she uses their terms, their physical descriptors, as a literary pivot toward less tangible and yet more fundamental: Koh concludes this section by writing, "because there was in me, *other than my face*, this [protective] love for my mother."²⁸

The structure of the memoir and these choices of anecdotes suggest that Koh's writing is unified not by a search for a certainty of ethnicity, but by her efforts to revise her memory of her mother Jun's care. This autobiographical task supports Koh's confessional telling of growth into love for Jun and in understanding of intergenerational trauma. The memoir opens by bearing witness to the "magic" of language for the individual, recollecting how Jun "used my name like a fire

27. Kuramitsu mocks this clichéd question — *What are you?* — by translating it to expose the racialized reasoning underneath: "What they're really saying is, 'I am uncomfortable with your physical appearance, and this in tandem with my inability to sort you neatly into one of the five racial classifications created by historic White supremacy means I need you to tell me what percentage of your ancestors came from which continents.'" With the mixed person constantly in the line of sight, racial labels become virtually useless for discussing ethnic identification, and are exposed as visual categories that enclose non-visual stereotypes.

28. Koh, 80. My emphasis.

poker to stoke me alive” as she personally labored over Koh’s English education.²⁹ Koh was nonverbal for a significant amount of her childhood. As the memoir progresses, following Koh’s progress as a language learner, the picture of Koh as an individual reckoning with language takes on countless permutations. For example, when her Japanese-speaking peers mistake her Korean surname “Koh” for the affectionate Japanese term *ko* (which means “child”), “Koh” as a sound expands to represent both her daughterhood to Jun, and her life in Japan with an entirely non-Korean community. Because *ko* in Japanese means “child,” this memory from being in Japan points the reader back to Koh’s images of her childhood, and makes a clear pathway back to Jun’s letters: Jun refers to herself as “Mommy” and refers to Koh in the third person (e.g. “I love Eun Ji”) as if she were still a child. Even the memory of literal muteness remains intact, insofar as Koh had not responded to any of the forty-nine letters.

Through similar small moments describing her early language learning, Koh is able to return again and again to the consequence of voices and silences to her selfhood. She describes, for example, the first time she hears her paternal grandmother, Kumiko, speaking Japanese:

“One day I overheard her speaking strangely inside Yaohan plaza at the sushi counter. She never talked in this manner with the other grandmothers, or with her [Korean] children and grandchildren. Their exchange was alluring...”³⁰

This scene is followed by Koh’s account of Kumiko’s parents’ (Koh’s paternal grandparents’) migration from Jeju: in order to be taken in as refugees after the annexation of Korea in 1910, they mask their Korean identities to pass as Japanese. However, Kumiko later flees back to Jeju during a period of unrest in Japan and stowed away her Japanese identity lest she be killed as a defector.

With Kumiko’s history of passing in mind, this scene of Yaohan plaza depicts a species of silence and concealment even if it is about the speaking of a language. Hearing Kumiko speak Japanese, Koh witnesses a small break in Kumiko’s performance of Koreanness — a performance

29. pp. 8

30. pp. 102

that was once a matter of survival. When Koh describes Kumiko “speaking strangely,” she implies that Kumiko was speaking *Japanese*; it is strange to Koh because Kumiko had so diligently hidden her Japaneseness. Koh reflects that though her grandmother must have concealed a great “longing or loneliness” in the “days upon days that she did not speak Japanese.” However, Koh also has this memory of Kumiko freely doing so in a unique context of safety, where the Japanese language does not incriminate her. So, although Koh is not raised in a context where interracial marriage is understood as “miscegenation,” the historical national tensions between Korea and Japan frame “race” in Koh’s life as a matter of loyalty, and “mixture” — in Kumiko’s case, manifest as linguistic mixture — as a betraying offense.

The scene from Yaohan plaza is paired with the following memory, a complementary image of her linguistic relationship with her grandmother.

Every night, she asked me to write an English phrase for her in her notebook. She would then copy it in large, neat handwriting. One night, I was eager to get to bed. In the morning...I saw the last few pages were empty because I had not given her any words the night before. I remember it so clearly because she would not ask for them again.³¹

The pairing of Yaohan and this notebook scene begins to give a shape to the personal agency held by the individual of multilingual heritage. Though not with the same purposeful restraint used by Kumiko, Koh conceals English from her grandmother. Koh is the younger relative, and yet she finds herself in the role of linguistic gatekeeper. Koh and Kumiko, as native speakers of their languages, held the power to include or to isolate one another through language. Koh depicts a current of linguistic endowment and inheritance of language that is specific to the immigrant experience: culture, language, and freedom of ethnic association can either be dammed or allowed to flow between generations, not just from the older generation to the younger but in both directions. Koh takes the predecessor-to-descendant linguistic inheritance and breaks up its linearity.

31. pp.115

The linearity is also broken when Koh chooses to learn Japanese as an adult. Koh reclaims this heritage language rather than taking her grandmother's refusal or silence as the final word. Koh's descriptions of the role of multilingualism in her adulthood suggest that, at first, she mostly relates to her grandmother's linguistic *performativity* as part of her linguistic identity:

As I learned Japanese...I learned to isolate myself through language—from English to Korean to Japanese. It was so effective it was frightening, as if I could guard against others like a spy. Where I could hardly open my mouth before, it now seemed that no one could speak to me. Languages, as they open you, can also allow you to close.³²

In this section conclusion, Koh projects multilingualism as a tool in the life of silence, secrecy, and isolation; her grandmother a refugee, herself a spy. Throughout the memoir, Koh describes the growth of her own ability to shapeshift with, disappear into, and exert control over her social world using her linguistic adaptability (not just through Japanese, Korean, and English but through creative writing and translation). Koh acknowledges that in the process of becoming multilingual she has inherited parts of Kumiko's life of "longing or loneliness," of silence and concealment.

Koh did not begin wearing these linguistic disguises until she *decided*, as a young adult in college, to learn her parents' and grandparents' native languages. Koh writes that her grandmother deliberately chose not to pass on Japanese to her, with the goal to "secure her with English, my troublesome tongue, but one I depended on to survive."³³ In other words, she remembers being taught to value assimilation to her English-speaking, Californian context.

However, the memoir itself points the reader to a shift in Koh's ideology around multilingualism that occurs somewhere down the line. The multilingual structure of the memoir reflects a counter-philosophy to her grandmother's stance that a mixed individual should be "protected" from one part of their heritage in order to have full claim on the other. Whereas Kumiko worked to "secure her with English," Koh moves from her monolingual childhood, unable to read or respond to her

32. pp. 116

33. pp. 102

mother's letters, to a multilingual adulthood where she is able to translate and weave her life story around them. She reclaims a linguistic inheritance through her later choices to learn these secondary languages. Koh's multilingualism can be interpreted as an inheritance redeemed from childhood disinheritances. So, there is both irony and redemption in the notion that when she "[runs] toward seclusion," it is Kumiko's voice that calls her in the other direction; Koh memorializes her grandmother as the very one who "urging her to try" differently "when learning to love."³⁴

Koh's experience abroad and the formative years she spent apart from the direct care of her parents have so much narrative prevalence in the memoir that the absence/silence of nuclear family members becomes its own syncopated presence. For Koh, her estrangement from her mother culminates when Jun sees her as an accomplished poet for the first time, and attempts to take credit for her personal growth. She writes, "...I could not say sorry because of how it might feel to see the pride in her face, as if the way I had grown taller and prouder was a result of her raising me."³⁵ She notes that her older brother internalized their parents' absence similarly and expressed that "he doesn't have parents...My brother would say, 'I won't ever be like them.'"³⁶ This set of moves adds to her description of inheritance by including what parts of her selfhood which she does *not* ascribe to her family; which were not, in her eyes, her mother's right to claim.

Koh's memoir is, as a whole, an act of forgiving Jun and re-envisioning how Jun raised her from afar. And yet, Koh still questions if intergenerational ties link us as firmly or far back to our predecessors as our ethnic narratives suggest. Especially when national and linguistic barriers are interposed, ethnic identity seems to be a matter of circumstance and choice in addition to blood ancestry. By describing the *soundscape* of her ethnic experience, Koh grounds the images of her mixed Japanese, Korean, and American identity formation in linguistic difference and inheritance

34. pp. 116

35. pp. 204

36. pp. 162

rather than in racial visibility or White referentiality. In doing so, she draws attention to the aspects of ethnicity that are literally silenced, especially those silenced by erasure and assimilation.

Synthesizing the work of Trethewey, Robinson, and Koh into a theory of ethnic identity

We reach a point now where we can draw a definition of mixed-heritage identity by which to engage the current theological dialogues around racial identity and racial justice, through the characters we meet in Trethewey's, Robinson's, and Koh's work. Beginning with Trethewey: *Bellocq's Ophelia* introduces the literary White-Black binary to our discussion, which we see active in the racial and sexual dynamics in the brothel, and in Ophelia's childhood. But Trethewey also problematizes that black-racial binary: Ophelia details the ways the brothel makes a fetish out of racial categorization — her customer's absurd attempts to interpret the "Whiteness" and "Blackness" of her ambiguous body. In *Ophelia* we also find a flexibility of mixed-heritage consciousness which allows her to draw connections between the racial performances she puts on for her father, and those she puts on for her White customers. Ophelia is shown to subversively retain a degree of psychological autonomy even within the context of her sexual objectification. Guarding a secret self through her given name, she puts a flag down on a continent of self that is hidden deeper than her skin.

Jack offers an inverted view of the mixed-race consciousness and experience depicted in *Bellocq's Ophelia*, on two accounts. Firstly, *Jack* portrays not the direct experience of the mixed-race person, but of his predecessors and the racial-theological ideologies that shape his society. Secondly, the central romantic relationship in the novel imagines a reversal of the power differential of the Black-White binary pictured in *Ophelia*: Jack, the White man, is the one who is impoverished, scrutinized and demeaned by the broader society, while Della holds a degree of security and status within her Black community. Both individuals are exiled from their respective, racially homogenous

communities because they do not conform to their popular politics and theology. In *Jack* we also find a challenge to the notion that interracial conflict is more violent than conflict *within* a single-race community. We do not see Jack and Della's families in conflict with one another; rather, we see Della in conflict with *her family* and Jack in conflict with *his family* because of the joint decision to pursue "miscegenated" life.

Koh's *The Magical Language of Others* expands *Gilead's* picture of "racial" identity as an intergenerational and non-visual aggregate, adding that self-conception can be a non-linear and multilingual dialogue. Koh shares from an experience that is distanced from the language of racial difference that affects the first two pieces, and focuses instead on the power of language in the shaping, erasing, and reclaiming of ethnic identity. Additionally, Koh introduces a picture of mixed-heritage experience out of Asia, which the other two works are entirely removed from.

In contrast to Ophelia's mode of ethnic autobiography, in which Ophelia responds specifically to the ongoing consequences of racial visibility, Koh's memoir prorogues the influence of racial visibility because of how deeply Koh's life is affected by the complex orbit of languages, sounds, and nonverbal communicants in her heritage. What Koh and Ophelia share is a keen sense for the performativity and fluidity of their ethnic identities which extends their agency beyond the static racial labels applied to their persons. In contrast to the characters of *Gilead* who reckon frontally with a reality of racial segregation throughout the series, Koh's history plays out in such a way that her ancestry is, by necessity, kept secret. When Koh finally does unearth her mixed heritage, her family had long since fled the countries in which her predecessors to claim certain ethnic purities — Koh is raised in a context where not only is mixed-heritage identity far more common, but where "Korean" and "Japanese" are not differentiated the same way "Black" and "White" are.

What these narratives all have in common is their attention to the multigenerational nature of racialization, and to how, as David Swanson argues in *Redisciplining the White Church*, race is not

inherent to the psyche but a matter of discipleship. As we move our discussion to theological criticism, we may also note that the *The Magical Language of Others* is unique among our literature in that Koh describes her heritage as a contemporary second-generation Korean-Japanese migrant. This points us back to the theological value of expanding the narrative of multiculturalism and racialization in the U.S. to include the Asian and Pacific diaspora.

II. Kūpuna

(predecessor, starting point, source)

In this section, we will be using our literature’s intergenerational, language-dependent, and nonbinary concept of ethnic identity to raise questions about current theological discussions of race/racial hybridity. In particular, our literature complicates the Christological and anthropological formulas proposed by J. Kameron Carter’s *Race: A Theological Account*, and by Brian Bantum in *Redeeming Mulatto*. Both of these authors take valuable steps away from the racial binary and racial triangle that closely resonate with the problems of racial identity present in our literary texts. At the same time, their Christologies rely on the lexicons of race and racial purity in ways that are not transparent to the Gospel witness of Christ’s hybrid humanity.

Mulatto theology as a predecessor to mixed-heritage theology

Following the sequence of our literary discussion beginning with Ophelia, Trethewey’s “octoroon” character, we first look at J. Kameron Carter’s proposal of a “mulatto Christ” in *Race: A Theological Account*, which attempts a Christology of hybridity from the Black American perspective.¹ Mulatto Christology is not Carter’s end goal, but the term appears twice and not without consequence — first in his synopsis of Irenaeus’s Christology, and again in a description of Israel as a “mulatto people.”

Carter’s work speaks of the theological legacies of race that make up our modern imaginary of the human as a racial being. He begins in his Prelude with Irenaeus, specifically in the lexicon built in Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies*. Carter suggests that, because Gnostic caste divisions resemble modern

1. Carter, J. Kameron. *Race: A theological account*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

racial divisions, Irenaeus's anti-Gnostic claims can be interpreted for anti-racist applications. Carter begins by describing Irenaeus' critique of Gnostic ideology:

The first thing Irenaeus argues against the Gnostics is the unity between Christ as God and the flesh of the man Jesus that is assumed...Irenaeus comes up against the too simplistic Gnostic notion that there is an opposition for God between the immaterial and the material, between the divinity and humanity. By contrast, he argues for their unity-in-distinction, which enables the human, and thus fleshly, material existence to reveal God's divine or supramaterial existence. [His crucial second move] concerns the unique modality of Christ's flesh in how it discloses God. To account for this, Irenaeus turns to the Pauline notion of "recapitulation" [ἀνακεφαλαιώσεις]... "There is" Irenaeus says, "one God...and...one Christ Jesus our Lord, who is coming throughout the whole economy, recapitulating all things in himself."²

Irenaeus's valuable counterpoints to Gnosticism include that the "immaterial" and "material" are not opposed to one another. Therefore, God's immateriality could be revealed in Jesus' materiality without one eclipsing the other. Carter then takes Irenaeus's exegesis of Paul's notion of "recapitulation" and transposes it for modern racial discourse. Carter is particularly interested in this section of Irenaeus's writing:

This is why Luke presents a genealogy of seventy two generations from the birth of our Lord back to Adam (Luke 3:23-28), linking the end to the beginning and indicating that he is the one who recapitulated in him, with Adam, *all the nations and languages and generations of men* dispersed after Adam.³

Carter uses this claim as his point of departure for discussing race. He argues that "Modern racial discourse" emerges in relationship to "Nations, languages, and generation of birth." Therefore, racial identities are also recapitulated and redeemed in Christ along with these nations, languages and generations. For the particular purposes of his prelude, Carter chooses to focus on the recapitulation of language, and appropriates Irenaeus's reading of Luke for his discussion of race in this manner:

...[Irenaeus] says that human language across time and space gets recapitulated in Christ...the Old Testament is not tyrannically overcome [but rather] re-presented as in conspectus, and in that concentrated form its freedom to signify the Creator acquires new, iconic depth...The words of creation (the *logoi*) are not lost in the Word of God (the *Logos*). Given this, one must speak of

2. Carter, 24 ff.

3. Carter, 28. Carter's emphasis.

[Christ's] humanity as an *inter*human humanity that constitutes a new *intra*humanity. That is, Christ's humanity is the historical display of an intradivine communion between Father and Son in the Holy Spirit that itself opens up...a new communion internal to human existence. In short, Christ's flesh as Jewish, covenantal flesh is a social-political reality displayed across time and space into which the Gentiles are received in praise of the God of Israel. Given this, we must say that Christ's flesh in its Jewish constitution is "mulatto" flesh. That is to say, in being Jewish flesh it is always, already *intersected* by the covenant with YHWH and in being *intersected* it is always already *intra*racial. Its purity is in its "impurity," which is the "impurity" of its being *intersected* by YHWH..."⁴

In this section, Carter's first use of the term "mulatto" is used presumably to describe the body of Christ as an interracial body, by virtue of Christ's inclusion of Jews and Gentiles into the covenant. Though the language fades from the argument as suddenly as it appears, his decision to employ the racial term here to signify hybridity and multiculturalism begins to impede his anti-racist claims. At the end of this paragraph, God's covenant with Israel has taken on the code of "intra-racial" purity and impurity, which obstructs the scriptural perspective of that relationship: God's relationship with Israel, his treasured people,⁵ is not "impure" or miscegenation. In his covenant, God defines, calls Israel into, and upholds Israel in holy and sanctified life.⁶

Carter reiterates and reinforces the mulatto metaphor later in the book. This time he employs it to represent interior double-consciousness:

God has from the first bound Godself to us in God's communion with Israel as a communion for the world. This is the *inner logic* of the identity of Jesus, the *inner logic by which Israel is always already a mulatto people* precisely in being YHWH's people, and by which therefore Jesus himself as the Israel of God is Mulatto. At the level of his identity, or *who* he is, Jesus carries forward, and does not supersede, Israel's identity as partner to YHWH for the world. He is miscegenated, and out of that miscegenation discloses the God of Israel as the God of the Gentiles too.⁷

Here it becomes clearer that mulatto/miscegenation language is Carter's chosen imagery for his argument against supercessionism. Like many prominent theologians in this arena, Carter's argument is that supercessionism lies at the root of racialized theology.⁸ Carter reiterates the term "mulatto"s

4. Carter, 30.

5. Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Psalm 135

6. Leviticus 19:2; 20:7-8; 20:26; Exodus 19:6

7. Carter, 192.

8. Nasrallah, Laura, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, eds. *Prejudice and Christian beginnings: investigating race, gender, and ethnicity in early Christian studies*. (Fortress Press, 2009). Fiorenza underscores that "Judaism of antiquity assumed outstanding importance in German historical research beginning in the early eighteenth

previous use as a signifier for “Israel,” the multi-ethnic Body of Christ which covenantally includes Jews and Gentiles. This leads Carter to argue that Jesus of Nazareth is also “mulatto” because he is the “Israel of God,” that is, one who “carries forward” Israel’s identity rather than being “severed” from it. In light of Jesus’ mulatto-ness, Carter can figure Jesus-Israel’s partnership with God “for the world” as a “miscegenated” condition which reveals the multiethnic nature of the Body of Christ after the incarnation.

The correlatives in the mulatto/miscegenation analogy are tenuous at best; the racial language of miscegenation (“God has...bound Godself to us”) hyperlinks us back to the racial binaries and notions of racial purity that Carter explicitly seeks to dismantle. To put it another way: describing God’s communion with us/Israel as an act of miscegeny keeps us from saying that we were *created for* communion with the God in whom we live, move, and have our being. “Miscegenation” and “mulatto” identity — and their amnion of racial difference and purity — are inconsistent with, and not analogous to God’s relationship with us.

Carter also sets the metaphor aslant by describing Jesus’ mulatto identity as an “inner logic.” Trethewey shows us clearly in Ophelia’s character that mulatto identity is not an inner logic: there is an inner-ness to Ophelia’s mulatta identity, to be sure, but she is not primarily mulatta inwardly or inherently. She is a mulatta because she inherits the racial ideologies of her predecessors through intentional, racial *discipleship*. In *Gilead* — for Jack and Della’s marriage to be called “miscegeny” says less about the nature of their relationship and more about the standards of racial-theological purity that they confront in Iowa, Memphis, and St. Louis. Mulatto/miscegenated identity is the product of an *outer logic* of racial visibility and purity that is wrought onto a person. That person, in the context of these racial ideologies, is *thereby* called “mulatto” or “miscegenate.”

century, not least because historical criticism of the Bible had to deal with undeniable “connections with the Jewish world.” As another recent example that echoes Carter, Willie Jennings writes that “...intellectual tradition in the New World denies its most fundamental starting point, that of the divine Word entering flesh in time and space to become Jewish flesh.” Jennings, Willie James. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 113.

In Carter's formulation, "mulatto" identity is recapitulated as Christ's inherent covenantal birthright, and the metaphor of "mulatto flesh" is literally disembodied in favor of pure-consciousness, a mulatto *mind*. In this way, one might suggest that Carter falls back on the Gnostic caste system he decries, a system which sets humans on a hierarchy from least to most pneumatic. Carter does not pursue this line of theological reasoning in his book but we can observe its ramifications more clearly in Bantum's *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity*, where Bantum develops Carter's mulatto metaphor into a longer-form treatise including Christology, Christian spirituality, and pneumatology.

Literary origins of Bantum's mulatto metaphor for Christ

Brian Bantum's *Redeeming Mulatto* is an in-depth discussion of Christ as a mixed-race person.⁹ Bantum extends his argument from a historical account of racialization in the U.S., similar to the pastor-scholars introduced in Section I: David Swanson, Esau McCaulley, and Brenda Salter McNeil. Like Swanson and McNeil in particular, Bantum asserts that racial reconciliation in the church begins with racial re-discipleship. For these authors and pastors, the practices of discipleship, mission, fellowship and worship should run exactly counter to these racial histories if the goal is to develop the anti-racist imaginations of their church members.

Ultimately, Bantum's Mulatto Christology/vision of hybrid humanity is meant to assist that cause; this is clear in his consistent attack on race-based identification, and how he describes the mulatto as a prophetic challenge to the notion of racial purity and race per se. Bantum's overall theology of mulatto/a hybridity exposes the historical power of racial logic in our churches, which is an important first step in deconstructing that logic and re-centering the *imago dei* in our anthropology. However, like in Carter's claims, Bantum's choice to build his Christology upon the

9. Bantum, Brian. *Redeeming mulatto: A theology of race and Christian hybridity*. Baylor University Press, 2010.

mulatto metaphor tends to re-implicate racial logic and imagery rather than “redeem” it, as is his original goal.

In preparing the reader to engage a mulatto Christology, Bantum dives into a literary analysis of several archetypal “tragic mulatto” characters found in twentieth-century fiction, beginning with Charles Chesnutt’s *The House Behind the Cedars* and James Weldon Johnson’s *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*, and concluding the section with Nella Larsen’s *Passing*. In his analysis, Bantum comes to define the mulatto/a existence apophatically: as “neither black nor white; neither slave nor free,” the mulatta is the tragic, un-categorizable child of a racialized society who can only interpret her if she conforms to one side of the color line at which she is born. For example, in Larsen’s novel, two mixed race women take different paths of social kinship: Irene associates primarily with Black society, and Clare chooses to pass as White. Bantum says the following in analysis of Irene and Clare’s foil relationship:

Larsen’s depiction of Clare and Irene expresses how the articulations of white and black identity become mutually necessary, sustaining themselves through the relation of one over the other, and ultimately attempting to create lives of stability and certainty. Clare, one who refuses these limitations and their myth of stability, binds herself to both worlds in ways that can only be resolved in death. To acquiesce to their presence is to begin to acknowledge the impurity of one’s claims to purity. In the world of American racial life it is to become *no-one*.¹⁰

[Irene’s] life as a black woman must now be protected and asserted over against one who would seemingly enter and exit without a sense of its costs or its requirements. For John Bellew lay the possibility that he is the father of a colored child, that he desired a dark woman, and that his own whiteness is therefore much less certain.¹¹

Bantum highlights the notion of a “choice” between “Whiteness or Blackness.” The conflict that arises between Clare and Irene as Clare attempts to have both, Bantum describes as a product of the “American racial life” and this social imaginary of racial purity. Interestingly, Bantum chooses

10. Bantum, 71.

11. Bantum, 76.

not to centralize each characters' actions to "create lives of stability and certainty," as he originally observes. He instead focuses on the disruptiveness of the mulatta character's "simple presence":

These [mulatto] bodies bore, through their simple presence, the possibility of disorienting the claims concerning racialized life in the West and thus can be understood as inherently political. Through three particular literary moments we see how interracial lives themselves, created through transgressive desire and discursive refusals, negotiate racial life, at once disrupting its claims and norms yet also becoming subject to its claims and hopes.¹²

Rather than drawing attention to Clare and Irene's choices, Bantum politicizes their *presence* — the *possibility* of the mulatta having political significance. For Bantum, the mulatta characters in this work are not complex agents, but racially ambiguous bodies on pause and on mute for display as an anti-monument: "They disrupt because they are."¹³ Furthermore, by speaking of the mulatta as a person born of "transgressive desire" and of "lust and power," Bantum encloses the archetype in the context of miscegenation logic. While "transgression" or "illicit" sex (especially between slaves and slave-owners) certainly was part of the backstory of many mixed-race characters in twentieth-century literature, Robinson offers in *Gilead* one clear alternative narrative. Nella Larsen actually offers very little to the imagination of Irene or Clare's parentage, aside from descriptions of Clare's abusive father.

Bantum accurately describes the underpinnings of racial purity to Clare and Irene's conflict, but tends to neglect that these are part of the more complex nucleus of their relationship: the 1920s American reality in which women achieved socioeconomic stability through marriage. From her childhood with a single abusive father and into her marriage to John Bellew, Clare moves from one performative and dangerous life to the next, from one explosive male caretaker to the next. Irene remembers Clare's abusive father when she beholds Clare's flagrantly racist husband, and so refrains from lashing out at him when he offends her: "In Irene, rage had not retreated but was held by some dam of caution and allegiance to Clare. So, in the best casual voice she could muster, she

12. Bantum, 42. My emphasis.

13. Bantum, 43.

agreed with Bellew.”¹⁴ Furthermore, the novel does not depict Clare as the disruptive character or center Clare’s story (tragic or not). The plot centralizes the invasions of *Irene*, the consequences of Irene’s actions, and Irene ultimately falls heir to the isolation and guilt of Clare’s life. Irene and Clare’s relationship is not entirely built on Clare’s initiative, but also on Irene’s particular interferences — many of which stem from insecurities within Irene’s marriage:

...The primary theme is not race...but marital stability. *Passing* describes Irene’s attempts to keep her marriage intact in the face of her husband’s potential adultery with Clare. In many ways, Larsen has written an old-fashioned tale of jealousy, infidelity, and marital disintegration.¹⁵

Bantum interprets Clare and Irene through the lens of racial visibility and how color made their bodies “inherently political,” but Charles Larsen reminds *Passing*’s audience that the notion of racial “passing” as depicted in the novella is a composite of gender and racial normativity. While racial visibility is a factor, Larsen’s novel indicts the whole American *system* of which racial visibility is one cog: Irene and Clare grapple not only with their Blackness and Whiteness, but with the pressures of a highly gendered society in which marital stability is tied to the woman’s beauty (and, “beauty” in Larsen’s novel is not equated with Whiteness necessarily; it is not Clare’s “White” features but her “exotic” features and her couture that attract Irene’s praise¹⁶). John Bellew’s comments on Clare’s body in front of her guests are obviously steeped in colorism, but the true weight of these comments is felt when interpreted in light of the historic notion that one’s wife was property to be valued or discarded at the husband’s discretion.¹⁷ Clare pursues — at a price, and in the way her society framed it — the path of socioeconomic freedom, agency, and stability.

14. Larsen, Nella. *The complete fiction of Nella Larsen*. (Anchor, 2001), 203.

15. Larsen, Charles R. Introduction. *The complete fiction of Nella Larsen*, by Nella Larsen. Anchor, 2001.

16. Irene gives a particularly vivid description of Clare that might remind the reader of how Ophelia’s customers read her body: “Ah! Surely! They [Clare’s] were Negro eyes! Mysterious and concealing. And set in that ivory face under that bright hair, there was about them something exotic” (191).

17. Historians argue that miscegenation law bared some of its truest fallacies when they became contested — by white *and* non-white men — as infractions on a man’s right to marry whomever he pleased. In sum, the notion that Clare (or Irene) has chosen to “become no one” may be too simple a reading of Larsen’s passing characters and of 1920s American life. For a detailed look at the legislation and court cases

As we encounter in Trethewey, Robinson, and E. J. Koh's work, and as we will address more fully in the last section, contemporary storytelling reveals a more non-racial, intergenerational understanding of hybrid identity in the U.S. Trethewey's modern rendering of the "mulatto" psyche in the character of Ophelia shows how notions of race are not inherent to individuals, but are a matter of discipleship. Robinson's attention to the dynamic of Jack and Della's relationship links racial purity to a sense of theological or religious purity, and shows how socioeconomic status can be as powerful an identifier as racial status. E. J. Koh attends to racial visibility in her personal story of hybridity, but is far more concerned with the power of language to link her to her ethnic predecessors in the lack of an ethnic home.

These formulae of mixed-heritage identity represented in these three are more useful in the express goal of de-centering racial referentiality in our theology because are not strictly reliant on racial ideology or visibility. *Passing*, with its prophetic response to the racial logic of the twentieth century, is a clear predecessor to the *present* of mixed-heritage identity depicted in our literature. With a better understanding of Larsen's characters in historical time, one can point out that the choice to adhere to the term "mulatto" as a signifier to hybrid identity is to speak of mixed-heritage existence allochronically.

Bantum moves from his literary analysis into a Christology of "Christ as a Tragic Mulatto." He begins by taking the twentieth century mulatto allochronism and extending it into a metaphor for interpreting the birth of Christ:

Whether Jesus is a liberator, or the perfection of thought and action, or the most profound example of humanity in its limitations, conceptions of Jesus have been bound to humanity's self-understanding. These conceptions are tied to the building of slave ships and the accumulation of knowledge within encyclopedias. Jesus is tied to the responses of faithful Christians to the profound problems of human trafficking and human classification. In this way the nineteenth-century puzzle

that made it clear that miscegenation also referred men's rights, see: Pascoe, Peggy. *What comes naturally: Miscegenation law and the making of race in America*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 2009.

concerning the impossibility of a black woman giving birth to a white child is not too distant from the question of whether a woman (much less a virgin) could be the mother of God.¹⁸

Bantum acknowledges (just as we have) the undeniable link between Christology and anthropology. However, one may observe that Bantum's structure takes a twentieth century anthropology of hybrid identity and packs it *into* Jesus's life rather than taking the hybridity of Jesus of Nazareth and unpacking its redemptive significance *onto* the lives of broken, mixed-heritage people. In other words, he builds his Christology on the mulatto archetype rather than using the particular mixed-heritage person of Jesus to prophetically locate the brokenness of the mulatto existence. The example above also ensnares his discourse in an unhelpful and counterproductive correlative: in the "impossible" kinship relationships that he describes, Black motherhood is put on the same side of the comparative as Mary's virgin motherhood, and White childhood is grouped with divinity.

Bantum builds a three-part case that the mulatto conscience can recognize their experience in Jesus. Firstly, Jesus, too, lived as the tragic mulatto because of the "impossibility" of his birth to a virgin girl: Bantum reads Mary's question to the angel, "How can this be?" as a "confession of her limitation"¹⁹ in understanding Jesus' "embodied disruption."²⁰ Secondly, Bantum explains that Jesus's birth recapitulates the "Black and White" double-consciousness of mulatto experience in the form of "flesh and spirit" double-consciousness; he defines the life of discipleship as our participation in "true humanity marked uniquely by the intermixture of flesh and Spirit. This intermixture is now the constitution of our persons, of a Christian's "mulattic" character."²¹ Thirdly, Bantum argues that it is through baptism/rebirth that all believers are welcomed into mulattic life as the Body of Christ

18. Bantum, 88.

19. Bantum, 91.

20. Bantum, 93.

21. Bantum, 143.

— the family of God who, in imitation of Christ, refuses or withdraws from idolatrous kinship structures and is united in “pneumatic existence.”²²

The value to these claims is that Jesus’s fully-God, fully-human “mulatto-ness” rewrites the archetypal mulatto life and consciousness into a *non-racial* hybrid sonship: the baptized people of God. While the historical mulatto, according to Bantum, is racialized from birth — “neither white nor black; neither slave nor free” — the hypostatic union is not prone to such racial fractures because it is not a product of race. By extension, the common baptism of believers, their “rebirth” into the family of God through the Spirit, means that the baptized are joined by the Spirit and not by race. This notion that “hybrid” identity can be detached from exclusive racial politics and attached to the inclusive love of the Godhead through the Spirit is at the center of Bantum’s anthropology.

This formula is at the same time unsatisfying *because* of its focuses on baptism and on Jesus’ birth. Bantum explores Jesus’s hybridity through the circumstances of his birth — his “internal” composition of “flesh” and “spirit.”²³ Bantum structures his chapter on “Christ, the Tragic Mulatto” around moments in Scripture where new life represented God’s promise-fulfilling intervention — Abram and Sarai; Moses’ “birthing” of Israel from the Red Sea²⁴ — but afterward, Bantum glosses over the ways that Jesus’ disruptive identity unfolds in Jesus’s embodied life, and how Jesus functioned as a hybrid individual among people. As a result, his ecclesiology, too, focuses on the language and imagery of birth. Bantum argues in the section following this Christology that our baptismal “rebirth” into mulattic, pneumatic existence signifies the believer’s “disruptive” presence in the world.

22. Bantum, 132

23. “born of flesh and spirit” is a recurring, central qualifier in Bantum’s description of Jesus, and the Body of Christ. See pages 100, 120, 141, 148, of *Redeeming Mulatto*.

24. Bantum, 90.

This pneumatic focus gets drawn forward and suggests an individualistic limit on Bantum's theology of prayer and discipleship; the outcome is an ecclesiology built on the spiritual aspect of the individual prayer life:

To be a follower of Christ is to pray. Prayer is an aspect of discipleship wherein the believer's life is pointed beyond itself yet through itself. It is through the cares, the joys, the yearnings of one's prayer life that we begin to see the kingdom breaking into the world through those who follow Jesus. It could be said that prayer is one of the most fundamental acts of Christian discipleship, for it is in the prayer of the believer and the believer's struggle to conform and apprehend the Spirit's groans within them that their lives become shaped within the life of the ecclesial community. The life of prayer is a life of conformation into Christ's image and bound to the lives of those who love him and whom he loves.²⁵

Bantum prioritizes a kind of private prayer cell — “the cares, joys, and yearnings of one's prayer life,” and “the believer's struggle to conform and apprehend the Spirit's groans within them”— as our primary context for Christian formation even “within the ecclesial community.”

Continuing on, Bantum uses the high priestly prayer in John 17 as a primary example of formative prayer. But this passage proves to be a difficult model to follow: when Jesus says, “I pray they will be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. I pray that they will also be in us,” he prays not *into* conformity with Father's will, as we must do, but *from within* conformity. In reality, because the disciples are not God, this is not exactly how Jesus teaches them to pray: the prayer that begins “*our* Father” is *our counterpart* to Jesus' prayer that “they [we] will be one.” The most clear model of prayer we are given begins by recognizing the *family* who prays.

In other words, prayer is not scripturally framed as an individual striving toward conformity with God's will and *thereby* conformity with one another. It is a corporate commitment to loving one another as an expression of our prayer and worship — “Our Father who is in heaven, uphold the holiness of your name.” If racism is an individual *and* corporate, systemic sin, then perhaps we should seek a commensurate structure of addressing racism individually *and* corporately. In John 13, Jesus issues the new commandment: “Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must

25. Bantum 170.

love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other.” This commandment is framed in the preceding passage not by an image of private devotion or even of prayer, but by the embodied love and servitude of Jesus, washing the disciples’ feet.

In summary, the first issue in the way of a Mulatto Christology that actually gives way to discipleship is that the apophatically-, allochronically-found character is not framed as an active or currently *living* character, but Jesus *is* an active character. Secondly, the nature of Jesus’ disruption was both pneumatic and culturally specific: Jesus’ disruption of Jewish and Greco-Roman culture cannot be conflated with an abstract notion that the presence of the Spirit is the “color” of Jesus’s mulattic disruption. Jesus did not have a visually neutral, New Face of Israel God-body. He had a Jewish body, which added a specific rhetorical weight to his actions. Similarly, believers do not have visually neutral bodies, but bodies whose appearances have rhetorical weight in their communication of the Gospel in a society that is actively suffering from racialization.

Bantum’s Christology is perhaps not directly addressing the twentieth-century “mulatto,” mixed person, or focusing on their unconditional inclusion in the Body of Christ; the spirit-flesh existence, while central to Christian faith, does not quite dovetail as a human hybridity that reintegrates “Whiteness” and “Blackness” into a one-ness of self. Bantum’s formula appropriates the mixed-race consciousness to frame life in the Spirit, *separately* from the experience of racialized consciousness. In the end, “mulatto” is not so much “redeemed” as it is used as a structural metaphor for pneumatic existence.

Mestizaje theology: repositioning the lens of hybrid identity in Christological claims

Problems arise at the point in both Bantum’s and Carter’s arguments where the mulatto metaphor is applied anthropologically, as a Christological hermeneutic, to Jesus. Carter’s uses “mulatto” to describe Jesus’ Jewish body as, having been intersected by God’s covenant to Israel, an

intra-racial body (i.e., inclusive of all “nations, languages, and generations of men”). This recodes the Christological discourse within an epistemological framework of purity and division — “transgression,” “impurity,” “contamination,” “miscegenation,” “promiscuity” — which suggests that creation is somehow violated by Jesus’ incarnation rather than restored; that humanity is altered by the incarnation rather than revealed in its fulness.

Appropriating the term “mulatto” to describe the hypostatic union, which is the route that Bantum takes in his Christological expansion of Carter’s original usage, is a framework which 1) requires an allochronic discourse about the present of mixed-heritage identity in the U.S., and 2) recodes the story of the God of Israel *into* our current story of racialization. The counterproductive effect of this framework is that, to the first point, the mixed-heritage experience is explored within the etymology of the term “mulatto,” which tends to reinforce or require the language of race rather than de-centralize it. Moreover Trethewey, Robinson, and Koh’s works all suggest that this is too narrow an anthropology of the mixed experience to be helpful today. To the second point, analogizing Jesus’ divinity into a higher, pneumatic order of “race” includes Jesus in a trajectory of humanity that is mapped out by racialization. Thus, this formula does not align with Carter’s or Bantum’s original vision of Jesus as Lord *over*, and *before* race (and not only race, but *all* structures of interpersonal hostility).

Even so, we find in Bantum’s and Carter’s formulae that the extended metaphor of mulatto identity can be a powerful tool which informs ecclesiology and shapes the prayer lives and imaginations of believers. Bantum pursues the conviction that the mulatto/a, born “dead to rights” because of their racialized context, can find a shock of recognition, redemption and belonging in the Body of Christ: “They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be

their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country.”²⁶

Furthermore, Bantum offers examples through literature that the racialized mind can find edification in the mulatta’s presence and in hearing her story, because she falsifies racial logic and exposes its traumatic effects. Carter, who tackles anti-Black racism in Christian theology head-on, suggests that the poor, powerless and outcast can find hope in the “whole recapitulated economy,” of “all nations, languages, and generations of men.” Taking Bantum’s and Carter’s assertions into account, we need only reposition the metaphor so that it points back to Christ instead of consuming him with racial language. This could mean moving mulatto-ness — or ethnic hybridity more broadly — further down on the chain of knowing. Justo González, in “*Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*,” takes this route by deferring the operative role of Hispanic-Americanness to ecclesiology, rather than using it as the basis for his Christology.²⁷

González’s *Mañana* begins to shift us to a discussion of religious categories that intersect with ethnic categories, as Robinson does in the previous section. González’s work also begins to expand our theological geography outside of Black-White America, preparing the way back to our discussion of transpacific migrant heritage on E. J. Koh’s terms.

The notion of “hybridity” in *Mañana* is signified by the ethnic term *mestizo*; Virgilio P. Elizondo constructively introduces González’s work as an ecumenical *mestizo* theology.²⁸ Elizondo recodes the ethnic term — which typically describes a person of *racially* Spanish and *racially* indigenous descent — to describe a *religiously* mixed individual:

26. Quoted in Bantum, 169: “Letter to Diognetus.” In *Early Christian Fathers*, edited by Cyril C. Richardson. New York: Collier, 2006.

27. González, Justo L. *Manana: Christian theology from a Hispanic perspective*. (Abingdon Press, 2010), 13.

28. The word *mestizaje* also appears in Elizondo’s case — a counterpart to the word *mestizo* with a history worth noting. The term emerged as an ethnic descriptor in response to the discourse of “the unnatural and unseemly” that surrounded the term “miscegenation” in the U.S. and Europe. Rafael Pérez-Torres, Professor of English at UCLA, notes that the term has clear links to the celebration of “miscegenation or cultural mixture as the basis for conceiving a homogenous national identity.” See: Pérez-Torres, Rafael. *Mestizaje: Critical uses of race in Chicano culture*. (University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

Let us never forget that we Iberoamericanos are not descendants of the religious and cultural problems of Europe, which produced Protestantism and post-Tridentine Catholicism. We are descendants of neither, and therefore should never be forced to assume them in order to be called Christians. We are descendants of two great mystical traditions: the pre-Reformation evangelically renewed Iberian and the Native American... We are *Mestizo* Christians, and this *mestizo* tradition can enrich the Protestant and Catholic traditions of the United States... [this tradition] is the Christian religious expression of the millions of poor, oppressed, and marginated peoples of the Americas.²⁹

Elizondo's description of the *Mestizo* Christianity born between Iberians and Native Americans gives us a way of understanding the word *mestizo* apart from its racial connotations; *mestizo* experience is inherently tied to two religious traditions in a way that "mulatto," etymologically, is not. Elizondo employs an ethnic metaphor, and also clarifies how González's theology operates independently from racial logic. Furthermore, Elizondo specifically characterizes the *mestizo* tradition as an ecumenical form of religious expression. He underscores the notion that the Gospel to the "poor, oppressed, and marginated," stating that "The poor have a privileged knowledge of God and of the language of God, for they are God's chosen ones, and God communicates with them in the language that is natural to them."³⁰ Elizondo claims *mestizo* Christianity for the Iberoamericanos and yet includes *all* of the marginalized under its epistemology in the same breath.

In another contrast to Bantum and Carter, Elizondo does not apply *mestizo* or *mestizaje* as a metaphor for the person of Jesus. Instead, Elizondo maintains it as an ecumenical signifier:

We will no longer impoverish our understanding of God by limiting God to the ways of knowledge of the Western World; we will come to the knowledge of a far greater God by knowing God also through the categories of thought of our own *mestizo* world of Iberoamerica.

Elizondo asserts to his and González's Hispanic-American audience that theology is not only limited when pursued within the bounds of Western epistemology, but "impoverished" or weakened. At the same time Elizondo includes an operative "also": Elizondo is not calling his audience to abandon Western theology, which is equally ingrained in their Hispanic-American heritage, but to come to knowledge of God through their Iberoamerican heritage *also*. As such, it

29. González, 13.

30. González, 19.

clear that in Elizondo's eyes, for González to pursue a specifically Hispanic Theology is not to abandon any other "contextual" theology, but to enrich the life of the Church across all time and geography: he writes, "Christianity does not come to destroy but to bring to the fullness of life!"³¹ Elizondo encourages *mestizaje* Christians that they may come to a fuller knowledge of God by allowing God to reveal himself in *mestizo* categories of thought.

González, in his first chapter building an anthropology of Hispanic-American Christians, similarly underscores his belief that his work is part of a joint cultural effort:

What will be most important in our attempts to rediscover the original liberating gospel will not be our participation in Spanish culture but our participation, jointly with the early church, with Jesus and the apostles, and with Afro-Americans and Asian Americans, in the condition of a dispossessed minority whom God is calling to new life.³²

González defines Hispanic-Americans, Afro-Americans, Asian-Americans, and later in the paragraph, "women and other underrepresented groups," as being linked — to each other, to the apostolic church, and to Jesus — by their dispossessed condition. Not only does González decentralize race and racial purity, refusing the notion that he is constructing an image of the Hispanic-American as a "ruling minority": he centralizes their shared experience of marginality and suggests that their cooperation as those being "called into new life" out of their dispossession is their own, non-racial ethnic heritage. González further explains that he composes this theology in English rather than in Spanish because his focus is not the good news to the Hispanic-American, but the good news to all the poor.

This ethnicity of being called out of dispossession and into new life solidifies as González founds his pursuit of a Hispanic theology on power/powerlessness rather than on Hispanic-American experience per se:

When we approach a text, we must ask first not the "spiritual" questions or the "doctrinal" questions —the Bible is not primarily a book about "spiritual" reality, except in its own sense, nor is it a book

31. González, 14.

32. González, 38.

about doctrines—but the political questions: Who in this text is in power? Who is powerless? What is the nature of their relationship? Whose side does God take? In this approach to scripture lies the beginning of a Hispanic-American theology, as well as the heart of the new reformation of the twentieth century.³³

González does not ask “how does this speak to the spiritual or doctrinal concerns of Hispanic-American Christians?” but rather “how do people relate to one another, and how does God relate to people?” As a counterpoint to Bantum and Carter, whose arguments are driven by the juxtaposing Jesus’ life with the African-American, mulatto condition, or putting Jesus at the center of the African-American story, González takes a step *back* from an explicitly *mestizo* epistemology. He begins where he believes Scripture literarily begins: in “politics” in the Greek *polis* sense of the word. According to González, Scripture is the narrative of who God is, how God relates to people, and how God continually implicates Godself in the way people relate to one another. While racialization needs to work backward to find its hope in Scripture, the experience of the marginalized in the eyes of God is scripture’s central image.

As a prologue to his Christological work, González affirms that the Chalcedonian Definition roots out the dangers of the Alexandrian and Antiochene extremes (where divinity overwhelms humanity, or humanity is preserved at the expense of the union with the divine). However the Christology he offers is actually part of a critique, not of Chalcedonian Definition per se, but of its hereditary ontology:

One must point out that the entire controversy, and therefore also its result in the “Definition” of Chalcedon, was posed in static terms. When this formula speaks of “humanity,” we are not led to think of a child growing up (Luke 2:52) or of a young man having to make difficult decisions (Mark 1:12 and parallels). Likewise, when the formula speaks of the divine nature, we are not led to think of the active God of Scripture. In both cases, humanity and divinity are depicted as static essences. This is untrue both to the biblical witness regarding the nature of God and to the human experience of what it means to be human.

But the main shortcoming of this formula—and of the long series of controversies that led to it—is that it forgets the basic principle that we do not know who God is, nor why or means to be fully human, apart from divine revelation. In the Older Testament we have the revelation of who God is

33. González, 85.

—or, more precisely, of how God acts—as well as what it means to be human. This revelation, Christians hold, comes to its culmination in the person of Jesus Christ.³⁴

González points out that because the Definition was literarily, rhetorically framed to defend the gospel from being conformed to Hellenistic ideas of divinity — in the form of an ongoing blood quantum-esque explication of Jesus — the phrasing of the Definition “forgets,” or is not necessarily transparent to “humanity” and “divinity” as they play out in the biblical narrative. González also identifies in both the text and context of the Definition, perhaps, a similar issue that we find in the Mulatto Christologies: an a priori notion of who Jesus can be as fully human and fully divine. Bantum and Carter begin with an a priori notion of humanity that can only be accessed through the language of race, and González identifies that the Definition reflects an a priori notion of divinity “drawn mostly from the Greek metaphysical tradition.”³⁵ González exits the Christological framework behind Chalcedon by instating a different ontology: “The proper starting point for Christology is neither theology nor anthropology — nor a combination of the two — but Jesus himself as Scripture witnesses to him.”³⁶ Here we find verbiage for a critique of Bantum: the “mulattic” Christ’s starting point is an anthropology which imports a racialized lexicon. We also find a critique of Carter: rather than starting with the Scriptural witness to Jesus, Carter builds his Christology around a doctrine (Irenaeus’s doctrine of recapitulation, a Pauline theology) and *then* transposes back to the Gospel (a Lukan Christology).

In order to enact a Christology that begins neither with anthropology nor with theology, González places a sort of coda on the Definition and restarts *dal segno*, from the Gospels. Citing primarily from Luke and John, González suggests that Jesus’ most striking quality that he is “entirely for others.”³⁷ He draws from across the whole of the scriptural narrative, from birth to ascension: “*To you*” is born this day in the City of David a Savior” (Luke 2:11). “God so loved the world that he

34. González, 150.

35. González, 151.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*

gave...”(John 3:16). “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (John 1:17-18). “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). “I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2) — and so on.³⁸ González goes on to observe that Christ’s for-otherness is a “Strong, assertive for-otherness,” which included “not only forgiveness and redemption but also judgement and condemnation”;³⁹ divine for-otherness is not depicted as “even-handed” in scripture because Jesus was proclaiming a new Kingdom order in which “the poor, the widow, the alien, and the oppressed all...enjoy special protection in the Law, and for whom the prophets repeatedly demanded justice.”⁴⁰ Jesus was “for” the *powerless* as their redeemer, he was “for” the *powerful* as a prophetic voice calling them to repentance.

Because González begins in scripture, he is able to keep his analysis of Jesus’ role in the Biblical narrative rooted in Jesus’ cultural context. González describes a for-otherness that manifests specifically “when he cleansed the Temple, spoke the harsh truth to the Pharisees, and called Herod a fox,” all of which are especially significant in light of Jesus’ Jewish heritage.⁴¹ González reminds us that in John 20, Jesus is not so much “cleansing” the temple by driving out the merchants, but condemning the exploitation and commercialization of the sacrificial system and prophesying the creational, Kingdom order which holds the life-giving God at its center. When Jesus spoke harshly toward the Pharisees in their interpretation of the Torah, it was because he came as the fulfillment of the Torah, not simply as another Jewish interpreter of the Torah. When in Luke 13 Jesus responds to the news of Herod’s threat of death by calling him a fox and “insisting on his own timetable,” Jesus is both assuming his Lordship and, perhaps, correcting the Pharisees’ sense of Herod’s

38. Ibid.

39. González, 153.

40. Ibid.

41. González, 151.

agency.⁴² In each example, González reminds the reader that Jesus was responding to very specifically socio-political realities that had taken root in his Jewish community.

Since his exegesis is a response to Chalcedon, González then rhetorically re-asks the reader, “Did all this make him more human, or more divine?” and responds that the incarnation does not seem geared toward answering this question. Rather, the incarnation was a unified expression of full humanity and full divinity for-others:

Divine and human are not two opposite poles, like red and violet in the spectrum, so that as one approaches one pole one moves away from the other. Being more human does not make Jesus less divine. And being more divine does not make him less human. Actually, it is precisely in his being for others that Jesus manifests his full divinity, and it is also in his being for others that he manifests his full humanity.⁴³

González interprets Jesus’ incarnation as the full revelation of God, humanity, and God’s dynamic way of relating with humanity. He also underscores the notion that it was in Jesus’ life of for-otherness that humanity *and* divinity are most authentically revealed.

It is only after this exegetical work that González moves toward describing the contribution of Hispanic epistemology to other areas of Christian theology. The final chapter of González’s work following his brief Christology, for example, is a *Mañana* ecclesiology and eschatology which positions Christ for-others as the hope of the Hispanic church:

Mañana is most often the discouraged response of those who have learned, through long and bitter experience, that the results of their efforts seldom bring about much benefit to them or too their loved ones...

There is, however, another dimension of *mañana*...It is the radical questioning of today...God who created the world in the first place is about to do a new thing — a thing as great and as surprising as that first act of creation. God is already doing this new thing, and we can join it by the power of the Spirit! *Mañana* is here! True, *mañana* is not yet today, but today can be lived out of the glory and the promise of *mañana*, thanks to the power of the Spirit.⁴⁴

42. González, 152.

43. Ibid.

44. González, 164.

Here, González suggests that *mañana* contains within it a double meaning for Hispanic-American Christians — an exclamation of lament for the past and present, and of hope in the inaugurated present of the future Kingdom order. He then uses this concept of the the Church as a “*Mañana* People.” *Mañana* announces the breach of “tomorrow” into “today”:

This is the practice of the prophets. This is also the manner in which the early church is politically active. It is a small group of insignificant people, and yet their activity soon brings upon them the wrath of the mighty Roman Empire. Why? Because by their mere existence, by their living out of *mañana*, they question the very foundations of the Roman social order.⁴⁵

González begins with the narrative of Jesus of Nazareth’s activity in Roman-occupied Palestine, and how his activity disrupted people’s assumptions about God, humanity, and God’s way of relating with humanity. Jesus’ disruption was not only or primarily visual, but political, and immersed in the cultural symbols of his community. This offers a model for how an “insignificant,” racialized, and sexualized individual like Ophelia, or a Black, Methodist schoolteacher like Della may retain agency by questioning the foundation of the social order around her. This contrasts with Bantum’s interpretation of disruptivity, which withholds a degree of agency from the mixed actor by lingering in the realm of “simple presence” and “possibility.”

Transpacific migrant theology: deepening the picture of mixed-heritage Christianity

González bears witness to the theological relationship between Iberoamerican Christians and the children of the Reformation/Counter-Reformation, offering a theological view of mixed-heritage identity in Latin America. González’s writing is taken up by his contemporary Jung Young Lee in *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology*,⁴⁶ which begins on the geopolitical front closer to where

45. González, 166.

46. Lee, Jung Young, *Marginality: The key to multicultural theology*. (Fortress Press, 1995). Lee’s work was groundbreaking at the time of its publication in that it emerged from an extensive reading of Asian-American experience in the U.S., from a first-generation immigrant perspective. Lee arrived in Boston in 1951, four years after crossing the 38th parallel, to pursue theological education and ordination; he was deemed by the Board of Ministerial Qualifications to be unappointable because of his race. Lee cites González’s *Out Of Every Tribe and Nation* (1992) in his chapter outlining an ecclesiology of the “authentic church” as the

we soon land our theological discussion — examining the sociopolitical context of Asian migrants in the U.S. Lee’s Christological terminology is a cooperative with González’s *mestizo* theology in our discussion because Lee is inspired by a migrant Korean-, Japanese-, and Chinese-American experience contemporary to the genealogies of Koh’s and Hong’s work; Lee pays especially close attention to war and church history, and the history of labor and immigration laws. Taking a closer look at how González’s and Lee’s work resonate thematically — despite their different religious geographies — can help us identify hermeneutical language that can speak to the problems of mixed-heritage humanity apart from White-Black experience. It allows us to include the experiences of transpacific racialization offered by Koh and Cathy Park Hong, for example, in our anti-racist discourse.

Prior to his Christology, Lee outlines the history of Chinese migrants, Japanese migrants, and Korean migrants to the U.S. in turn. He begins with Chinese-American history, because chronologically, Asian-American history is inaugurated by the arrival of Chinese migrants to the West Coast during the California gold rush of the 1840s and the building of the Transcontinental Railroad in the 1870s. These workers — over 100,000 by 1890, mostly married men without their wives, and many from families of higher status in China — were beset from the start by racial animosity. Contractors exploited those who could not read English, designing positions that would bind individuals to the U.S. Mainland till they paid off their debt. They were disallowed from seeing their families, and bringing their families to the States. In response, Chinese migrant men started restaurants and laundromats, and took up other roles in the service industry, filling a niche created by the influx of solitary men to the Gold Rush — and a niche that required less mastery of English. The stereotype of Chinese migrants as illiterate storefront workers was born in these decades. While

“community of new marginality.” *Mañana* is just two years a predecessor to *Out Of Every Tribe and Nation*, and the heavy thematic overlap in Lee’s and González’s work suggests that they sat together, so to speak, at the “ethnic roundtable” of which González writes.

it escapes the reach of this thesis, Lee also addresses the vast and horrific psychological and sociopolitical outcomes of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Lee's final move in his outline of Chinese-American experience is to describe a dramatic shift in Chinese-American and White-American relations, marked by WWII: a strange alliance formed between these two groups following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, resulting in a number of reparational repeals and new policies.⁴⁷

From the mid-eighteenth to mid-twentieth century, over 600 pieces of legislation were passed that were explicitly hostile toward Asian national groups. This meant that ethnicity in this era was determined by exclusionary and dehumanizing policy intended to keep "Asian" and "American" separate. Koshy writes, "while the 40s focused public antagonism on Japanese Americans, the anti-Communist witch-hunts of the 1950s shifted attention to Chinese Americans...in Ronald Takaki's succinct formulation: "The new peril was seen as yellow in race and red in ideology."⁴⁸ Lee arrived from Korea to the U.S. in 1951, at the very cusp of post-war shifts in national alliances where people of Asian descent were concerned; he would have been familiar with anti-Asian discrimination in two forms: the term "enemy alien" was assigned to Japanese migrants after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and "yellow peril" was assigned to Chinese migrants according to anti-communist alliances.

Lee frames his Christology with this particular anthropology of mixed Asian-American heritage, and how Asian-Americans are affected by racial discrimination *as well as* diaspora, socio-economic sacrifice, and erasure:

The incarnation can also be compared to divine immigration, in which God emigrated from a heavenly place to this world. As an immigrant in the new world, Christ, like the Asian-American, experienced rejection, harassment, and humiliation. Many Asians, prominent in their countries, gave

47. Of course, Lee is entertaining a notion that these changes in the White American attitude toward Chinese migrants represented an overcoming of anti-Chinese discrimination even into the current century. This is a notion that Cathy Park Hong rejects, from an author's perspective: "...writers of color must tell their stories of racial trauma, but for too long our stories have been shaped by the white imagination...In many Asian American novels, writers set trauma in a distant mother country or within an insular Asian family to ensure that their pain is not a reproof against American imperial geopolitics or domestic racism; the outlying forces that cause their pain—Asian Patriarchal Fathers, White People Back Then—are remote enough to allow everyone, including the reader, off the hook" (49).

48. Koshy, Susan. "The fiction of Asian American literature." Parker, 766.

up everything to come to America. Where they once held professional-level positions in their native land, here, they are started as janitors, launderers, cooks, and other marginal workers... [However] The similarity ends there. God's divine emigration was intended to save the world, while human emigration is to save the immigrant.⁴⁹

Lee acknowledges that his theology of marginality is culturally informed — in this case, inspired specifically by the Asian-American experience of diaspora and exile. I say this not to point out a hermeneutical weakness, but to underscore that Lee's attention to a variety of cultural concerns in the Asian-American experience opens up a conversation that operates on the same plane of nuanced ethnic discourse as Trethewey, Robinson, Koh. Lee's intersectionally-minded Christology offers important correctives and alternatives to mulatto-ness, a race-centric concept of hybrid identity.

Like González for his Hispanic-American, *mestizo* audience, Lee returns to scripture when initiating Christological claims rather than superimposing the Asian-American story of immigration onto the incarnation. Lee moves from this picture of Asian-American marginality to suggest that the marginal consciousness should also be seen as the consciousness of the people of God, because God presents Godself as Jesus, the “new marginal person”:

The Christian way of thinking is ultimately to think like Jesus Christ. To think like Jesus Christ means to have the mind of Jesus Christ. Following Paul's teaching, let me reiterate that to become a Christian means to speak, think, and reason like Jesus Christ...

Jesus Christ was a new marginal person *par excellence*...he was not accepted by the dominant groups of the day. The Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, and Romans rejected him. He was accepted by marginal people because he was a marginal person. He was an outsider, one who lived in-between.⁵⁰

We previously noted González's primary theological guiding questions: “Who in this text is in power? Who is powerless? What is the nature of their relationship? Whose side does God take?” Above, in saying that Jesus lived in-between — and out of favor with — the dominant cultures, Lee proposes that God, in the person of Jesus, sides with the marginal.

49. Lee, “Incarnation as Divine Marginalization”

50. Lee, “In-Beyond: Theology of marginality”

Lee's social-spatial metaphor of centrality and marginality begins here, and develops over the course of several chapters. When Lee says that Jesus was not accepted by the "dominant groups," he does not only mean the powerful or high status groups that he immediately lists; this is clear because he also identifies liberation theologies as expressions of centrality:

In recent years, while liberation theologies have contributed greatly to the removal of dominant group theological monopoly, in general such schools of thought still operate under the auspices of the dominant groups who define and control the center. As long as the third-world liberation theologians attempt to validate their theological interpretation by the work of European-American scholars who have dominated racial and ethnic minorities, they will never be free of the hermeneutics of centrality and will never produce an authentic theology that represents their own perspective.⁵¹

Lee points out that because liberation theologies mostly hold a degree of referentiality to a presuppositional (White) center, they do not actually pose enough of a challenge to the European theological monopoly. So, when Lee discusses "centrality" and "marginality," he imagines not a sliding scale of power between these two identifiers, but an infinite number of identifiers — each with their own "center." "Marginality" is then conceptualized as the border or gap between centralities.

Lee finds his ecclesiology on this theology of marginality: he concludes that the marginal perspective and life should be taken up by God's people because universally across time and geography, it is aligned with the perspective and life of Jesus:

In reality we will never be free from marginality. As the followers of Christ, we will always be a marginal people. Liberation from the margin does not mean to be at the center that dominates the margin. Liberation means to transfer one form of marginality to another form of marginality, that is, to transfer from the marginality of human centrality to the new marginality of divine presence in the world. As long as we are the followers of Jesus-Christ, we can never be free from marginality, for Jesus-Christ himself is marginal.

Lee's stance is that to follow Christ is to constantly follow him into his marginal position, and that paradoxically, to be liberated from marginality we must choose to dwell with Christ in his divine marginality. The migrant metaphor of the Body of Christ being a community who actively chooses

51. Lee, "In-Beyond: Neither/nor and both/and"

marginality complements González's Scriptural and metaphoric image of the Church's political location: "a small group of insignificant people [whose] activity soon brings upon them the wrath of the mighty Roman Empire...whose daily lot is suffering, poverty and humiliation."⁵² For Lee, Jesus as the new marginal person is the Head of the Church comprising the new marginal people.

By virtue of its references to the Asian migrant experience of racialization *as well as* social subjugation, broken family, ties, loss of place, etc., Lee's theological framework of marginality initiates a discussion of mixed-heritage constitution in all of its intersectionality. This intersectional concept of personhood mirrors the contemporary, literary understanding of ethnicity posited in the previous section. Lee's attention to the intergenerational and non-visual brokennesses of mixed-heritage identity gives his framework the potential to make a Christological response that is more relevant to contemporary problems of social identity. Lee's framework thus contrasts the mulatto formulas for hybrid identity used by Bantum and Carter, which — semantically, subliminally, even if unintentionally — extend the narrative of racialization and individual hybrid identity.

We find several solutions to the problematic aspects of Bantum and Carter's Mulatto Christology offered in González's *mestizaje* theology (for-others Christology and Mañana ecclesiology), as well as in Lee's theology of marginality. For instance, neither González nor Lee root their claims in a racial lexicon even while they address the problem of racial injustice. The difficulty of relying on the term "mulatto" as a signifier for the whole of hybrid identity is that the term is racial by origin, and the consequent theological discussion becomes infused with racialized imagery and language. "Mulatto" also imports its own history as a literary archetype which speaks of hybrid identity allochronically and non-intersectionally. By contrast, González finds in the Gospels a Christ who is *universally* for-others — who is attentive to the geography of power, and who accordingly

52. González, 166.

locates Godself as the redeemer of the powerless and a prophet to the powerful. Similarly, Lee's Jesus-Christ continually associates with the marginal, and in the resurrection, directly links their death or erasure to fulness of life in him. In both cases the brokenness of mixed-heritage identity may include racialization without being inscribed inside a racial imagination. Lastly, while Bantum and Carter present a Christ whose hybridity is an interior, inactive, and disembodied consciousness, González and Lee's Christologies represent the career of the active, Jewish, Jesus Christ.

Lee's and González's work still bring the mixed-heritage reader to a few hermeneutical dead ends. The first is that neither scholar gives a very clear route for imagining Jesus as the proton or eschaton of hybrid humanity, potentially because even after getting their Christology "onto the ground" of the Gospel narratives, neither stays there for very long. González, for example, points to Jesus' ongoing work in the post-Easter chapters but only in passing: "For Hispanics, the church is a pilgrim people, but...it is a pilgrimage to a *mañana* made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, made present by the Spirit, and made certain by the power and the promise of none other than God Almighty!"⁵³ Similarly, Lee offers great hope to Asian-Americans through the concept that their deaths or erasures are recoded, by Jesus' death-resurrection, as the beginning of new life. And yet Lee does not return to the Gospels but instead opts for Paul's exegesis of the resurrection to the Corinthian church. In other words, both Lee and González pay more due attention to Jesus' career than Carter and Bantum, but they truncate their argument by ending their main exegesis at the crucifixion.

What is still lacking in each of the Christologies we have looked at so far, then, is a model of Jesus Christ's cultural hybridity which stands as a *specific, actionable* model for hybrid life as his Body in our current world — one that clearly defines the church's participation in the *imago dei* after the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

53. González, 166-67.

III. Ha‘ina

(declaration, confession — in Hawaiian grammar, a class of verb)

The language for an actionable model as such can actually be found by leaning further into Lee’s theology of marginality, which is where I begin my Christological work in the next section. In particular, I will redefine a descriptor that Lee briefly addresses in his book: the *hyphenated* Jesus-Christ, Lee’s signifier for the hypostatic union of “Jesus as the Christ” being synonymous for “the Christ as Jesus.” But before further unpacking Lee’s specific use of the hyphen, it will be helpful to trace some of the hyphen’s history. Then I will describe the kind of contribution that Lee is making, and be able to demonstrate how, in the context of Lee’s particular Christology, the hyphen metaphor does not reach its full effect.

Redefining Lee’s hyphenated Jesus-Christ from the Pacific migrant perspective

Throughout the history of migration, which we have already spoken of in some detail, the hyphen has tended to symbolize either a double refusal of identities or a category of lesser-Americanness, like Bantum’s term “mulatto.” Australian theologian Clive Pearson observes in engaging Lee’s work that “the hyphen can act like a conduit, an arrow, pointing in a direction that will never be fully realised.”¹ Asian-American playwright David Henry Hwang is considered among the “artists who manage to cross over into the mainstream from Harlem or Watts or Chinatown east or west” by “riding on the hyphen” from the first term into the second.² In his article “Hyphenated-Jews and the Anxiety of Identity,” Jewish historian Berel Lang reminds us of the undercurrent of

1. Pearson, Clive. “Telling Tales: Following the Hyphenated Jesus-Christ.” *Studies in World Christianity* 10, no. 1 (2004): 9-24; 12

2. Gerard, Jeremy. “David Hwang Riding on the Hyphen.” *Drama Criticism*, edited by Lawrence J. Trudeau, vol. 4, Gale, 1994. *Literature Resource Center*

American nationalism that denied/s Americanness to those who take on hyphenated identities: the 26th and 28th presidents of the United States were literal “anti-hyphenates.” In 1915, Theodore Roosevelt announced from the stage of Carnegie Hall that

There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism. When I refer to hyphenated Americans, I do not refer to naturalized Americans. Some of the very best Americans I have ever known were naturalized Americans, Americans born abroad. But a hyphenated American is not an American at all...The one absolutely certain way of bringing this nation to ruin, of preventing all possibility of its continuing to be a nation at all, would be to permit it to become a tangle of squabbling nationalities, an intricate knot of German-Americans, Irish-Americans, English-Americans, French-Americans, Scandinavian-Americans or Italian-Americans...The only man who is a good American is the man who is an American and nothing else.³

Similarly, Woodrow Wilson stated in his 1919 address to the League of Nations that “Any man who carries a hyphen about with him carries a dagger that he is ready to plunge into the vitals of this Republic whenever he gets ready.” Whereas the hyphenated individuals in question sought to “preserve a conjunctive identity,”⁴ Roosevelt and Wilson imagined a pure and undiluted American *ethnos* in which interior allegiance would serve to fortify geopolitical borders. With these exclusionary and purist politics at play — and manifest in policies like the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882-1943) — it is no wonder that “even those immigrants who had managed to put down roots on American soil tended to think of themselves a *huaqiao*, ‘overseas Chinese;’” if you were considered unassimilable, as Chinese migrants were, there was no room to identify as “American.”⁵

Accordingly, the term “Asian-American” did not come into wide use as an ethnic category until the socio-political struggles and victories of the 1960s protest movements; it is not until the 70s that we see a strong re-articulation of scholarly interest in historically repressed voices, and “Asian-American literature” becomes a literary category only because this shift in the academic landscape.

3. Roosevelt, Theodore. “Address to the Knights of Columbus.” *New York, NY* (1915), excerpted in Lang, Berel. “Hyphenated-Jews and the Anxiety of Identity.” *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, 12, no. 1 (2005): 1-15.

4. Lang, Berel. “Hyphenated-Jews and the Anxiety of Identity.” *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, 12, no. 1 (2005): 1-15. pp. 2

5. Cheung, King-Kok, ed. *An interethnic companion to Asian American literature*. (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 39-40.

Lee's *Marginality*, then, containing his interlocation of the "hyphenated Jesus-Christ" in the history of Asian-American struggle, owes itself largely to those movements of the 1960s and 70s. Lang proposes that as far as anti-hyphenate ideologies go, "the principles of diversity and multiculturalism exhibit at least as strong a contemporary presence. Through the latter, moreover, the hyphen has gained a new lease on life, often in applications quite unfamiliar...to Roosevelt and Wilson."⁶

Even as the hyphen gained academic and social capital and shed its past reputation as a fatal edge, denotations for "Asian-American" remained (and are still, for that matter) in constant flux. Changes in immigration law in 1965 ushered in a wave of diasporic Asian migrants whose experience was completely separate from that of the first wave and their children. In contrast to earlier migrants who were non literate plantation or railroad laborers, many who came during the "second phase migrations" were educated professionals. Their migrant experiences and socioeconomic sensibilities were inherently different, but they were incorporated into the same category of "Asian-American" nevertheless. As in all taxonomy, the term's utility ends with its essentialist quality.

Jung Y. Lee's particular view of hyphenated identity has a way of dodging essentializing language as he progresses, though, because he decides on the nonracial word "marginal." He expresses his formula for "marginal" identity most clearly in the Christological section of his book, a Christology of "Jesus-Christ" as the "margin of marginality," the marginal person *par excellence*. Lee holds throughout his book, similarly to González, that the Church has been too apt to focus on a theology of glory, becoming "increasingly interested in the power and majesty of Christ and [forgetting] that it was his weakness that made him powerful, and his humility that raised him to be the Lord of

6. Lang uses the hyphen as avenue into discussing the "anxiety" of hyphenated Jewishness, and the relationship of mutual influence that exists between Israeli-Jews and the Diasporic Jews. For Lang hyphenated-Jewish identity is both a thorn in the flesh and a cultural necessity stating that "The hyphen draws on and shapes Israeli-Jewish identity and, arguably, Jewish identity." The hyphen is a symbol not of fracture but of common well of history and hope for a common table in the present and future.

lords.”⁷ Lee then initiates his Christology by comparing the dual nature of Christ to the hyphenated consciousness of first-generation Asian-Americans:

I use a hyphenated “Jesus-Christ” because Jesus is the Christ, while the Christ is also Jesus. In other words, Jesus as the Christ is not enough. He is also the Christ as Jesus. Just as “Asian-American” means an Asian and an American. Whenever I say Jesus, I mean Jesus-Christ; whenever I say Christ, I mean Christ Jesus. They are inseparable, two facets of one existence.⁸

Lee’s reasons for emphasizing the hyphenated Jesus-Christ are never made very clear. Is Lee’s insistence on “Jesus as the Christ, and the Christ as Jesus” a statement about the hypostatic union, about Jesus’ fulfillment of God’s promises about the Messiah, or something else? This line of questioning is not pursued in Lee’s Christology; the bulk of the chapter is geared toward exegeting the gospels to discover Jesus as a marginal person, and not toward exegeting the term “Christ” or explaining the dynamic between the two natures. One reason Lee might have had for interpolating this comparison was to clarify his Christological method: to discover “Christ” and messiahship by looking directly at Jesus rather than looking at contemporary models of authority — a part of his original critiques of power-focused, majority-minded Constantinian ecclesiology.

In actuality, the hyphen does not seem explicitly necessary as grounding for the Christology of marginality that follows, because the location of the hyphen between “Jesus” and “Christ” does not communicate marginality or hybridity in the same way that “Asian-American” might. In the end, the metaphor breaks down relatively early and Lee does not revisit or expand it — at last, the notion of a hyphenated Jesus-Christ falls away from the forefront of Lee’s Christology.

It also seems likely that Lee drops the discussion of the hyphen because his theological reflection does not flow so much from an “in-between” *hyphenate* experience but rather from his personal *marginal* first-generation migrant experience — an experience not so much of hybridity, but of one’s primary cultural identity becoming fractured by migration. Whereas the first-generation

7. Lee, “Jesus-Christ: The Margin of Marginality”

8. *Ibid.*

migrant is usually central in their home culture, she is marginal in the receiving culture, and as such, migration results in a “loss of place, status, markers of identity and a basic rupture in personal narrative.”⁹ Pearson describes the autobiographical dynamic of Lee’s theological authorship this way:

Being a newcomer to this [American] society, Lee experienced the dichotomy of living inside its highly intentional language of freedom and equality and the practical reality of marginality and not fitting in. In due course Lee became a hyphenated being, a Korean-American, rather than a sojourner. For the sake of the multicultural theology that emerged out of his subsequent quest for identity Lee drew upon this autobiographical context. That he should then think in terms of Jesus-Christ is a good example of how his personal experience has filtered his theology. Jesus-Christ is the divine emigrant.¹⁰

For Lee, suggests Pearson, the narrative of the condescension of God is mirrored by the migrant’s traumatic movement from native to foreigner. In light of his own personal experiences of transpacific migration, Lee offers that Jesus-Christ, as the divine immigrant to earth, modeled the most human response to the migrant’s “inward need to invent a new sense of identity and construct a new sociality.”¹¹ Lee crosses the wide gap between two geopolitical identities — two centralities — and so brings forth a theology that integrates his disparate experiences into a single, Christocentric “marginal” identity.

Hyphenation is a helpful hermeneutic because it frees us to speak of mixed ethnic heritage within and without race. In Trethewey’s poems, the character of Ophelia resides in the hyphen between Black and White but also between girl and woman. For Jack, there is a hyphen between “white” and “poor,” and even between his atheism and the Protestant heritage signified by his surname. Koh’s hyphenate relationship with her surroundings is more subtle in the scenes of her memoir; she walks the line between silence and expression, teaching language and learning it, and, arguably, between daughterhood and the effects of long-term orphanhood. In each of their

9. Pearson, 8.

10. Pearson, 9

11. Pearson, 8.

circumstances, our characters are constructing new, countercultural socialities in response to their technical and/or metaphorical hyphenated spaces.

Still, there are inherent dangers to a simile between “Christ and Jesus” and “Asian and American.” As in Koh’s memoir, Cathy Park Hong’s observations, and in the history of immigration we have discussed, hyphens tend to signify nationalistic identification and exclusion. This is in spite of the fact that the hyphenated term emerged aspirationally, as part of a political movement. With this in mind, comparing “Christ and Jesus” to “Asian and American” can produce an undesirable correlative between the Christ’s appearance as Jesus, and an Asian migrant’s assimilation into American society: are we to think of the Christ’s appearance as Jesus as a transition of “Christ” into “Jesus” initiated by incarnation? Are we to think of the incarnation, the Word becoming flesh, in the same way we think of an Asian migrant “becoming” American on U.S. soil and maintaining both Asianness and Americanness? These questions are not at the center of this conversation, but if they were, we would probably find that the comparison takes the temporality, directionality, and nationality carried not only by the hyphen in “Asian-American” but each hyphen-containing identity formulation *ad infinitum*, and unloads them onto the hyphen between “Jesus-Christ.” Lee’s hyphenated “Jesus-Christ” is also another formulation of *internal*, individualized hybridity, as I have already implied, and so is problematic in a similar way to Carter’s and Bantum’s pneumatic mulatto Christ. Lee opts to focus on Jesus’ internal “composition” as Jesus and Christ rather than how it manifested in his relationship to the world — in his career.

If this is the case, and if what we find in the notion of hyphenation is merely a structural ancestor to those more racial notions of mixed heritage, then characterizing the hyphenated Jesus-Christ seems questionable. But it is at this point that redefinition is essential for the purposes of this thesis.

Lee's primary delineation is between "centrality" and "marginality," and such a distinction directly references the literal, physical voyage the first-generation migrant makes from centrality in the homeland, to marginality in the foreign land. Lee's worldview does not necessarily account for the experiences of later generations of migrants who are *native to* the receiving culture; whose identities are formed by their "stationary position" between the two terms rather than by an act of physical migration. Ethnographer Easten Law speaks of this stationary position as a "sensory threshold," a location to which the second-/third-generation is native in a way the first usually is not.¹² This section departs from Lee's notion that structurally the hyphen is a "marginal" space, and imagines it instead as an *origin* space where Christocentric identity can be formed and communicated.

This is precisely the notion of migrant identity reflected in the work of New Zealand-born Samoan theologian, Risatisone Ete. While Lee's perspective is distinctly that of a first-generation migrant, Ete's *A Bridge in My Father's House* is a second-generation transpacific migrant theology. Clive Pearson puts Lee in conversation with Ete, which helps us to see more clearly how these two different views of the hyphen shape Christology.

Pearson emphasizes that Ete's ethnic position — "neither migrant majority nor the indigenous people of the land,"¹³ and "a seed adrift, on account of the decisions of others to migrate"¹⁴ — exerts a strong influence on his theological framework. If the hyphenated Jesus-Christ becomes less operative in Lee's theology as it progresses, Pearson observes that the hyphen remains *essential* throughout Ete's Christology. Pearson writes,

Second-generation theology must consult the 'concrete experiences' of parents who 'still have their hearts in the islands, with their feelings for its culture and customs.' It must also address the concerns

12. Law, Easten. "Living Faith between Kingdoms and Empires: Pondering the Trans-Pacific Politics of Chinese/American Theologizing." (presentation, 2021 Asian American Theology Conference on Lived Theology in Asian America: Race, Justice and Politics in Transpacific Context, online conference, April 24, 2021).

13. Pearson, 7.

14. Pearson, 8.

of a rising generation who ‘do not know the depths of their mother tongue or feel the necessity of old customs to satisfy the soul.’¹⁵

Here, Pearson explains that the second-generation has unique cultural instincts and manners of relating to the terms on either side of the hyphen. Their lives are lived in “consultation” of — and even in unconscious reference to — their heritage cultures because of their proximity to their first-generation parents; they can also comprehend the third generation’s distance from that heritage culture, and communicate on the terms of their shared experience of the receiving culture. This is to say that second-generation migrant theologies can reckon with the ethnic past of their heritage culture *and* help to faithfully shape the ethnic futures of all their descendants in a non-supercessionist fashion. Pearson suggests that while Ete’s dissertation does not contain a fully-formed Christology, it was a novel enterprise which both revealed a lacuna in Pacific Islander theology and offered vision for the second-generation transpacific migrant’s role in filling it.

Pearson’s work to explain the difference between Lee’s and Ete’s Christologies is valuable because he clearly explains how first-generation hyphenated identity is a culturally and theologically distinct experience from second- or third- generation *hyphenate* identity. For if the adjectival form “hyphenated” implies a fracturing of identity (intended or forced), then by contrast, the nominal form “hyphenate” figures an individual who is *native to* both/all of her heritage culture(s) and her receiving culture(s) even if those relations are pained, fragile, or shifting.

Furthermore, Pearson’s move to explain hyphenation within the context of Pacific Islander Christology offers solutions to both of the problems we find recurring in the Christologies we have already visited: racialized language (for, as discussed, hyphenation can be, but is not etymologically about race) *and* an odd underdevelopment of a hybrid identity with specific implications for the embodied hybrid life of the Body of Christ.

15. Pearson, 13.

Ke Ha'i Mo'olelo: vocabulary for a mixed Christology based in the Pacific

Ete's choice to take Christology as his "hermeneutical key" marks his digression from a greater body of Pacific Islander theology which takes "ecclesiology with its strong communal sense [as] the most obvious organizing doctrine."¹⁶ While that defines some hazardous territory, in reality it is not necessary to abandon these communal values; in fact, the communal metaphysics of Pacific Islander culture more readily conform to scripture's fundamental picture of the Body of Christ as an inherently intergenerational and diverse community with shared values. As such, I seek a middle ground that, while still beginning with Scripture-based Christology, conserves the ecclesial value of Pacific Islander traditions that originally emerged to protect intergenerational, communal existence. In particular, I home in on Pacific Islander traditions of oral and embodied storytelling, which provide an invaluable vocabulary for interpreting Jesus' career, and how Jesus intended the gospel to be passed down and lived out by the Body of Christ.¹⁷ In doing so I re-link ecclesiology to Christology in the way Scripture presents them. But we do not merely seek to use Pacific Islander culture as a hermeneutical lens. Pacific Islander storytelling has its own internalized nationalistic, exclusionary politics, which we seek to rectify Christologically, by conforming and expanding its vocabulary to signify the much larger story of God's relationship to *all* humanity.

In Hawaiian culture, storytelling falls under the blanket term *mo'olelo*: a combination of the words *mo'o* (genealogy, lineage; the image of the vertebrae forming a spine) and *'olelo* (language, speech,

16. Examples of theological works that take this form include Bush, Joseph E., "Land and Communal Faith: Methodist Belief and Ritual in Fiji." *Studies in World Christianity* 6, no. 1 (2000): 21–37; Goh, Joseph N. "Trans/Forming Church in the Asia Pacific Region: Narratives of Hospitable Ecclesiology by Philippine and Tongan Transgender Women." *QUEST: Studies on Religion & Culture in Asia* 4 (2020). Samoan theologian Upolu Luma Vaai builds the case that a number of missiological, colonial factors have led to a widespread "denial of the doctrine [of the Trinity] in contemporary Samoan spiritual and ecclesial life." Vaai, Upolu Luma. "Faaaloalo: A theological reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Trinity from a Samoan perspective." PhD diss., Griffith University, Brisbane, 2006.

17. Gonzalez writes in *Mañana*: "We must remember that only a small portion of scripture was originally written to be read in private. Spanish, like Greek and Hebrew, distinguishes between the singular and plural forms of the second person. The singular "you" as a form of address to the reader appears rarely in Scripture...[we] must be aware that even when we read Scripture in private, God is addressing all of us as a community of faith (85).

conversation). *Mo'olelo* is a storytelling tradition we might access from a Western concept of *mythos*, especially as a counterpart to *logos*,¹⁸ but it is crucial to note the ways that *mo'olelo* is not *mythos* either, and narrow our own concept of *mo'olelo* for this final stretch of our discussion.

Hawaiian was an exclusively oral language until the 1800s. Ancient genealogies, mythologies, and histories that were preserved in oral *mo'olelo* were thus highly endangered when the Hawaiian Kingdom was overthrown in 1893 and the Hawaiian language banned in all school instruction in 1896. Hawaiian poet, scholar and political activist Haunani-Kay Trask writes,

A century after the overthrow of the Hawaiian government by U.S. marines in 1893, thousands of Hawaiians commemorated that evil event at the Palace of our chiefs in Honolulu. Our greatest contemporary chanters, masters of *bula hālau* (dance academies), greeted the throngs who poured onto the Palace grounds. After nearly twenty-five years of a Hawaiian revival in the language, the arts, and most visibly, in the struggle for our mother, the land, the two springs of our Hawaiian renaissance — cultural and political — merged together in a demand for sovereignty, for political representation among the world's family of nations.¹⁹

Trask refers to the events of the Hawaiian Renaissance in the 1960s-80s, and how the “marginalized voice” of the Native Hawaiians found a redemptive image in front of ‘Iolani Palace, in the presence and welcome of these highly literate chanters. Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua introduces her edited collection of essays on modern Native Hawaiian pedagogies with the following account of *mo'olelo* necessity:

“...writers from various fields have published *mo'olelo* asserting the continued central importance of the relationship between *Kanaka*²⁰ and *‘āina* [ancestral land], which provides the bedrock of who we

18. As many scholars have explored, for all that theological scholarship underscores Jesus as *logos*, scripture cannot be fully explored without a matched sense for *mythos*. For examples and theories of exegesis as an amalgam of *logos* and *mythos*, see: Otis, Brooks. “Mythos and Logos.” *The Christian Scholar* 38, no. 3 (1955): 219-31; Clasby, Nancy Tenfelde. 2008. *God, the Bible, and Human Consciousness*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; Fisher, Walter R. “The narrative paradigm: In the beginning.” *Journal of communication* 35, no. 4 (1985): 74-89.

19. Trask, Haunani-Kay. “Writing in captivity: Poetry in a time of decolonization.” *Inside out: Literature, cultural politics, and identity in the New Pacific* (1999): 17-26.

20. There are several self-selected terms used to refer to Native Hawaiians. The first in this excerpt is *Kanaka*, which in context is Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua shortening a previously used term, *Kanaka Maoli*: “true people” or “real people.” The latter term ‘*Oiwi*’ is also shortened, from “Kanaka ‘*Oiwi*”: literally, “real bones.” These two terms are often used as a contrast to *kama‘āina*, “children of the land,” which is used to refer to Hawai‘i-born, non-indigenous people. Oftentimes, *Kanaka* denotes as much as attitude toward the land itself as it does ancestry.

are as *‘Oivi* [native people]. In addition to such *mo‘olelo* composed in prose, scholars of Hawaiian *mele* [song] and *hula* [dance] have provided a foundation showing that *Kanaka ‘Oivi* have since time immemorial used *mele* to express and explore who we are. Many of these *mele* and *hula* scholars are practitioners in the double sense of being both researchers-writers and composers-performers, and even *kumu hula* [masters or teachers of hula]. Some have published books and academic journal articles, whereas others have directed their research efforts toward enriching the experiences of *hālanu hula* [*hula* in concert, by members of a troupe or academy] and other forms of community education.²¹

Here, Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua highlights the work of Native Hawaiian educators, scholars and activists who have conducted their research via traditional Hawaiian ways of *mo‘olelo*-knowing. They participate in a clear history of *mo‘olelo* being a tool for the preservation of Hawaiian identity. Furthermore, Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua’s observes, *mo‘olelo* recitation and *hula* are not merely performative, but *formative* “assertions of humanity” and “expressions/explorations” of identity. Hula is so much a verbal art, with each motion corresponding to or elucidating the words of the *mele*, that it is impossible for many to imagine it surviving apart from Hawaiian language: “hula is a dance form whose precise choreography is dependent on the poetic texts—hula can’t be hula without words.”²² The immense body of *mo‘olelo* that are specifically danced or dramatically performed to links the practice definitively to embodiment.

In both ancient and modern *hula hālanu*, participation in the creative form requires other disciplinary practices that we might think of as separate from dance:

...many sacred hula were taught as *hula kuanu* (hula adhering to the maintenance of a hula altar for Laka, the goddess of the hula), that required the school of hula to follow strict rules of behavior and ritual with appropriate offerings and prayers of supplication composed appropriately in the language. The *Pule Ho‘oulu No Laka*, (prayer for inspiration consecrated to Laka) exemplifies the acknowledgement of the higher realm and the invocation in accord with Laka, to grant inspiration

21. Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, Noelani. “Reproducing the ropes of resistance: Hawaiian studies methodologies,” in *Kanaka ‘Oivi methodologies: Mo ‘olelo and metaphor* ed. Katrina- Ann R. Kapā‘anaokalāokeola Nākoa Oliveira and Erin Kahunawaika‘ala Wright (University of Hawai‘i Press, 2016): 1-29. All italicizations and bracketed translations are my own, provided for clarity. Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua’s original article uses Hawaiian vocabulary mostly without accidentals, so the distinction of *mo‘olelo* in this excerpt is likely included because of how vast a category *mo‘olelo* tends to be.

22. Ho‘omanawanui, Ku‘ualoha. “He Lei Ho‘oheno No Nā Kau a Kau: Language, Performance, and Form in Hawaiian Poetry.” *The Contemporary Pacific* 17, no. 1 (2005): 51

for engaging in the creative skill of hula. This traditional prayer summons the deity to allow entry to her instruction and brings to cognizance for both student and teacher, the discipline of hula.²³

The dancer's dedication to *hula* signified her or his dedication to the *hālanu* itself and to Hawaiian deities. *Hula kuahu* are "altar hula," the opening of the liturgy of the creative practice.

Ho'omanawanui expands that in *hula*, the genre of the chant or song needed to be translated to or reflected in the posture of the dancer:

Mo'olelo akua (sacred stories) are distinguished from the secular not only by name but in the manner of telling. Therefore, the performance aspect of mo'olelo is important in ha'i mo'olelo [storytelling], as it involves distinguishing between types of mo'olelo by tone of voice, vocal expression, and body language.²⁴

Ho'omanawanui asserts that the performance of the *mo'olelo* is inseparable from its verbal content; they are, together, *ha'i mo'olelo*. The links between movement, language, and the sacred in Hawaiian modes of knowing are so strong that hula, as Chariot writes, "is not isolated...but continuous with the rest of life. Dance concentrates and heightens a consciousness of the meaningfulness of one's words, body, and actions — a consciousness which can be found in every other activity." Chariot continues, "Because word and body are meaningful and powerful...the child is taught [through *hula*] not to speak and act thoughtlessly and haphazardly, but consciously and carefully."²⁵ The depth of *hula* as an embodied, extra-verbal practice of *ha'ina* (telling) ties human movement/behavior so closely to storytelling that theoretically, one does not *move* without telling *some kind of story*. Similarly, one should not speak without considering the influence of words on the body — not just when with the *hālanu*, but in all spheres of life. The body of the dancer is legible and inherently sacral. To begin transposing to and from our theological lexicon, *mo'olelo* produced shared

23. Galla, Candace Kaleimamoowahinekapu, Louise Janet Leiola Aquino Galla, Dennis Kana'e. Keawe, and Larry Lindsey Kimura. "Perpetuating Hula." *Pacific Arts* 14, no. 1/2 (2015): 132.

24. Ho'omanawanui, Ku'ualoha. "A cairn of stories: establishing a foundation of Hawaiian literature/He ahu mo'olelo: e ho'okahua i ka paepae mo'olelo Palapala Hawai'i." *Palapala* 1 (2017): 71

25. Chariot, John. "The hula in Hawaiian life and thought." *Honolulu Magazine* 206 (1979).

language, memory, and community practices that were essential to Native Hawaiian culture as mythology, memory, sacrament and discipleship both within and without the *halau* itself.

In this final section, I present a Christology of Jesus Christ as a hyphenate *par excellence* and as *Ke Ha'i Mo'olelo* — the Great Storyteller. Jesus' prophetic *mo'olelo* of reconciliation confronts the narrative of racialization we find in Trethewey, Robinson, and Koh's work by defining humans in terms of their shared origins, shared present lives, and shared futures. This active defining process, I refer to as *ho'okū'auhau* — Jesus' construction and reconstruction of a Kingdom ethnicity, or genealogy.²⁶ If Jesus Christ, the *imago dei* and the first over all creation, is dynamically native to the threshold between cultures at odds, then we can discuss hyphenated identities like “Asian-American” as representative of nationalistic *disintegrations* of *imago dei* humanity that have been prioritized over Christocentric, Kingdom ethnicity.

Furthermore, the communal and embodied proclamation of the gospel are native to Jesus' storytelling and to the aims of the gospel storytellers, which means that the gospel has direct responses to the intergenerational and embodied brokenness represented by racialization. I conform the Hawaiian lexicon of oral storytelling — the Hawaiian mode of knowing and being — to the exegetical task in order to invoke our awareness of the verbal and somatic quality of Jesus' storytelling. By way of a subsequent ecclesiology, cast from this Pacific perspective, I unpack that the pertinent aspect of the hyphenate believer's existence is their unique *ha'i mo'olelo* in and for the Body of Christ.

26. I borrow this usage from Hawai'i-based scholar of Hawaiian literature, Brandy Nālani McDougall. She defines *ho'okū'auhau* as the “active and constructive process of genealogizing as opposed to the recitation of genealogies. Ho'o- is a prefix indicating causation and transitivization, and kū'auhau can be translated as “genealogy” or “genealogist” or “to recite genealogy.”

McDougall, Brandy Nālani. "Putting feathers on our words: Kaona as a decolonial aesthetic practice in Hawaiian literature." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 1 (2014): 1-22.

Jesus the hyphenate and Ke Ha'i mo'olelo

The underlying claim to Lee's marginal theology is that Jesus resembles a first-generation migrant because the incarnation was the emigration of God to the world in human flesh. In light of Ete's and Pearson's claims the birth narrative can be read in another way: the circumstances of Mary's pregnancy and Joseph's obedient decision not to call off their engagement made them strange among their community but aligned them with the Kingdom culture that God was about to newly usher in. Situating us in a theological framework similar to Ete's — one that acknowledges the contrasting experiences between the first- and second-generation migrant — I launch my exegesis from the idea that *Mary and Joseph* were the original *hyphenated* migrants. Jesus' parents were brought by God into a context that was culturally difficult for them to understand — into an unfamiliar telling of their Torah *mo'olelo*. This makes Jesus a second-generation *hyphenate*.

I base the following Christology in Luke's gospel, similar to Ete, because the path from Luke into the ecclesiology of Acts and Paul's letters is already well-paved,²⁷ and because Luke's two-volume sequence links Jesus' career to the career of the Church, the Body of Christ in the world following Jesus' Ascension. The Evangelist begins: "Now, after having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, I have also decided to write a carefully ordered account for you, most honorable Theophilus." Edwards writes the following in expansion of this prologue:

It seems significant that Luke chooses a term that signifies a proper narrative *sequence and order*, a term Luke uses similarly in Acts 11:4. According to Luke's testimony, his primary contribution to the apostolic tradition consists in matters of sequence and order more than in content and substance. The third gospel is...a presentation of the life of Jesus in such a way that readers can know the *meaning* of Jesus. [...] Luke testifies that his role as one Evangelist is to bear responsible testimony to what God has done in human history in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.²⁸

27. I draw especially James Edward's and Justo L. Gonzalez's observations on Luke: González, Justo L. *The Story Luke Tells: Luke's Unique Witness to the Gospel*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015; Edwards, James R. *The gospel according to Luke*. Inter-Varsity Press, 2020.

28. Edwards, "Chapter One: Heavenly Announcements of John and Jesus," regarding Luke's prologue.

Edwards suggests that Luke, having gathered all these segments of human testimony, carefully arranges them into an account that frames Jesus' "saving significance" in the human *mo'olelo*. Further, Luke highlights Jesus' practice of *ha'i mo'olelo* (as I will show) as a prophetic, reconciling tool.

Luke's is unique among the Gospels in that it begins with the *mo'olelo* of Jesus' birth and childhood (1:5-2:52). Luke is quick to situate Jesus and his family in the context of Roman rule: the first character to appear is Herod, the Roman-appointed King of Judea (1:5) and soon after, Caesar Augustus (2:1). Under the nose of these two rulers, the angels announce that "Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord." There is much to be said about the multiple juxtapositions of kingship that Luke offers; the dynamic of concern for us is that Luke's construction implies that at the time of his birth, Jesus' predecessors can only imagine him as part of the Torah *mo'olelo* of the Davidic king and Messiah whose rule is described with *'olelo* of *place* and *ancestry*. According to Luke, Mary offers a *pule* and *mele k̄ālai'āina* (a prayer and political song) recounting God and his promises to Israel: "He has *scattered* those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations. / He has pulled the powerful *down from their thrones* and lifted up the lowly.../ He has *come* to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy / just as he promised to our ancestors, / to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever" (1:51-55). In Mary's imagination, Israel's enemies will be scattered just as Israel was scattered. Zechariah does similarly. In his *mele* he declares, "He has raised up a mighty savior for us in his servant David's house.../ He has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, / and remembered his holy covenant, / the solemn pledge he made to our ancestor Abraham" (1:69-70), which is a *ha'i* (telling) of the Genesis 12 covenant: "Leave your land, your family, and your father's household for the land that I will show you." Mary's and Zechariah's *mele* stake Jesus' prophesied kingship in the bloodline from Abraham and in the "house"

of David, by which they would have imagined a literal place where they could stay for all future generations.

However the child Jesus freely revises Mary's and Zechariah's *mo'olelo* of a physical ancestral land of promise when he remains at the temple in Jerusalem (2:41-51). Mary and Joseph leave Jerusalem after the Passover Festival with their caravan, as planned, and soon realize that Jesus is not among their family or friends. After three days, they find the twelve-year-old Jesus "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and putting questions to them." Mary reprimands him, saying, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Listen! Your father (*ho pater sou*) and I have been worried. We've been looking for you!" Jesus replies, "Didn't you know that it was necessary to be in my Father's house (*en tois tou Patros mou*)?"

It is important to notice that Mary's question is phrased as a question of motive — "Why have you treated us like this?" — and that Jesus states his motive in his response: "to be in my Father's house." The parallel phrasing between Mary's statement, *ho pater sou*, and Jesus' response, *en tois tou Patros mou*, suggests that Jesus is aiming to use "pater" differently, *redefining* the 'olelo of fatherhood and household.²⁹ While Mary saw it as proper that Jesus be with the caravan (naturally!) Jesus deemed it more necessary to be *en tois tou Patros mou*. Jesus reveals his interior *ho'okū'auhau*, his sense of family, to his parents, by acknowledging a Father who is more his father than Joseph. By extension Jesus professes that his true household is not with his parents in Nazareth but in his Father's house.

In effect, Luke portrays Jesus' sense of who the true Father is — *in whom* his identity is most truly rooted. Likewise, Luke's *ho'okū'auhau* of Jesus' ancestry ties him initially to the *kūpuna* (predecessors) esteemed by the first generation (e.g. Abraham, David; 3:31-34) but ultimately to *God*

29. Edwards, "A boy in his father's house"

(38). Luke situates Jesus in a human *mo‘o kupuna* (a human ancestry) and in a *mo‘oakua* (an ancestry of the gods/God) — a story of humanity and divinity.

Despite the cultural differences made apparent in this scene, the bookends do not depict a child Jesus who tries to exit his parents' *obana*. He spends the first twelve years of his life with his family in Nazareth. Under the care of devout parents who “had completed everything required by the Law of the Lord,” Jesus “grew up and became strong” and “filled with wisdom.” Though Jesus finds himself in his Father’s house after the Passover, he obediently returns to his earthly father’s house in Nazareth. “God’s favor” (2:40) does not leave Jesus when he returns to Nazareth; it is precisely as a hyphenate in Nazareth, self-affirming his divine sonship but also abiding by the *mo‘olelo* of his human sonship, that Jesus *continues* to mature “in wisdom and years, and in favor with God *and* with people.” In other words, Luke figures that Jesus had a period of cultural formation after the finding at the temple where he negotiated hyphenate space between two inextricable conditions of full sonship. On the one hand, he is reared by Mary and Joseph, and the community of his childhood so clearly associates him with his family that they later pour scorn on his miracle-working on the basis of those memories:

When he came to his hometown, he taught the people in their synagogue. They were surprised and said, “Where did he get this wisdom? Where did he get the power to work miracles? Isn’t he the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother named Mary? Aren’t James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas his brothers? And his sisters, aren’t they here with us? Where did this man get all this?” They were repulsed by him and fell into sin. (13:54-57)

On the other hand, Jesus adheres so closely to his divine Sonship in the meanwhile that it puts him at fatal odds with the religious leaders:

The high priest said, “By the living God, I demand that you tell us whether you are the Christ, God’s Son.” “You said it,” Jesus replied. “But I say to you that from now on you’ll see *the Human One sitting on the right side of the Almighty and coming on the heavenly clouds.*” Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He’s insulting God! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, you’ve heard his insult against God. What do you think?” And they answered, “He deserves to die!” (Matthew 26:63-66)

If there is a filial first generation acted out primarily by Mary and Joseph, the narrative also characterizes a kind of spiritual or religious first generation quite separately, through religious leaders such as this high priest. In other words, Jesus navigates cross-cultural interactions with the Jewish majority of which he is also a “son,” and whose *ho‘okū‘auban* are interrupted by his claims of kinship with God. The first two chapters of Luke suggest that intergenerational and cultural tension begin early in Jesus’ life, Mary, Joseph, and the religious authorities of his time representing a “first generation,” and Jesus representing the second. Luke continues to present Jesus as the hyphenate Christ throughout his career.

Jesus’ reconciling mo‘olelo over shared meals in Luke-Acts and 1 Corinthians

Moving forward, we seek to expand on the first four theologies we have visited (Carter, Bantum, Gonzalez, Lee) by strengthening the link between Jesus’ hybrid identity and the actual narrative of his career, and the link between his career and the career of the Church, his Body. Luke’s Gospel continues to be an ideal location for this synthesizing work for a number of reasons. For one, many of Luke’s central motifs are the “realia,” the physical symbols and structures that shaped everyday life, grounding the reader in the tactile, bodily lives of the Biblical actors.³⁰ As many theologians make plain, Roman Palestine’s culture of eating is impossible to ignore as a literary symbol in Luke.³¹

The temptation is to define all of Luke’s mealtime scenes eucharistically, which, Karris writes, can water down the specific countercultural significance of each scene.³² Eucharist is where the

30. Karris, Robert J. *Eating Your Way Through Luke’s Gospel*. (Liturgical Press, 2006), 3.

31. Robert J. Karris and Douglas E. Neel look at the cultural, socioeconomic and agricultural realities of food that are part of the synoptic backdrop: Neel, Douglas E., and Pugh, Joel A. *The Food and Feasts of Jesus: Inside the World of First-century Fare, with Menus and Recipes*. Religion in the Modern World (Lanham, Md.). Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012.

For other, full exegeses of food imagery in Luke, see Smith, Dennis E. “Table fellowship as a literary motif in the Gospel of Luke.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106, no. 4 (1987): 613-638; Corley, Kathleen E. *Private Women, Public Meals: Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993.

32. Karris, Robert J. *Eating Your Way Through Luke’s Gospel*. Liturgical Press, 2006.

current argument, too, will land, but we will momentarily stave off that retroactive instinct; we begin with an example of how Jesus redefines and prophetically narrativizes common meals in order that the encounter holds meaning specific to those present at the table. In these shared meals, Christ *Ke Ha'i Mo'olelo* is shown continuing his embodied *ho'okū'auhan* as a hyphenate who draws all believers into his own hyphenate space. Jesus redefines shared meals as opportunities for believers to live counterculturally, even after his death, resurrection and ascension.

One such meal is found in Luke 7:36-50, where Jesus takes a mode of hyphenate inter-personality to mediate between Simon the Pharisee and the woman of the city. When Simon, a person of status, sees Jesus allow the “woman of the city” to touch him, Simon says to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. He would know that she is a sinner,” that is, more specifically, someone who regularly violated Mosaic Law. Though it is not framed as a question or even posed to Jesus directly, Simon’s thoughts mirror Mary’s “why”-question in the temple in Jerusalem: “Why would Jesus let this woman touch him?” or even, “How could he allow this woman to be at my table?”

Luke suggests throughout the gospel that these shared meals were fundamentally socio-political.³³ Simon’s invitation was not a politically neutral act and neither was the woman’s unexpected entry. Simon operates out of a dominant *mo'olelo* which linked a person’s value directly with their keeping of the Law; those who keep the Law are welcome at the table, and sinners are not welcome. Simon’s view of how this *mo'olelo* ought to be performed is plain in his response: if Jesus were truly a prophet and observed the same *mo'olelo* as himself Jesus would have made a different physical response to the touch of a sinful person. Simon begins with an inkling that Jesus may be a prophet, but this event gives him pause.

33. Luke 7:36-50 cf. Luke 10:38-42 (Mary and Martha); 11:37-53 (Pharisees and legal experts); 14:1-24 (a different scene at the home of a Pharisee); 19:1-10 (Zacchaeus). In each of these instances, Jesus’ teachings about status and sin are enmeshed with the depiction of the shared meal.

Although Simon has not spoken, Jesus responds prophetically to Simon's critical gaze by metacommunicating the *ha'i mo'olelo* disclosed by Simon's actions. Jesus begins with the moment he arrives to Simon's house: "When *I* entered *your* home, you didn't give me water for my feet... You didn't greet me with a kiss... You didn't anoint my head with oil." By contrast, the woman comes to Jesus weeping, anointing and kissing his feet. Jesus juxtaposes Simon's physical *ha'i*, his body language, with the woman's *ha'i* in order drive his point. The woman has done more rightly in this instance, and she forgiven of her many sins because by coming in to touch and anoint Jesus "she has shown great love."

The counter-*mo'olelo* Jesus subsequently poses to Simon in 7:41-43 describes a wide discrepancy between two *amounts* of debt (v. 41), but debts nonetheless — and their cancellations — putting Simon and the woman both in the category of "debtor." In parallel with Jesus' new *mo'olelo*, Simon's sins are not left unforgiven, but rather Jesus calls Simon to remember that he, like the woman, is a debtor who has been forgiven — whether it be of little or of much. Jesus also reveals to the woman that she is the one who has truly welcomed Jesus as if into her home, though the home is Simon's. Through Jesus' mediation between the woman and Simon, Luke suggests that the dominant *mo'olelo* of their context is one of hierarchy and exclusion. Furthermore, Luke depicts the contrasting hyphenate politics of Jesus' reconciling *mo'olelo* in which *all* present at the table with him are sinners whom he particularly forgives and calls to a holier, more hospitable life. Jesus' parable is not only a *mo'olelo* of debt and forgiveness, but a story beat in his *ho'okū'aubau*.

Luke repeats this format of story and counterstory with increasing potency until it culminates at the Passover meal, the central shared meal of the Gospels. In line with Luke's *ethos* of inversion, the Passover scene in 22:7-30 is carefully staged to facilitate Jesus' counter narrative. Jesus takes the role as Master of Ceremonies but hosts the meal in a guest room (22:10-13), and he hosts not as a person of status but as a servant (v. 27) soon to be broken, wounded (v.19-20) and betrayed (v.

21-22). The disciples rush to expose the betrayer among them, which appears to give way to the next argument over “which one of them should be regarded as the greatest.”³⁴ Jesus intervenes:

The kings of the Gentiles rule over their subjects, and those in authority over them are called friends of the people.’ But that’s not the way it will be with you. Instead, the greatest among you must become like a person of lower status and the leader like a servant. So which one is greater, the one who is seated at the table or the one who serves at the table? Isn’t it the one who is seated at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. (22:25-27)

Jesus leverages the cultural symbols of the meal at which they sit to explain to the disciples that he has not intended himself or his followers to be great; this is implicit in his *ha’i* of servanthood in the upper room. John’s Gospel conveys even more tangibly in the foot washing. Continuing on, Jesus does not promise the disciples any of the power or status they imagine for themselves (v. 24-27), but rather affirms the value of their common trials as his followers (v. 28). He reminds them of their shared identity in response to their debate of hierarchy.

Luke emphasizes the eschatological and ecclesiological implications of the Passover meal in his particular *ha’ina*, constructing a *mo’olelo* that is formative and prophetic. For example, Jesus frames this “last” supper as, in actuality, one that anticipates the first meals of the new reality: “I tell you, I won’t eat it until it is fulfilled in God’s Kingdom...I tell you that from now on I won’t drink from the fruit of the vine until God’s Kingdom has come.” This is true also of the appearance at Jerusalem: “everything written about me in the Law from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (24:44). Additionally, the “remembrance” that Jesus commands in the Passover, Luke frames as more than a remembrance of the past. As González writes in his commentary on Luke, *The Story Luke Tells: Luke’s Unique Witness to the Gospel*, the word *anamnesis*, there

...certainly has the meaning of “memory,” but refers to more than the past. Actually, even in common usage we use the notion of remembering to refer to more than the past...What Jesus tells his disciples in First Corinthians is that they are to bring him to mind. This means remembering the past (his crucifixion and resurrection), the present (his presence in the church by virtue of the Holy

34. This response exposes an amnesia of what Jesus has just told them, about the inverted character of his Kingdom, and also of the Passover Festival which they now observe — a tradition marking their common heritage as a previously enslaved people.

Spirit), and the future (the day in which he is to eat with us in the reign of God). Thus, doing this “in remembrance of” him is to remember the past, the present, and the future.³⁵

What González means is that the “institutional” model that Christian tradition finds in the text of Luke 22 is Jesus’ invitation to a shared cultural memory. It is in the embodied *ha’i* of the *ho’okū’anbau* of Jesus’ life that Jesus projects that common and participatory *future* where “People will come from east and west, north and south, and sit down to eat in God’s kingdom. Look! Those who are last will be first and those who are first will be last” (13:29-30).

González also traces the parallel structure and diction between Luke’s Passover account and the meal at Emmaus (ch. 24), so as to explain how Luke formally suggests that the Ascension that follows marks the disciples as the Body of Christ in the world thereafter. Moreover, the parallel actually begins on the Emmaus road when Jesus is interpreting scripture to the disciples, because it reveals how even after the Crucifixion and Resurrection, Jesus’ career is rooted in his Kingdom *ho’okū’anbau*. Walking with the disciples still mourning his death and bewildered by the disappearance of his body, Jesus “interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets” (24:27). The very first action Jesus takes after conquering death is to re-present the *ho’okū’anbau* of the life he lived among them, verbally and in conspectus.

The end of Jesus’ earthly life is marked by the blessing and breaking of bread, where he says, “This is my body, which is given for you” (22:19); during his brief appearance to the disciples after the Resurrection Jesus recounts his *ho’okū’anbau* (24:28-32) on the road to Emmaus, then blesses and breaks bread when they reach Emmaus. Jesus “makes himself known” in the blessing and breaking of bread in both of these instances. Then, at Bethany, Jesus blesses *them* (22:50) and parallel imagery suggests that Jesus thus marks the disciples as his Body in the world just before he ascends.

35. González, Justo L.. *The Story Luke Tells: Luke's Unique Witness to the Gospel*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 68.

In this set of encounters after the Resurrection, Jesus summarizes the significance of his life and how it is meant to be remembered after his Ascension: the Body's hyphenate career is intended to be rehearsed in the blessing and breaking of bread, in the embodied communal interactions of everyday life. It is by remembering and then modeling the unity and love described by Jesus in the upper room that *mo'olelo* of disunity and hierarchy are overcome. This everyday practice is meant to conform the Body to the common past, present and future of its members.

This eschatological, ecclesial *mo'olelo* is active in Paul's understanding of the Lord's Supper, made apparent as he condemns the Corinthian church for their damaging behavior at their common meals. Paul's harsh appraisal of the Corinthian eucharist offers a retrospective account of what occurred in the upper room and several assertions about its significance as an event that had since been commemorated into a regular ritual.

It is implicit in Paul's critique that what he has heard about the Corinthian eucharist is an issue of their context and its dominant *mo'olelo*: as in the scene between Simon and the woman of the city, these meals among the Corinthians were common practices which reinforced socioeconomic hierarchies. Tucker argues that according to what was known of Corinth as a center of ideological exchange, the believers in Corinth likely "did not sense the need to change their approach to their civic life once they had accepted the gospel"; the meal may have been regarded as primarily as a normal feast at which the eucharist was also acknowledged rather than an express performance of the Lord's Supper.³⁶ Similarly, Thiselton notes Paul's underlying critique that the Corinthians were allowing their meetings "as the church" to be assimilated with Greco-Roman feasts that were likely occurring in the same civic, and civically defined spaces.³⁷ According to Paul, when the Corinthian

36. Tucker, J. Brian. *You belong to Christ: Paul and the formation of social identity in 1 Corinthians 1–4*. (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 113.

37. Thiselton, Anthony C. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A commentary on the Greek text*. Vol. 7. Wm. B. (Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 865.

believers were supposedly together “as a church” (11:18) it looked dangerously like normal Greco-Roman banquet.

Paul holds nothing back in his censure of this misexecution: whereas the Lord’s Supper was intended as a common meal representing the table in God’s Kingdom, Paul tells them that they merely “[go] ahead and [eat] a private meal” (1 Cor. 11:21), and — to make matters worse — in front of people who are going hungry. Whereas the Jesus was “among [them] as one who serves,” Paul is told that the Corinthians were allowing people to become so weak and sick that they have died (v. 30). Whereas the Lord’s Supper was intended as an anamnetic *mo‘olelo* recollecting Jesus’s self-sacrifice at the table and on the cross, pointing to the shared present and future of the Body of Christ, the Corinthian eucharist merely reproduced Greco-Roman table manners.

Paul’s final indictment, “those who eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord inappropriately will be guilty of the Lord’s body and blood” (v. 27) echoes Jesus’ words in Luke: “You will begin to say, ‘We are and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ He will respond, ‘I don’t know you or where you are from. *Go away from me, all you evildoers!*’ (13:25-27). Paul describes that to treat the Kingdom *mo‘olelo* carelessly, participating in the *ha‘i* “inappropriately,” is to place oneself outside the Kingdom *mo‘olelo*, to go unsung in Jesus’ *ho‘okū‘auhau*: “I don’t know you or where you are from.” Even so, Jesus-Christ is *Ke Ha‘i mo‘olelo Nani Kamaha‘o* — the Great Storyteller — who sets a table where all can be welcome. His *ho‘okū‘auhau* is the reconciling, resurrecting *mo‘olelo* of life which all people after Adam are meant to take part in.

Ha‘ina ‘ia mai

The storytelling vocation that Jesus bestows on his Body is enriched by the language of Hawaiian *mo‘olelo*, which are inherently, physically participatory. In most Hawaiian *mele* and *oli* (chants) and especially in *bula kabiko* (literally “old” hula; pre-contact *bula*) you will hear the dancers

or another singer signal each stanza using its first word or phrase. When the final stanza comes, you might hear the dancers shout “*Ha‘ina!*”, anticipating the cantor’s declaration, *Ha‘ina ‘ia mai ana ka puana!* — “The story has been told!” The *oli* is a contract between *kumu* (teacher) and *haumana* (student), a testament of memorization of the story they offer.

Section I contended for a literary witness to a racialized world, and the stories of Ophelia, Jack, and E. J. Koh provided opportunities for us to question our racialized view of humanity. From the perspective that true humanity is revealed in Christ the *imago dei*, we did not interpret their stories as conclusive *mo‘olelo*, but as prophetic *ha‘ina* that reveal the inhumanity of racialization.

In response to these stories we turned, in Section II, to J. Kameron Carter and Brian Bantum — two current theologians who have grappled with racialization through the concept of ethnic hybridity. Carter and Bantum explore the intersections of racial identity and Christian identity through the notion of a mulatto Christ. Building upon their findings with the work of Justo González, Jung Y. Lee, and Risaitone Ete, we stepped closer to a theological lens that offers hope to those whose identities have been fractured not just by race, but by all forms of injustice and hostility. At the end of Section II, we saw that hyphenated and hyphenate theologies reckon with the ethnic pasts of their heritage cultures *and* help to faithfully shape the ethnic futures of all their descendants; we found in the concept of intergenerational Christian ethnicity a vision for re-discipling the Body of Christ to gather around its common past, present, and future.

That common past, present, and future is revealed in the Gospels; we began our Christology in Section III by looking at Jesus, the true human. As a child in the Jerusalem temple, Jesus of Nazareth reckons with the beliefs of his predecessors and his own ethnic identity as a Jew. In submitting to dual sonship, this Jesus prepares himself for ministry as a hyphenate individual who speaks with prophetic boldness to those who are a part of his *mo‘olelo kupuna* (his Jewish ‘ohana) and with mercy and love toward his *mo‘oakua* (all the nations and languages and generations dispersed

after Adam who are recapitulated in him). In reuniting these two disparate genealogies, Jesus writes a new *ho'okū'auhau* — a genealogy of all humanity in which he links humanity to Godself as the *imago dei*, the true human and the first of all creation.

We see Jesus *Ke Ha'i Mo'olelo* at the table of Simon the Pharisee: Jesus takes the hyphenate position between Simon and the unnamed woman, casting a new *mo'olelo* of hospitality and reconciliation in which both the Pharisee and the Sinner are welcome at the table. Jesus continues to intercede between the divided, at the table in the upper room. On the night he is betrayed, he tears down the disciples' *mo'olelo* of hierarchy and disunity — their vision for a Davidic Kingdom where they become great — and casts a *mo'olelo* of reversal where the hungry eat and where the leaders serve.

The concluding image of Luke embodies the Gospel's own declaration of *ha'ina ia mai ana ka puana*: we see all the believers in the Jerusalem temple with their minds newly opened to comprehend the scriptures, and their mouths opened in continuous worship of the Resurrected Christ. The believers cry *Ha'ina!* The *mo'olelo* of Jesus-Christ has been told; the tomb is empty, and death and hostility are overcome!

And yet Luke does not end his *ha'ina* of the Gospel here at the Resurrection. González writes in the conclusion to *The Story Luke Tells: Luke's Unique Witness to the Gospel*, his commentary on Luke-Acts:

...He (Luke) is not just telling his readers about something that took place in Judea years ago; he is also telling Theophilus and all his readers throughout the centuries that the story goes on. This does not mean that the events in Judea are less important. But it does mean that their importance must be seen and experienced by people in many different contexts, times, and places — by Parthians, Medes, and Phrygians, by people in Jerusalem, and in all of Judea, and in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, by people in lands whose existence was unknown to Luke himself, people speaking a multitude of languages far beyond those represented at Pentecost...³⁸

38. González, Justo L. *The Story Luke Tells : Luke's Unique Witness to the Gospel*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 83.

González reminds us that Luke published a second volume, the book of Acts, that picks up exactly where the gospel account leaves off in order to portray how the *mo'olelo* of Jesus' victory over death reverberates forward and outward to the ends of the earth just as is promised in Scripture. John Rosa, professor of Hawaiian history, writes that *ha'ina ia mai ana ka puana*

does not signify a conclusion, but instead calls for listeners to return to the beginning, to tell the story again, to perpetuate not only its contents, but also its cadences and manner of telling...It is the repetition of phrases, after all, that reinforces the story, enhances its meaning, and engenders memory, thereby linking the storyteller to other members of the community.³⁹

The cantor or dancer of a *mo'olelo* calls on the listener to repeat after them in anamnetic community. Luke's intent on extending his *mo'olelo* beyond the Resurrection, much farther than the other Gospel writers, is to emphasize that the "mighty works of God" are not to be silenced, and are to be told again and again. Pentecost is the Holy Spirit's command of *hana hou* (do it again)!⁴⁰

This second volume, too, finishes with a *hana hou*. Luke writes that Paul is unable to convince all of the Jewish leaders of the good news, and as the crowd disperses, Paul quotes from Isaiah 6:

*Go to this people and say:
You will hear, to be sure, but never understand;
and you will certainly see but never recognize what you are seeing.
This people's senses have become calloused,
and they've become hard of hearing,
and they've shut their eyes
so that they won't see with their eyes
or hear with their ears
or understand with their minds,
and change their hearts and lives that I may heal them.*

Paul remembers the Prophet's ancient warning that there would be many who would refuse to be changed by God's *mo'olelo*; the story has been told, but the people have become calloused to its reconciling and shaping power. Yet Paul does not allow the *mo'olelo* to die in the unbelief and

39. John Rosa employs this poetic metaphor in his retelling of the Massie-Kahahawai case, which is considered a case of unfulfilled justice in the Native Hawaiian community and in general local lore. Rosa, John P. "Epilogue: Ha'ina 'ia mai" In *Local Story*, 102-108. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2014.

40. *Hana hou* is a general command you would hear in rehearsal settings, like "again, from the top." It is also a common exclamation in performance settings, and is used like "encore!"

disagreement between these Jews. Rather, Luke tells us, Paul persisted in his *ha'ina* in word and in body: “Paul lived in his own rented quarters for two full years and welcomed everyone who came to see him. Unhindered and with complete confidence, he continued to preach God’s kingdom and to teach about the Lord Jesus Christ” (28:30-31).

In the same way Acts picks up where the climax of the cross and resurrection leaves off, the reader of Acts is meant to pick up where Paul leaves off: at the *hale*⁴¹ (house) of hospitality open to all, preaching the Kingdom *mo'olelo* of reconciliation. *Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana* is also understood by an alternative translation, as an imperative: “Let the story be told,” or “Let the *echo* of our song be heard,” that is, “Do not stop telling this story!” In the world of theology, we also know that word “let” very well as the jussive that set creation in motion.

At the end of Acts, it is the *kuleana*⁴² (the communal responsibility) of *us the readers* — the *baumana* of today — to continue the *mo'olelo* as the Body of Christ, for in our retellings we reinforce the Body. The hyphenate stands at a vantage point for proclaiming that reconciling *mo'olelo* told and lived by Christ *Ke Ha'i mo'olelo*, the *mo'olelo* most deeply concerned with instilling believers with a sense of common origin, common present, and common future in spite of all hostility, such that the Kingdom is done on earth as it is in heaven. In Hawaiian we remember, *I ka 'olelo nō ke ola, i ka 'olelo nō ka make*: in speech there is life, in speech there is death. And yet in the Church we remember that through Jesus' *'olelo* there is victory over death. *Hana 'ia maila ka wai ā 'ono* — “the waters were made sweet;” everything is now ready.

41. *hale* can also be translated as “a hospitable person” or as “palace.” The original name of 'Iolani Palace was “Ali'iolani Hale — “House of the Heavenly King.”

42. In Hawaiian culture, “kuleana” is especially tied to tasks that are given to an individual that are important to the health and life of the community.

‘Uhola ‘ia ka makaloa lā
 Pū‘ai i ke aloha lā
 Kūka‘i ‘ia ka hā loa lā
 Pāwehi mai nā lehua
 Mai ka ho‘oku‘i a ka hālāwai lā
 Mahalo e Ke Akua
 Mahalo e nā kupuna lā ‘eā
 Mahalo me ke aloha lā
 Mahalo me ke aloha lā

The makaloa mat has been unfolded

Food is shared in love

The great breath is exchanged

The Lehua honors and adores

From zenith to horizon

Gratitude to God

Gratitude to our ancestors

Gratitude with love

Gratitude with love⁴³

43. Camara, Kehau. “Oli Mahalo.” A chant of gratitude. The original line *mahalo e nā Akua* meaning “Gratitude to the gods” was changed to *Mahalo e ke Akua*, “Gratitude to God,” with the composer’s permission, for Kamehameha Elementary School’s use. <https://blogs.ksbe.edu/kibrown/oli-mele/oli-mahalo-lana-ka-mana%CA%BB/>

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