

CHAPTER 2

UNNATURAL LANDSCAPES

Romantic Anticapitalism and Alien Degeneracy

[Landscape] is like money: good for nothing in itself, but
expressive of a potentially limitless reserve of value.

—W. J. T. Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape”

Undoing Landscape

I begin this chapter with an unnatural scene: an old photograph of a tree surrounded by a crowd of onlookers (figure 2.1). It is nighttime. White men under gleaming hats stand with their hands in their pockets. On the left appear the blurred faces of a couple, walking arm in arm toward the camera. They are dressed as if they are on a date at the movies. Some of the bystanders look ahead, away from the camera, while others look back, impervious to the glare of the flash. There seems to be nothing aesthetically remarkable about the tree in the background except its sturdiness, emphasized by its proportional dominance, and its three solid branches jutting out like tines on a pitchfork. It turns out that the photograph is lying. What we do not see is that the occasion for the social gathering is the body of a lynched man who hangs from one of the tree’s branches. The photograph belongs to a series by artist Ken Gonzales-Day entitled *Erased Lynching*, in which he digitally removes the victim from the lynching scene. These are scenes that were captured and circulated on post-



FIGURE 2.1 Ken Gonzales-Day, *Erased Lynching*, 2006. Courtesy of the artist.

cards in western states from 1850 to the 1930s, and most of the victims were not black. As Gonzales-Day explains, “Native Americans, Chinese, and Latinos of Mexican and Latin American descent were lynched in California . . . guided by anti-immigration sentiments, the fear of miscegenation, a deep frustration with the judicial system, or in combination with white supremacy.”¹ The vast majority of lynching victims he uncovered were of Latino descent.

Gonzales-Day’s manipulation of lynching scenes is remarkable for the way it produces visibility out of erasure, inverting the power of the visual field. By shifting the spectacular nature of the lynched body onto the spectators, *Erased Lynching* moves the viewer’s attention to the visibility of lynching itself. Not only does it draw our attention to the expressions of the spectators, but we are also confronted by the cultural apparatus and circulation of lynching images, what Gonzales-Day refers to as the “aesthetics of the event, from the physical act to the creation of the lynching photograph and its progeny, the souvenir card, view card, and postcard.”² It also draws our attention back to the tree, whose former innocence is replaced by purposeful attributes of branch height and species — primarily native oak species³ — that facilitated the mechanics of lynching. In addition, the large, life-size scale of Gonzales-Day’s photographic rendering serves to insert the contemporary viewer into the lynching scene, implicating us as consumers of the spectacle of racial violence and participants in their circulation.

For the purposes of this chapter, Gonzales-Day’s photograph is significant not only for the way it counteracts the spectacle of the lynched racial body, but also for how it reverses the normative power we associate with landscape. The anchoring tree, as the primary subject of the viewing public, is stripped of the romanticism we attach to “scenery.” As a photograph rather than a painting, it communicates less the *spiritual* aesthetic of landscape than what Gonzales-Day describes as an artifact that “remains trapped somewhere between memento and evidence.”⁴ In its inversion of the visual content of the image — rendering the white spectators, rather than the lynched body, as racial spectacle — Gonzales-Day exposes the power of perspective and subjective identification, elements that are intrinsic to the aesthetic technology of landscape. In manipulating viewers’ capacity to identify with the scene, *Erased Lynching* activates the notion of landscape as a medium rather than strictly a genre of art. This follows W. J. T. Mitchell’s insistence that we examine “not just what landscape ‘is’ or ‘means’ but what

it *does*, how it works as a cultural practice.”⁵ In this case, the landscape functions as both a witness and accomplice to racial violence.

Following the last chapter’s focus on the racialization of Chinese workers as abstract labor, an economism that aligned Chinese labor with the temporal domination of capitalism, this chapter probes how settler colonial constructions of the landscape express the other side of the antinomy: the concrete, thingly, natural dimension Postone describes as that which “appears as the variegated surface of immediate sensuous experience.”⁶ While Asian labor personifies the abstract circuits of capitalism, settler colonial constructions of landscape express the opposite: the concrete, pure, and authentic noncapitalist dimension of nature. That the social world *appears* antinomical—that is, characterized by concrete and abstract dimensions—is a function of the fetish, which conceals the social relations behind products of human labor, repressing the duality of commodity-determined labor. As Kingston’s and Fung’s texts illuminated in the last chapter, Chinese labor was associated with a perverse temporality, one that rendered Chinese bodies fungible (like currency) and a signifier of moral corruption. As such, Chinese bodies occupied the abstract dimension of the antinomy, as subjects “abstracted from all particularity”⁷ insofar as Chinese bodies are interchangeable with other Chinese bodies. White labor, on the other hand, was individual, tangible, concrete, and of social value. Postone describes this structure of social relations as a “quasi-natural opposition” of two objective worlds: “The relation of these two worlds of objectivity can then be construed as that of essence and appearance, or as that of an opposition (as has been expressed historically, for example, in the opposition between romantic and positive-rational modes of thought).”⁸ Postone’s emphasis on the opposition between romantic and positive-rational modes of thought is particularly germane for our consideration of landscape, which is associated with both western romanticism and an imperialist aesthetic. As Mitchell observes, the Chinese antecedents of western landscape “flourished most notably at the height of Chinese imperial power and began to decline in the eighteenth century as China itself became an object of English fascination and appropriation at the moment England was beginning to experience itself as an imperial power.”⁹ From this view, landscape can be seen to function as a fetish itself, “symptom[atic] of the rise and development of capitalism; the ‘harmony’ sought in landscape [can be] read as a compensation for and screening off of the actual violence perpetrated there.”¹⁰

It is precisely because landscape *appears* real, natural, and thingly, rather than a way of seeing and a culturally mediated representation of nature, that it seems antithetical to the very circuits of capitalism and imperialism that Mitchell identifies with it. Here, as Postone clarifies, “the opposition of its abstract and concrete dimensions allows capitalism to be perceived and understood in terms of its abstract dimension alone; its concrete dimension can thereby be apprehended as noncapitalist.”¹¹ In other words, capitalism is understood in terms of its abstract dimension, noncapitalism (and anticapitalism) with its concrete dimension. Thus, building on the last chapter’s examination of settler exclusion of abstract alien labor because of its “perverse” alignment with capital, this chapter examines the settler identification with the western landscape and idealization of Native peoples as a further expression of the romantic anticapitalism of anti-Asian sentiment and the indigenizing project of settler colonialism. We will see how settler colonialism constructs a landscape that is simultaneously a site of Native erasure and a site of indigenizing purity and authenticity.

In order to excavate the racial logics of landscape in a manner that foregrounds, as Gonzales-Day’s photograph does, the interplay of racial violence, settler identification, and landscape, I look to the landscape photography of Vancouver-based artist Jin-me Yoon and the late New York-based photographer Tseng Kwong Chi. As photographic countermemory, their re-envisioning of western landscapes in Canada and the United States identifies romantic anticapitalism as a key ideology of settler colonialism. Their respective photographs of Mount Rushmore, the Canadian Rockies, and the Pacific coast parody the conventions of landscape art of the 1920s and 1930s that were established by artists such as Ansel Adams, Gutzon Borglum, the Canadian Group of Seven, and Emily Carr. In doing so, Tseng and Yoon expose how romantic anticapitalism flourished during the height of anti-Asian immigration restriction to project a settler identification with a personified, Indigenous landscape. The way early twentieth-century artists anchored white settler identity in the landscape reflects contradictory identifications with the “Native” that effectively erased the history of conquest and dispossession while expressing nostalgia for a time before capitalist modernity. This romantic idealization of nature and the “noble savage” captures the settler valorization of the concrete realm of social relations under capitalism, particularly under conditions of rapid industrialization and economic flux leading up to and following the stock market crash of 1929. Within the

romantic anticapitalist logics of settler colonialism, the valorization of the concrete over the abstract realms misconstrues the *appearance* of capitalist relations for their reality. As Neil Levi puts it, “Romantic anticapitalism . . . hypostatizes the concrete, rooted, and organic, and identifies capitalism solely with the abstract dimension of capitalist social relations.”¹² In this chapter I look at the way works by Tseng and Yoon emphasize how the eugenicism embedded in an expanding conception of whiteness increasingly appropriates Indigeneity as a mode of biologizing the landscape.

I situate Tseng’s and Yoon’s parodic strategies of countermemory within the theoretical framework of disidentification articulated by José Esteban Muñoz. For Muñoz, disidentification works alternatively as an artistic process, a mode of performance, and a critical hermeneutic. It is a mode of “shuffling back and forth between reception and production.”¹³ By highlighting disidentification as a frame for Tseng’s and Yoon’s artistic process and performance, I read their engagement with landscape neither as assimilative identification nor as a wholesale rejection of it. Neither is it, as Muñoz clarifies, an “apolitical middle ground.”¹⁴ Rather, disidentification operates as a third mode of dealing with dominant ideology that emerges from the recognition that the subject is constituted *inside* ideology—that there is no privileged position outside ideology from which the subject can oppose its own formation—and that resistance can occur through “negotiations between desire, identification, and ideology.”¹⁵ Disidentification, therefore, is about “*recycling* or reforming an object that has already been invested with powerful energy.”¹⁶ Tseng’s and Yoon’s projections of their alien excess against a landscape of normative racial, cultural, and aesthetic values captures the political potential that Judith Butler further ascribes to the disidentificatory encounter, “this uneasy sense of standing under a sign to which one does and does not belong.”¹⁷ By analyzing their engagement with the cultural values it activates, I propose that Tseng’s *Expeditionary Series* and Yoon’s *Group of Sixty-Seven* enact modes of parody that both *recycle* the dominant codes associated with the landscape and *transform* them with their racial excess. Their encounters perform a repetition with a racial difference.

As British settler nations whose colonial objective was primarily land appropriation rather than the exploitation of Indigenous labor,¹⁸ national identity in Canada and the United States has often been defined as a product of the landscape. As Angela Miller explains of the US context, the nineteenth-

century landscape encapsulated “the nationalist myth—that the physical environment itself produced national character.”¹⁹ Similarly, in the early twentieth century in Canada, as Erin Manning suggests, the “quest for national identity [was sought] through the image of the landscape . . . where the unity of states and citizens [was] constructed on the putative ethnic or racial identity of a nation, which, in turn, is anchored to the representation of landscape.”²⁰ As a vital source for the expression of national identity in both nations, the continuing appeal of landscape art into the early twentieth century was often coupled with disdain for the rise of modernism. In a revealing glimpse of such antimodernist sentiment, when the Group of Seven traveled to New York State in 1913, it was not to attend the influential exhibition of international modern art at the Armory Show but to attend an exhibition of traditional Scandinavian art.²¹ Within the diverse media that form the landscapes by Adams, Borglum, the Group of Seven, and Carr, none ironize or subvert—as modernist art often does—nationalist subject matter or the hierarchy of high and popular cultural forms. Instead, their works contain a romantic reverence for and spiritual identification to land as a symbolic anchor for their aestheticized “defense” of national identity.

Uncovering the eugenic and Indigenizing subtexts of romantic anticapitalism that are embedded in the settler landscape, I turn first to Tseng’s *Expeditionary Series* to explore its citations to US photographer Ansel Adams, the Group of Seven, and Mount Rushmore sculptor and architect Gutzon Borglum. I demonstrate how his photographs prompt a recognition of landscape as both a biopolitical expression of white supremacy and a personification of white male dominion. Such a personification of the land is precisely a form of what Postone refers to as the biologization of the concrete that constitutes “expressions of that antinomic fetish, which gives rise to the notion that the concrete is ‘natural,’ and which increasingly presents the socially ‘natural’ in such a way that it is perceived in biological terms.”²² The final section of this chapter turns to Yoon’s photographic collage *Group of Sixty-Seven*, whose title makes reference both to the Group of Seven painters and to 1967, the year Canada removed racial barriers to immigration. This legislation was the Canadian corollary to the Hart-Celler Immigration Reform Act of 1965 in the United States, which similarly removed race-based immigration criteria. Building on Tseng’s parody of the eugenic whiteness of the landscape, Yoon’s project highlights the fusion of the Group of Seven’s eugenic ideology with Emily Carr’s own autochthonophilia and her intense

desire to “go native.”²³ Thus, *Group of Sixty-Seven* exposes the eugenic ideology at the core of romantic anticapitalism and the contradictory logics of exclusion and elimination that condition the triangulation of Native, alien, and settler positions within settler colonialism in North America.

Eugenic Landscapes

In 1978 the artist Tseng Kwong Chi transformed himself from an invisible minority to a visible alien. His metamorphosis came about after an experience he had on a family lunch outing at a high-end New York restaurant. Respecting the restaurant’s dress code, Tseng arrived wearing the only suit he owned: a Chinese uniform he had purchased at a Montreal thrift store. To his amusement he was greeted by the restaurant’s staff and patrons as a Chinese Communist dignitary, much to the displeasure of his parents, who years earlier had escaped from Communist China. His sister, Muna Tseng, recalls the royal treatment her brother received at the restaurant, recounting, “When we arrived . . . the maître d’ took one look at [Tseng] and treated him like a V.I.P., a gentleman from the East, an emissary from Cathay. My parents were not amused.”²⁴ The attention he attracted at the restaurant nevertheless produced an artistic breakthrough that led Tseng to undergo a process of orientalizing, beginning with his name, which went from Joseph Tseng to Tseng Kwong Chi. Completing his wardrobe with mirrored glasses and a clip-on “Slut for Art” ID badge, Tseng reinvented himself in the stereotypical role of the inscrutable and perpetually foreign Asian. It was an identity that his friend the choreographer Bill T. Jones described as “Chinese drag.”²⁵ Henceforth, in Chinese drag, he took to the streets of New York, gaining unparalleled access to exclusive social events, most famously in 1980 when he crashed the opening night of the Ch’ing dynasty costume exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum. There he mingled with the rich and famous, including Henry Kissinger, William F. Buckley Jr., and Yves Saint Laurent, who, as the art critic Grady Turner relates, “commended Tseng for his fluency in French and asked if he had served in the Chinese embassy in Paris.”²⁶ What Tseng realized during these experiences was the vastness of Westerners’ ignorance of Asians. Therefore, drawing on a persona that simultaneously evoked foreigner, visitor, tourist, alien, and imposter, he exploited that ignorance in his photographs, which offered surprising reconfigurations of clichéd tourist scenes in North America and around the world.



FIGURE 2.2 *Seven Peaks, Alberta, Canada, 1986*. Photograph by Tseng Kwong Chi, *East Meets West*, a.k.a. *The Expeditionary Self-Portrait Series 1979–1989*. © Muna Tseng Dance Projects, Inc., New York. www.tsengk Wongchi.com.

In the diverse fields in which Tseng's photographs have been analyzed, from performance studies to Asian American studies, the majority of critical attention has focused on the photographs from the earlier period of his *East Meets West* series, for their clever juxtaposition of caricatured foreignness and touristy familiarity of Western monuments and icons, such as the Statue of Liberty, Disneyland, and the Hollywood sign. Reflecting the historical moment, the series title aptly parodied the anticommunist sentiment being reignited in 1979, on the eve of the Reagan Revolution. What many critics found remarkable about his photographs, as Margo Machida explains, is that they "counter[ed] a long history of Orientalist painting and photography by explicitly re-representing the West as if seen through a possessive 'Occidental' gaze."²⁷ In contrast to this reception, however,

Tseng's later photographs featured in the same series, renamed *Expeditionary Series*, have garnered less attention, perhaps because they appear attenuated from the overt culture clash staged in his earlier work. For instance, Tseng's photographs of majestic US and Canadian landscapes, such as the Grand Canyon, Monument Valley, and the Rocky Mountains, have been described as offering more solitary explorations of the individual's relation to nature, which his sister describes as "recalling Chinese landscape paintings of man balanced between sky and earth."²⁸ Turner further marks the shift toward natural landscapes in Tseng's series as evidence of a romantic turn in his oeuvre:

[He] put aside the confrontational implications of the earlier title to concentrate on [his] own transformation from alien tourist to American explorer. . . . The Mao suit has become irrelevant. . . . He offers us brief glimpses of a Romantic figure, an artist who has put aside his disguise to revel in the sheer power of nature.²⁹

This chapter reconsiders this assessment by asking whether the concerns of the latter phase of his series are absent of "confrontational implications." Rather than a romantic homage to nature's sublimity, I interpret Tseng's *Expeditionary Series* as a queer parody of the Western conventions associated with Canadian and American landscape art of the early twentieth century. Given that landscape art of this period was broadly concerned with honoring nature's vitality and universalizing power, the intrusion of Tseng's alien body is a sign not of life-affirming incorporation but of extravagant degeneration. Reading the managed interplay of life, degeneration, and death as a central feature of settler colonialism and projected onto nature, I argue that Tseng's photographs animate the biopolitics of the settler landscape in Canada and the United States.

In consideration of the vexed modalities of racial impersonation that Tseng's work elicits in Chinese drag, Butler's discussion of gender and drag performance is useful for highlighting the ambivalent agency of parodic recycling that surrounds his work. When Butler evaluates the subversive potential of drag to expose gender constructions through imitation, she locates gender transgression less in the volitional agency of the drag queen than with the drag performance itself: "[Drag] serves a subversive function to the extent that it reflects the mundane impersonations by which heterosexual ideal genders are performed and naturalized and undermines

their power by effecting that exposure.”³⁰ In other words, drag *allegorizes* the imitative structure of gender, as a recycled copy that has no original. Butler’s theorization of gender and drag presents an opening for considering race through the terms of drag performance, without collapsing the distinctions between the processes of gendering and racialization—or disregarding their intersection.³¹ In particular, both racialization and gendering are processes that are historically constituted through a racist and heterosexist system that reproduces itself through its iteration in bodies, institutions, and law. It is a system that both “precedes and exceeds” the *intentions* of the racialized and gendered subject.³² In the case of Tseng’s photographs, although he taps into the symbolic construction of the Asian alien through his performance, Tseng does not invent or choose the terms of his own racialization. Thus, by engaging a disidentificatory hermeneutic, my reading of Tseng’s photographs harnesses the *ambivalence* of queer of color parody as an opportunity to further demystify and denaturalize what Muñoz calls the “universalizing ruse of dominant culture.”³³ At one level, this mode of reading registers Tseng’s deliberate efforts to choreograph the visual dissonance in the juxtaposition of two figurative constructions: the Chinese as alien and the settler nation as landscape. At another, my analysis also mines the *unintentional gaps* between parodic repetition and difference that magnify how, as a queer man of color in racial drag, he epitomizes what Chandan Reddy refers to as a “material nonequivalence” to the settler landscape as an alien abstraction against a concrete expression of nature.³⁴ It is in this spirit of disidentification that I draw on the way Tseng’s photographs evoke the conventions of landscape art produced in the 1920s by the Canadian Group of Seven painters, the American sculptor Gutzon Borglum, and the American photographer Ansel Adams.

Comprising a significant portion of the 150 black-and-white photographs Tseng took from 1979 to 1989, the *Expeditionary Series* captures the variation and range of landscapes he photographed in North America and around the world. A Hong Kong-born Canadian immigrant who attended art school in Paris and lived his adult years in New York among a vibrant set of artists until his death from AIDS in 1990,³⁵ Tseng’s perception of the landscape in North America and elsewhere was undoubtedly informed by his transnational movements. Excavating the historical context surrounding his photographic references to North American landscapes of the 1920s, a generative period of landscape art in Canada and the United States, I focus on Tseng’s

Seven Peaks Snowfield and *Lake Moraine*, both located in Banff National Park in Alberta, Canada, and *Mount Rushmore* in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

As “natural wonders” of the West, Banff National Park and Mount Rushmore are two sites firmly positioned in settler colonial mythologies of the North American landscape. Banff owes much of this popular mythology to the Group of Seven landscape painters who made Canada’s Western landscape a central subject of many of their paintings. In the United States this mythology is indebted to Gutzon Borglum, the architect behind the colossal sculpture of the four presidents’ faces at Mount Rushmore. With respect to the highly aestheticized quality of Tseng’s dramatic black-and-white photographs, they also recall the visually operatic Yosemite photographs of Ansel Adams. However, unlike Adams, Tseng disrupts the sublime tranquility of the natural landscape by inserting his caricatured body into the frame. Tseng engages with the mythic landscape as an artistic subject that was foundational for the legacy of the Group of Seven and Adams, as well as in terms of the way space and scale are crucial components of the visual impact of Mount Rushmore. Confronting the tangled strands of national history, artistic convention, and regenerative racial power that are projected onto these diverse landscapes, Tseng’s photographs capture what Mitchell calls the “dreamwork” of settler colonialism.³⁶

By putting his alien excess into racial tension with the landscape, Tseng’s parody of early twentieth-century landscape art brings to light a romantic idealization of nature that, in the context of North America, is infused with eugenic ideologies of white racial regeneration. Evolving out of social Darwinist theory, eugenics emerged in the late nineteenth century and grew in the early decades of the twentieth century with the support of both conservatives and progressives. As Daniel Kevles explains, “The progressives and the conservatives found common ground in attributing phenomena such as crime, slums, prostitution, and alcoholism primarily to biology and in believing that biology might be used to eliminate these discordances of modern, urban, industrial society.”³⁷ According to Kevles, racial thinking “played a major part in American and Canadian versions of this [eugenic] creed,”³⁸ based on fears raised from the influx of non-Anglo Saxon immigrants and the social degeneracy those groups were associated with. The 1920s and early 1930s represented the apex in the eugenics movement, with the passage of numerous eugenics sterilization laws—particularly in California, British Columbia, and Alberta—which inordinately targeted racial

minorities and immigrants.³⁹ While the scientific justification for eugenics had waned slightly after World War I, eugenics nevertheless persisted in institutionalized forms.

Knowledge of eugenics' false claims did not, as Mary Coumts and Pat McCarrick explain, "decrease the pressure for legislation, judicial action, or immigration controls."⁴⁰ Indeed, immigration restrictions directed at Chinese migrants to the United States and Canada coincided with the intensification of eugenic ideology from the nineteenth century into the twentieth. After passage of the 1875 Page Act, which effectively restricted the entry of Chinese women for their presumed sexual immorality, the United States passed its first race-based federal immigration restriction through the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was in effect from 1882 to 1943. In 1885 the Canadian government passed its own race-based immigration restriction through the Chinese Head Tax, a tax designed to deter Chinese migrants from entering Canada. By the mid-1920s, both Canada and the United States had intensified and expanded earlier restrictions on Chinese migrants. In Canada these measures extended restrictions to other Asian migrants and further deterred Chinese immigration through the passage of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, which excluded most classes of Chinese migrants until 1947. The United States, having also broadened restrictions to encompass other Asian migrants, passed the Immigration Act of 1924, which intensified previous race-based restrictions through its exclusion of most Asian ethnic groups and foreigners who were deemed "biologically inferior."⁴¹ The persistence and growth of anti-Asian policy from the 1880s to the 1940s reflects what Erika Lee refers to as the "hemispheric Orientalism" that took hold along the West Coast of North America.⁴² Despite their nationalist pretensions, Canada and the United States were bound by a shared commitment to preserving the transnational power and normativity of whiteness. As Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds put it, the "project of whiteness was a paradoxical politics, at once transnational in its inspiration and identifications but nationalist in its method and goals."⁴³

Fears over the degeneration of Anglo-Saxon stock were present in the art world as well. The Canadian Group of Seven painters reflected these anxieties over the diminishing strength of the white Nordic race in their painting, believing that the Canadian landscape held "replenishing power" that could disinfect what one member called a "low receptive reservoir into which pours the chaos of ages, the mixed concord and discord of many

varied peoples.”⁴⁴ Employing tropes associated with hygiene and mental health, they put forward a mission to “clean this reservoir . . . or we will remain a confused people.”⁴⁵ In the US context, Deborah Bright draws out the anticapitalist basis of Ansel Adams’s romanticism, noting that his early twentieth-century photographs represented a “mixture of Progressive Era phobias about industrialization and encroaching alien populations with an equally conservative nostalgia for the myth of preindustrial organic society.”⁴⁶ Fears of white race suicide also informed Gutzon Borglum’s vision of Mount Rushmore, a colossal-scale sculptural project that he began in 1924 and did not live to see completed seventeen years later. Expressing his fears of miscegenation, he once wrote, “Here we have in the filtering of Asiatic and North African blood [into Europe] the complete vitiating of the vigor and intellect of the civilization existing in these once pure European peoples.”⁴⁷ Thus romantic, regenerative, and preservationist motifs were infused in North American landscape art of the period and reflected deep anxieties over the racial “health” of the industrializing settler nation. And despite the absence of human or nonwhite representation in many of these works, my analysis of these landscapes heeds Martin Berger’s assessment that in North American art since the nineteenth century, “a decidedly racialized perspective animated even those cultural products most removed from racial concerns.”⁴⁸

The hyperbolic orientalism of Tseng’s persona in the *Expeditionary Series* confronts these defensive logics embedded in the romanticized colonial landscape in ways that denaturalize the abstract, universalizing, and absorptive power of its conventions. As such, Tseng’s photographs tap into the historicism of parody, which Linda Hutcheon defines as “an inscription of the past in the present [that] embod[ies] and bring[s] to life actual historical tensions.”⁴⁹ In Chinese drag, Tseng’s exaggerated performance “mimes and renders hyperbolic” a host of normative race, gendered, and sexual conventions that are literally and figuratively naturalized in the landscape.⁵⁰ As the alien, the dissonance between his body and the landscape delineates the racialized abstraction of Asians and their symbolic excess to national culture. The Chinese male body in North America was historically constituted as nonreproductive, perverse, and feminized, which was reinforced through legal and extralegal restrictions on interracial intimacies, restrictions on the immigration of Chinese women, and aggressive enclosure in the domestic labor market. Thus the alien sexuality Tseng elicits can also be

seen as the product of a biopolitical landscape whose regenerative energy is directed at the degeneration and exclusion of alien bodies. Moreover, as a queer artist who referred to himself as a “snow queen” because of his preference for white men,⁵¹ Tseng’s queer white desire—a desire for incorporation into a white landscape of artists and gay culture—creates a productive tension with the gender and sexual objectification of the Asian body. The conflicted relations and identifications that Tseng’s photography stages capture a mode of disidentification that negotiates “between desire, identification, and ideology.”⁵² Disrupting an exceptionalist imagining of Canada or the United States as a concrete, pristine wilderness, Tseng’s photographs reframe the settler colonial landscape as a racial borderland of symbolic violence.

With the exception of a handful of photographs taken in British Columbia, the main focus of Tseng’s Canadian landscapes is the Rocky Mountains of Banff National Park in Alberta. Established in 1885 as Canada’s first national park and modeled after Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, Banff National Park is one of the most iconic wilderness symbols of Canadian national identity. In Rob Shields’s analysis of Banff’s nationalist symbolism, he suggests that “Banff can serve as a metaphor for the Canadian condition: the peremptory Canadian self of the present clings to an image of a European past (or an ideal future) and refuses to confront the violence and paradox of its own making.”⁵³ In short, Banff reflects the worldview of European settlers who modeled the area after nineteenth-century European spas and tourist retreats. The city itself is named for a country seat on the northeast coast of Scotland between Aberdeen and Inverness, a name indicative of the vast colonial respatialization of Native territory. Resignified and repackaged in an endless series of tourist photographs and postcards, Banff conveys the purity of nature that contrasts with the impurities associated with the urban environment. What is evacuated from Banff’s symbolic repository is the displacement of First Nations peoples as the region’s original inhabitants. Native voices have largely been silenced, while their identities have been appropriated as tourist commodities that serve to authenticate the “naturalness” of the environment.

The birth of Canada’s first national park in 1885 also coincides with the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the transcontinental railroad responsible for the park’s creation.⁵⁴ As discussed in the last chapter, construction of the railroad employed thousands of Chinese railroad workers

recruited from the United States, who tunneled through the most treacherous sections of British Columbia's Fraser Canyon. Only after the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed did a Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration persuade the Canadian government to take measures to restrict the entry of Chinese migrants. As noted earlier, the government responded by enacting its first race-based immigration restriction, the Chinese Head Tax, which required that Chinese migrants pay \$50 to disembark in Canada. By 1903 this sum had climbed to \$500. Hence the very conditions of possibility for Banff's pristine environment depended on appropriating and eliminating Indigenous peoples and exploiting and excluding aliens. Here, as in other settler states, elimination and exclusion are two ways that settler colonialism cuts both ways.⁵⁵

Despite the fact that Banff National Park is located in the valley of the Bow River in the southern part of Alberta, Banff's snowy alpine landscape nevertheless evokes Canada's nationalist identification with the North. Sheilah Grant explains that conceptualizations of the Canadian North have been informed by both British and American romantic idealizations of nature in the nineteenth century: "British aesthetic myth blended with American wilderness myth to reinforce a Romantic image of north."⁵⁶ An integral feature of Canada's national identity—showcased no less in the first verse of the national anthem, "O Canada, our true *North* strong and free"—the North is nonetheless a moving construction that is articulated through representations ranging from the Canadian arctic to Banff's alpine elevation. The unfixed character of the North is what Sherrill E. Grace calls "magnetic north," a "north whose parameters seem always to be shifting."⁵⁷ The development of Canada's northern identity is often attributed to the landscape paintings of the Group of Seven artists. An artist collective that rose to national fame in the 1920s and was credited with producing the first "national" art, their landscapes set out to reflect what they saw as an authentic Canadian spirit that was not derivative of European or American art traditions. Manning explains that "while the landscape paintings of the Group of Seven do not create the type of nationalism that is based on an ideology of the land, they do play a role in supporting the myth of the 'great white north.'"⁵⁸ Drawing on tropes of purity, rugged masculine strength, and individualism, Group of Seven founder and spokesperson Lawren Harris saw the North as a spiritual realm untouched by history, humanity, or capitalist modernity. Harris writes in "The Story of the Group of Seven" that "what I

was groping toward [was] Canada painted in her own spirit,”⁵⁹ and he elaborates the connections between race, nation, and northernness in his essay “Revelation of Art in Canada”:

We are in the fringe of the great North and its living whiteness, its loneliness and replenishment, its resignations and release, its call and answer—its cleansing rhythms. It seems that the top of the continent is the spiritual flow that will ever shed clarity into the growing race of America, and we Canadians being closest to this source seem destined to produce an art somewhat different from our Southern fellows—an art more spacious, of a greater living quiet, perhaps of a more certain conviction of eternal values.⁶⁰

Harris’s conceptualization of a North equipped with the spiritual powers that could “cleanse” the nation through an interplay of “living whiteness” and “loneliness and replenishment” is indicative of his racial anxieties of immigrants who contributed to “the growing race of America.” Moreover, crafting an exceptionalist narrative around Canada as the most northerly nation in the Americas, Harris attributes to Canada a primary role as spiritual compass and regenerative source for the continent.

Tseng’s Rocky Mountain landscapes contain sly allusions to a romantic conceptualization of wilderness as a purifying and regenerative national symbol that the Group of Seven idealized. For instance, Tseng’s *Seven Peaks, Alberta, Canada, 1986* (figure 2.2) references the phallic majesty of mountains, trees, and icebergs that dominate the Group’s paintings.⁶¹ Commenting on the Group’s authority over the Canadian landscape, Manning remarks that “for many years the quintessential Canadian landscape painting was an image of an unpopulated wilderness, with Tom Thomson’s ancient pine tree or Lawren Harris’s icebergs at the forefront.”⁶² The Group’s tendency to position these natural subjects—mountains, trees, and icebergs—as visual anchors in their paintings has been well documented as reflecting heavily gendered ideas of nature. Towering mountains and trees were associated with a heroic masculinity that exercised their superiority over the changing, ephemeral, and feminized qualities of water and wind. A case in point is Harris’s renowned painting *Mt. Lefroy*, which depicts a large snowcapped mountain that evokes qualities of nobility, imperviousness to change, and purity and expresses, Berger states, “a distinctly masculine aesthetic.”⁶³ In particular, *Mt. Lefroy*’s peak seems to almost puncture

the overhead clouds, while light ripples away from the site of entry—as if to illuminate the nobility of the peak’s act of penetration. The connotations of forced sexual penetration and feminized submission are intentional, Joan Murray explains, given that Harris “believed in expressing sexuality in symbolic terms, and in his Lake Superior and Rockies subjects, the use of such semi-symbolic sexual imagery (penal [sic] mountains and vaginal clouds) [is] overt.”⁶⁴ In *Mt. Lefroy*, masculine virility constitutes the power of the mountain and its domination of the feminine ephemera that lie below and hover overhead. These anthropomorphic motifs are consistent with the Group of Seven’s broader symbolic language, in which mountains and trees represent white, heterosexual, and paternal resistance to what Robert Linsley calls “inundation from below, and submission to the powers above . . . like a spike that is meant to pin together a stable identity out of spiritual, social, and sexual experiences that are all by nature transitory.”⁶⁵ The sturdy tree or towering mountain therefore celebrates a virile masculine individualism that is in constant tension with threatening lower elements that allegorized the Group’s fears, widespread in the 1920s and 1930s, about racial and ethnic mixing and the corresponding degeneration of a white, Nordic race.⁶⁶

Some of the racial implications of the Group’s landscapes come into further relief in the way Tseng’s photographs echo Adams’s environmentalist photography. Originating in the late nineteenth century, the American environmentalist movement regained momentum after World War I and bore the imprint of escalating eugenicist thought. In particular, eugenic ideology fused wilderness protection with white racial preservation through analogies that linked the degradation of the natural environment with the degeneration of the white race through miscegenation and rising nonwhite populations. Alexandra Minna Stern explains that during the 1920s, efforts to save redwood trees in California served as a “metaphor for defending race purity and ensuring the survival of white America.”⁶⁷ Inspired by Sierra Club founder John Muir, Bright explains, Adams “se[t] out to produce a photographic version of the nature publicist’s writings” and played an immense role in constructing an environmentally focused vision of the American landscape.⁶⁸ Despite the progressive agenda attributed to Adams’s landscapes, Bright points out that “the rugged western wilderness [was] a locus for the sentiments of white, middle-class Americans around nationalistic and ethnocentric ideals [that] cannot be overlooked in any discussion of the

development of environmentally concerned photography.”⁶⁹ As such, the grandeur of Adams’s landscapes, analogous to the Group of Seven’s, could provide spiritual reassurance of the durability of the white race, its ability to persevere in the face of lower castes.

Stern explains that eugenicists “profoundly shaped California’s landscapes” and subscribed to the belief—reflected in Adams’ and the Group of Seven’s regenerative narratives about nature—that “exposure to nature” was a “method of containing the worst and actualizing the best of human’s evolutionary and hereditary predispositions.”⁷⁰ Exemplified in *Monolith* (figure 2.3), the mountains and trees featured in Adams’s photography stood for what many conservationists viewed as the “stateliness, grandeur, and perseverance—represent[ing] the ‘great race.’”⁷¹ Discussing the way conservationists collapsed distinctions between the redwood and white America, Stern writes: “Like Anglo-Saxon America, which was being engulfed by hordes of defectives and mongrels and menaced by the excessive breeding of undesirables, the redwood was imperiled by ‘race suicide’ from rampant logging, urban encroachment, and human ignorance.”⁷² While mobilizing against the expropriation and destruction of natural resources was certainly a worthwhile cause, romantic anticapitalism framed the struggle in racial terms. For both the Group of Seven and Adams, racial ideologies could be invisibly projected onto the impermeable mountains in Banff and at Yosemite. As a cultural practice, then, the landscape aestheticized defensive racial ideologies of white supremacy.

Tseng’s *Seven Peaks* also plays with what Linsley describes as the “great freeze out of Canadian painting” in the 1920s,⁷³ referring to the Group of Seven’s emphasis on snow and ice, and exhibits an attention to lighting that recalls Adams’s compositional details. However, the inclusion of Tseng’s body displaces the anchoring image of Harris’s and Adams’s trees and mountains. If these anchoring images symbolically project the white masculine mastery over inferior forces, Tseng’s body fails to convey a sense of stability, permanence, or purity associated with the landscape. Unlike the imposing and phallic tree or mountain peak, Tseng neither dominates the surrounding landscape nor stands, to quote Linsley’s assessment of Harris’s natural imagery, as “a spike meant to pin together a stable identity.”⁷⁴ Contrasting the whiteness of his snow-filled environment, Tseng’s body highlights his dissonance with the landscape. His isolation does not suggest a rugged individualism in symbolic struggle with the surrounding elements; rather,

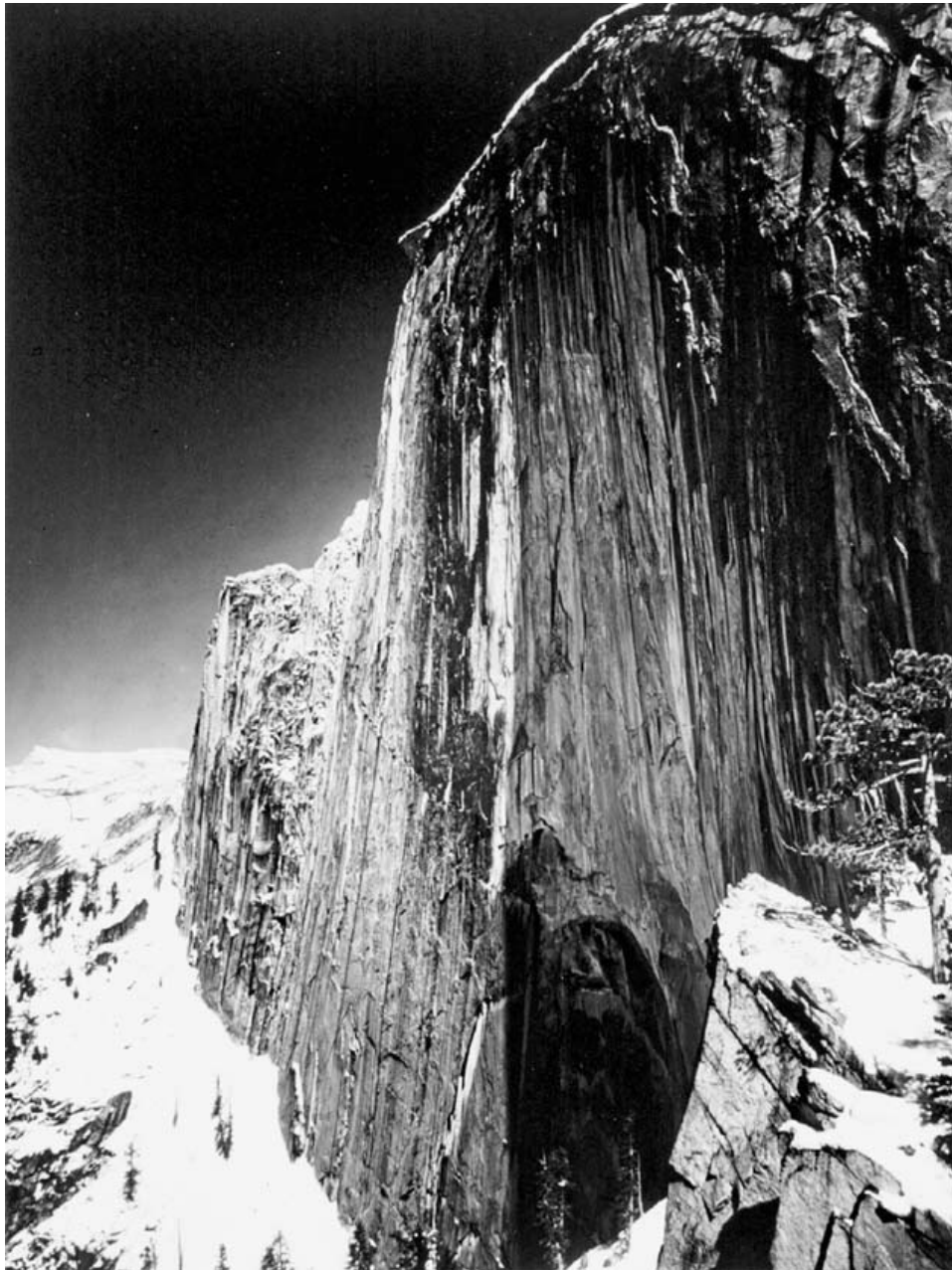


FIGURE 2.3 *Monolith*, 1927. Photograph by Ansel Adams. © 2014 The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust.

it evokes the incongruity of his alien body against the overwhelming whiteness of the natural background. As an evolving sign of yellow peril, moreover, Tseng's body exposes the eugenic logics of purity present in the early twentieth-century landscapes he references. As an index of the abstract, degenerative value of nonreproductive, alien sexualities, he highlights the

eugenic spirit of white racial reproduction and regeneration projected onto the landscape. Finally, dwarfed by the massive mountain peaks in the background, Tseng animates the desire for what Albert Boime calls a commanding “magisterial gaze” over the landscape, “the perspective of the [North] American on the heights searching for new worlds to conquer.”⁷⁵ Although the tradition of North American landscape art promotes what Berger identifies as a “natural affirmation of white culture” through a decidedly white male gaze,⁷⁶ Tseng’s gaze is largely unreadable behind his mirrored glasses. The direction of his gaze only points back to the camera and ultimately to the viewer. In this reversal, Tseng’s photographs highlight the racial limits of the landscape’s regenerative symbolism in its reflection of white settler identification with an uncorrupted nature that exists outside the circuits of capitalism.

Tseng’s photograph of Moraine Lake (figure 2.4) also makes references to the intersecting discourses of northernness and tourism that produce Alberta’s national parks. His deliberate or unintentional misidentification of Lake Moraine’s location in the Northwest Territories—way, way up north—humorously underscores the *northness* of its more southern location in Banff National Park. Commodified by Rocky Mountain tourists who frequent the lake and rent canoes, the most literal commodification of the lake occurred when the Bank of Canada issued twenty-dollar bills featuring the lake on the reverse side of the 1969 and 1978 bills (figure 2.5). The scene on the bill that Tseng perfectly captures is known as the “Twenty-Dollar View.”

Tseng’s recreation scene flaunts the irony at the core of the Group of Seven’s conceptualization of nature. His photograph demonstrates that, far from a space untouched by modernity where a pure white wilderness exists as a refuge from corrupting human influences, Moraine Lake represents instead the capitalist conversion of Indigenous territory into tourist sites. The high aestheticism of the mundane tourist snapshot also amplifies what Jody Berland refers to as a form of “staged authenticity,” a concept derived from Dean MacCannell’s work on the western tourist to “describe the ways in which diverse regional cultures produce themselves as touristic objects.”⁷⁷ Berland goes on to explain that “because tourists seek new experience through interaction with the *other* . . . they place themselves in contact with personalities and spaces that seem to represent the inside of another culture but which in fact are carefully staged to represent that in-



FIGURE 2.4 Lake Moraine, Alberta, Canada, 1986. Tseng Kwong Chi, *East Meets West*, a.k.a. *The Expeditionary Self-Portrait Series* 1979–1989. © Muna Tseng Dance Projects, Inc., New York. www.tsengkwongchi.com.

side to outsiders.”⁷⁸ Tseng adds another parodic layer to the notion of staged authenticity insofar as his photograph confuses the relation between tourist and other. He is both tourist *and* other. Playing with the various codes of “authenticity” that produce the tourist site, the tourist, and the alien other, he reduces the scene’s commodified grandeur to a stage that dramatizes the fetishization of the imagined colonial encounter.

On a more humorous note, Tseng’s pose, with oar raised in midstroke, also evokes the figure of the wilderness sportsman. The sportsman movement began in Canada in the late nineteenth century and promoted an ideology of the wilderness that, analogous to the burgeoning conservation movement, represented a domain of white masculine regeneration.



FIGURE 2.5 Twenty-dollar Canadian bill, 1969–1979 Series, *Scenes of Canada*. Bank of Canada.

As Lynda Jessup explains, nineteenth-century landscape paintings that depicted sportsmen coincided with the rise of sportsman clubs that aimed to “revitaliz[e] manhood” against what they perceived were the “degenerative, emasculating, effects of capitalist modernity.”⁷⁹ The sportsman was thus the antithesis of the Chinese “bachelor” of the exclusion period, who exemplified respective racial and sexual threats to white labor and white female bourgeois respectability. Pictured as an unlikely sportsman, Tseng further underscores his exclusion from the regenerative scripts associated with this wilderness genre of masculinity. In stark contrast to the leisure associated with the sportsman’s wilderness enterprise, labor defined the lives of early twentieth-century Chinese male immigrants. As discussed in the first chapter, the colonial management of Asian reproduction was largely accomplished through immigration restriction, antimiscegenation law, and segregation practices that produced “bachelor societies” in Canada and the United States. The constraints on Chinese masculinity amounted to what David Eng calls “racial castration,” the “psychic and the material limits circumscribing Asian American male subjectivity.”⁸⁰ However, in Tseng’s adaptation of the iconic nationalist scene, his parody highlights foremost the commodification of nature while prompting recognition of the white racial investment in regenerative narratives embedded in its mythology.

As a multisensory medium that expresses cultural values, the landscape can be “found” in Banff National Park and Yosemite or, as Mitchell outlines, “put there by the physical transformation of a place.”⁸¹ Examining the latter, I turn to one of Tseng’s US landscapes, *Mount Rushmore, South Dakota*, 1986

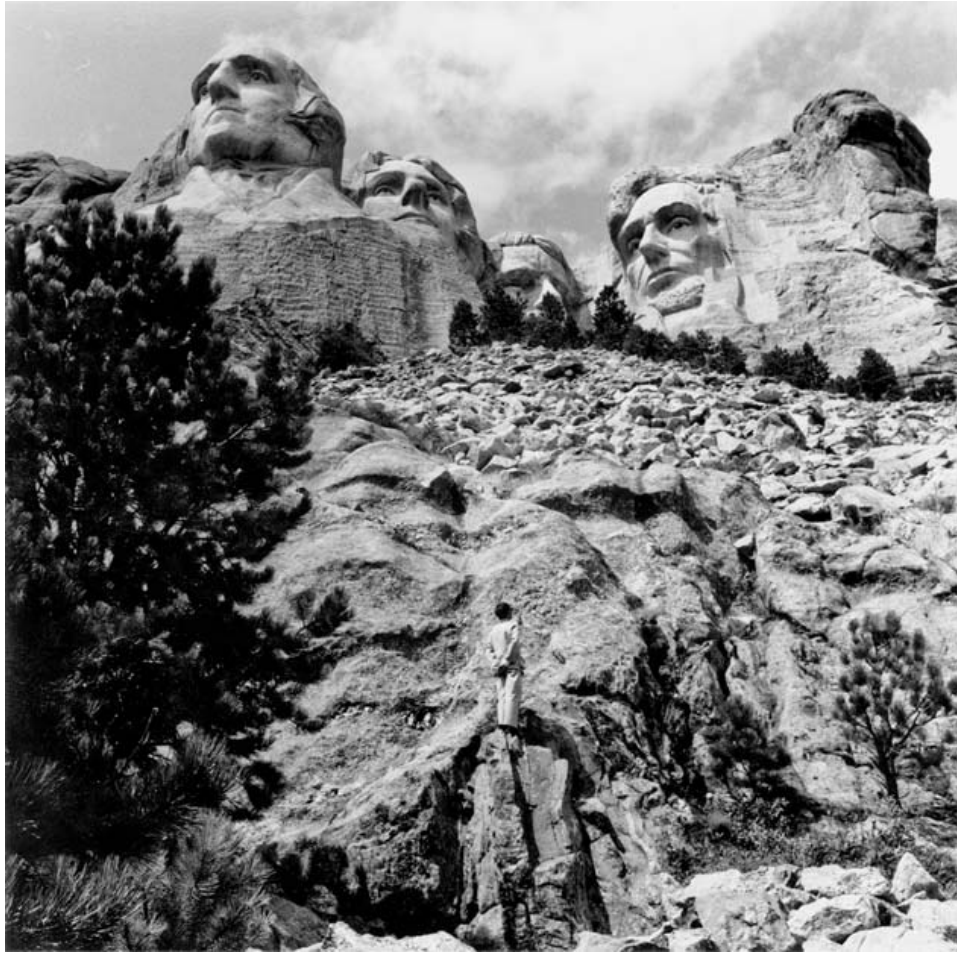


FIGURE 2.6 Mount Rushmore, South Dakota, 1986. Tseng Kwong Chi, *East Meets West*, a.k.a. *The Expeditionary Self-Portrait Series* 1979–1989. © Muna Tseng Dance Projects, Inc., New York. www.tsengkwongchi.com.

(figure 2.6), to demonstrate how Tseng's intrusion onto the patently manufactured natural landscape also prompts an excavation of the racial logics embedded in the "shrine of democracy." *Mount Rushmore, South Dakota* is in many ways exemplary of the *Expeditionary Series* title in its engagement with the heroic forefathers of the nation and the monument's fearless creator, Gutzon Borglum. Four presidents—George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt—were carved into stone in a project that took seventeen years from inception to completion. As the presidents set their gaze on the westward frontier, Tseng's body faces the presidents. What does he see?

Since its completion in 1941, Mount Rushmore has become such an em-

bedded symbol of US nationalism that Cher once admitted to believing that the monument was a naturally occurring rock formation.⁸² Even for those who recognize the transparent constructedness of the rock landscape, the monument nevertheless appeals to similar ideals of authenticity and purity present in the Group of Seven's landscape paintings. Fears over the potential degeneration of a superior "Nordic" race that were projected onto the landscape reflected the transnational currency of alarmist race theories in white settler nations. Similar to the Group of Seven, whose trees and icy mountains can be interpreted as personified symbols of white paternalistic dominion over the Canadian nation, Mount Rushmore's granite rock face brings this symbolism to a literal realm in its depiction of the nation's heroic "forefathers." Borglum's rock, a medium that expresses both impermeability and permanence, shares with the Group's paintings a reverence for nature's strength, stability, and resistance to change. As Borglum wrote of his intentions for the memorial, "The purpose of the memorial is to communicate the founding, expansion, preservation, and unification of the United States."⁸³ Interestingly, although the Group's landscapes and Borglum's mountain sculpture represent spaces of spiritual relief and separation from alienating bureaucratic structures and the economic determinism associated with the city, their artistic undertakings would have been impossible without substantial government funding. And, similar to the Group's romantic pursuit of the true North, Borglum fashioned himself as a rugged explorer who "discovered" the site in the Black Hills. During the memorial's formal dedication ceremony in 1925, he climbed the vertical face of the mountain and planted a flag on its peak. Boime explains that in this feat "Borglum was emulating [John C.] Frémont's dramatic unfurling of the flag on the summit of the Rockies."⁸⁴ Thus Borglum and his monument provided for Tseng a rich corpus of heroic, white, masculine, and colonial associations to emulate in his own *Expeditionary Series*.

If the effect of the Group of Seven's paintings was to naturalize conquest by erasing human involvement in the landscape, Borglum's Mount Rushmore was an even more explicit homage to the ideology of Manifest Destiny. Boime observes that the monument "allegorizes the idea of Manifest Destiny" in that all four presidents had a role in the myth of divine territorial intervention.⁸⁵ These included Washington's extensive surveying of the frontier; Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase; Lincoln's transcontinental railroad; and Roosevelt's role in the conquest of New Spain and construction

of the Panama Canal, which provided an expedient water route to Pacific markets. In short, the monument exemplifies Mitchell's suggestion that the "rise of landscape" is intimately connected with imperial expansion.⁸⁶

Similar to his parodic engagement with the Group of Seven, Tseng's pose and manipulation of scale recalls a romantic tradition of landscape art that privileges a single perspective. Mount Rushmore's participation in this tradition is rendered to the point of exaggeration, captured in the monument's grandiose point of view. This perspective epitomizes what Boime refers to as a "magisterial aesthetics," one that reinforces an "imperial point of view that is often expressed in American landscape painting of the nineteenth century and that remains deeply embedded in the national consciousness."⁸⁷ In *Mount Rushmore, South Dakota*, the elevated perspective of the gigantic presidents' faces symbolizes their authority over the land they govern, which is contrasted with Tseng's subordinated and ambiguous perspective. Reversing the direction of their magisterial gaze, Tseng's body is turned away from the viewer, and his concealed face points upward toward the four presidents. And unlike in the earlier *East Meets West* phase of Tseng's series, where he often blew up the scale of his body to give the impression he was a Godzilla-esque figure threatening the various national icons he stood beside—such as the Statue of the Liberty or the Empire State Building—here Tseng's body is dwarfed in the presence of Borglum's homage to the nation's forefathers.

The pose Tseng adopts in this photograph brings to mind the Byronic hero, the lone romantic figure cast in relief against the natural landscape. A well-known example of these "magisterial aesthetics" is captured in a nineteenth-century piece called *The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818) by the German painter Caspar David Friedrich. Contained in Friedrich's painting (figure 2.7) are the frequently recycled tropes of romanticism. For instance, the clouds and mountaintops intermingle in the painting to emphasize the inseparability of nature from the heavens above. At the center is the solitary traveler, who has climbed to a dangerous vantage point, his back turned to us so that the viewer can share his point of view and spiritual identification with the purity of nature. The mountains in this painting similarly evoke permanence and steadfastness. Joining earth and heaven, the intermingling craggy rocks and clouds convey both endurance and immortality. The anticapitalist subtext of this romantic vision is underscored by the wanderer's traditional folk attire, which valorizes the cultural purity of folk life over the abstract degradations of capitalist modernity.

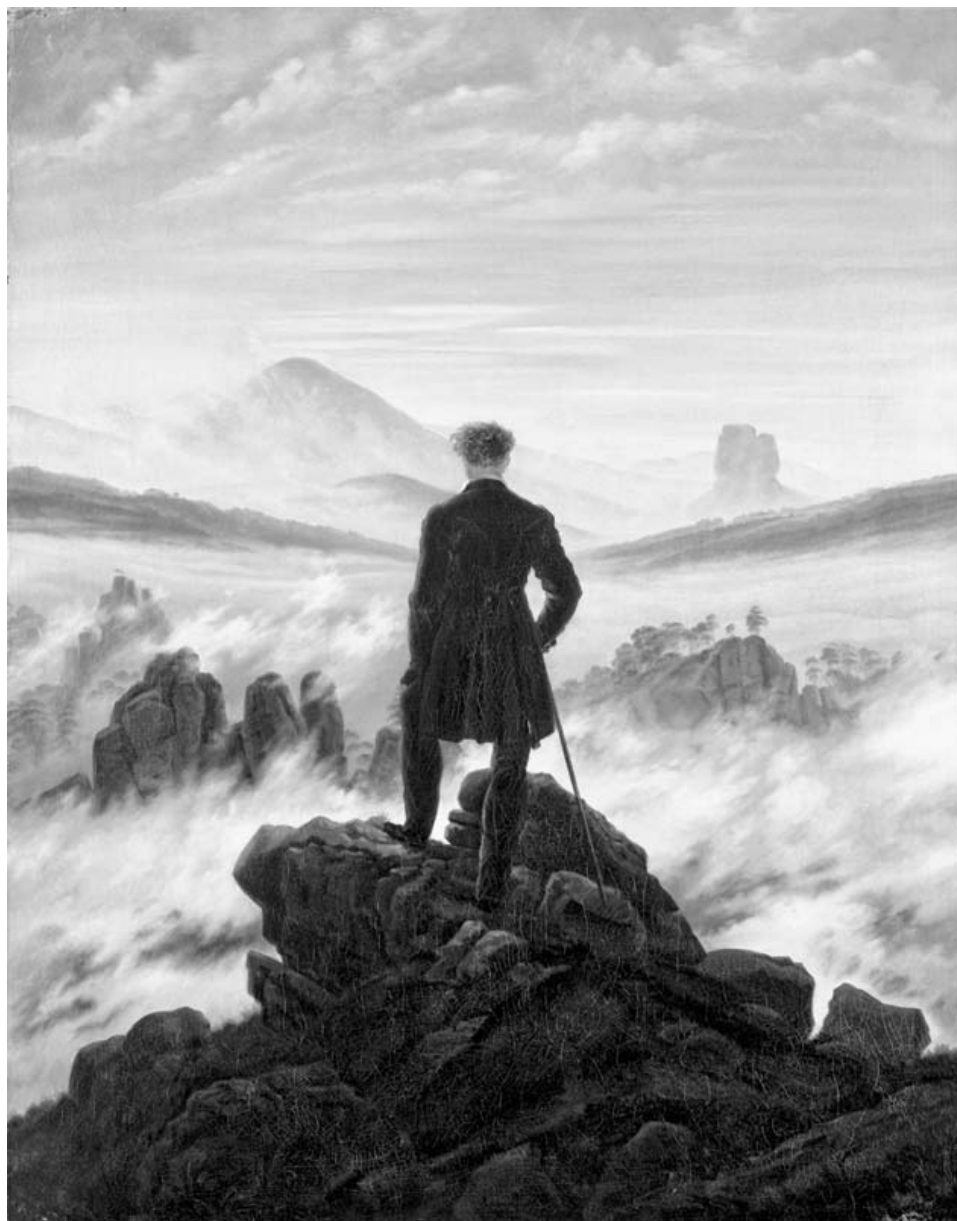


FIGURE 2.7 Caspar David Friedrich, *The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, ca. 1817. Oil on canvas, 94.8 × 74.8 cm. Inv.: 5161. On permanent loan from the Foundation for the Promotion of the Hamburg Art Collections. Photo Credit: bpk, Berlin / Hamburger Kunsthalle Museum / Elke Walford / Art Resource, NY.

Like Friedrich's wanderer, Tseng stands with his back to the viewer. However, he is standing so close that the monument loses its illusions of grandeur. Boime suggests that Mount Rushmore, "like the statue of liberty, . . . succeeds [only] through the impact of scale rather than aesthetic quality."⁸⁸ From where Tseng stands, unable to appreciate the impact of

scale, the monument cannot succeed. Using his body to emphasize distinctions of scale, Tseng also evokes Chinese landscape paintings of the Song and Yuan dynasties.⁸⁹ The small scale of the human figures depicted in the paintings of these periods emphasizes the sanctuary offered by nature and the relative insignificance of human beings against an overpowering natural environment. Maxwell Hearn explains that the disintegration of the Tang dynasty was the main catalyst for the Romantic antidynastic retreat into nature: “Faced with the failure of the human order, learned men sought permanence within the natural world, retreating into the mountains to find a sanctuary from the chaos of dynastic collapse.”⁹⁰ Whether deliberate or not, the allusion to Chinese landscape painting in Tseng’s photograph is amusingly out of place at Mount Rushmore because it subverts, as Mitchell explains, “any claims for the uniquely modern or Western lineage of landscape.”⁹¹ In particular, in the context of Mount Rushmore’s celebration of Manifest Destiny, the photograph’s connection to Chinese landscape painting further underscores the circuits of dynastic power and capital that give rise to imperial dimensions of landscape art. Through the parodic gaps between repetition and difference, Tseng’s photography brings to view the imperial dimensions of landscape art that are conditioned by the violent elimination of Indigenous peoples and expropriation of land resources.

Toying with these elements of scale, Tseng dramatizes his insignificance in the face of these forefathers in a parody of heroic frontier masculinity. This parody underscores the cultural importance of frontier masculinity as a constitutive element of US national identity while emphasizing how Asian men literally fall short of its larger-than-life romanticization. As a queer Asian man, moreover, Tseng and his near invisibility underscore the multiple registers of his alienation: from constructions of white masculinity, from the whiteness of US gay male identity, and from patriarchal Asian American cultural nationalisms that reinforce a staunchly heterosexist “heroic” masculinity to combat anti-Asian racism. For instance, according to Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong of the *Aiiiiieee! Collective*, Asian American cultural politics must challenge the social and cultural emasculation of Asian American men by subverting stereotypes of the “good Chinese man . . . [as] the fulfillment of white male homosexual fantasy, literally kissing white ass.”⁹² While Tseng assumes the guise of the explorer, however parodic, his contemplation of the four presidents might very well be read as “kissing white ass.” Thus, in

Tseng's disruption of cultural nationalist prescriptions, his physical inconsequentiality may suggest that a masculinist and heterosexist Asian American cultural nationalism falls short precisely because it further entrenches a cultural standard of white masculinity. At the same time, Tseng's diminutiveness can also be read as a tacit acknowledgment of what Malini Johar Schueller calls "the gendered imperatives of Western imperialism and orientalism that have produced the stereotype of the effeminate Asian male."⁹³ Refusing to adopt the "magisterial gaze" of the four presidents, Tseng turns his attention to the gaze itself and its presumed authority. He faces east rather than west, reversing the westward direction of the frontier that the presidents seem to be surveying. His eastward gaze counters the normative conventions of landscape that, as Patricia Nelson Limerick observes, "ran on an east-to-west track, following the physical and mental migrations of white English-speaking men."⁹⁴ Most importantly, his eastward gaze demonstrates the fact that the westward movement of white settlers was only one small part of the process of "discovery." A disoriented explorer, Tseng evokes the historical fact that for nonwhite immigrants, as they moved along the west-east axis of labor, internment, and other displacements, the landscape was not the simple, pure, virgin wilderness of the settler colonial imagination. Indeed, Chinese labor in North America offers a salient illustration of Raymond Williams's remark that "a working country is hardly ever a landscape."⁹⁵

The subtle lighting in the black-and-white photograph also has the effect of nearly disappearing Tseng. On the one hand, his invisibility underscores the illegibility of his queer Asian difference within the regenerative myths and expansionist ideologies that Mount Rushmore stands for. On the other hand, his disappearance allegorizes the repressed histories that are not etched in stone, most notably the history of the Sioux Nation: the Sioux campaigned vigorously against the monument, which was built on stolen land and commemorated the murder and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. As Boime points out, "Consistent with the pattern of destruction characteristic of national exploration and empire building, the creation and the dedication of the Mount Rushmore monument was one more symbol of the white man's racist and intolerant Indian policy."⁹⁶ The site of Mount Rushmore is between what is now Harney National Forest and Custer State Park, what Boime refers to as the "two most hated names in the Sioux lexicon" because of William S. Harney's and George Armstrong Custer's massa-

cles of Sioux populations that led to illegal gold mining in the Black Hills.⁹⁷ The Black Hills, where Mount Rushmore is situated, houses the sacred site of Paha Sapa and is designated by the Sioux as a ceremonial place of prayer and meditation. The memorial was built despite the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, which gave Dakota Indians exclusive rights to the Black Hills. Predictably, as soon as gold was discovered, white miners swiftly breached the treaty agreement to begin the illegal expropriation of natural resources and, in the case of Borglum, to blast 450,000 tons of granite from the face of the sacred Black Hills. This history underscores the contradictory logics of settler colonialism, which engages in the violent elimination and dispossession of Indigenous peoples and simultaneously expresses a desire to become Indigenous to the landscape, to naturalize settler colonialism through symbolic projection.

Another history not etched into stone includes the many Chinese who worked in the Black Hills in what Liping Zhu calls the “largest Chinatown east of San Francisco from 1876 to 1910.”⁹⁸ Only since 2001, when extensive archaeological excavations of Deadwood’s Chinatown began, have widespread signs of Chinese life been revealed for examination. As Zhu notes, the gold rush brought thousands of Chinese miners to the western states, including South Dakota—although the population did not surpass 250 residents. Zhu explains that “as soon as the news spread of Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer’s expedition finding gold in the mountains of western Dakota Territory, Chinese immigrants joined the last major gold rush in the nineteenth century, arriving in the Black Hills by the winter of 1875–1876.”⁹⁹ They were subject to labor exploitation and racial violence. Only recently have the Chinese, who played such an important role in this South Dakota borderland, emerged from historical repression into partial visibility, giving new meaning to the hazy outline of Tseng’s body at Mount Rushmore. But as Tseng’s suit nearly blends into the rock—suggesting that he is part of the rock—the Chinese of the Black Hills are also embedded in this borderland of invasion, dispossession, and ongoing political struggle.

Like the Group of Seven, Borglum’s nationalist project was shaped by his own reactionary beliefs. Despite the rhetoric of democracy he invoked to characterize Mount Rushmore’s commemorative spirit, he was unambiguous about the perils of miscegenation. In particular, in addition to expansions in anti-immigration law, the period saw the rise in white supremacist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), an organization that had

earlier commissioned Borglum to create a Confederate monument at Stone Mountain near Atlanta, Georgia. His ties to the KKK were not insignificant. Borglum was an impassioned reader of Madison Grant's *Passing of the Great Race*, a scaremongering, pseudoscientific treatise that "became a sacred text for eugenicists, the Klan, and proto-Nazis everywhere."¹⁰⁰ Influenced by Grant's treatise, Borglum also took to the page. In a 1923 letter to prominent Indianapolis Klansman David C. Stephenson, Borglum boasted, "I wrote 2500 to 3000 words on the evils of the alien races."¹⁰¹ In other letters to Stephenson in the early 1920s he also expressed a profound anti-Semitism in his fears of hypodescent through miscegenation, writing as follows:

If you cross a thorough-bred with a jackass you get a mule. . . . The lowest race in civilization is the strongest physically and breeding (crossed) is always down. A Negro and a Jew will produce Negro, but Hindu and Jew—Jew; Chinese and Jew, offspring Jew; Italian and Jew, offspring Jew; and European race and Jew, offspring Jew.¹⁰²

As John Taliaferro notes, "He labeled immigrants 'slippered assassins,' . . . [and] warned that America was becoming an alien 'scrap heap.'"¹⁰³ Even though Borglum opposed slavery, he blamed African slaves for the degeneration of the white race, writing that "it has been the character of the cargo that has eaten into the very moral fiber of our race character, rather than the moral depravity of Anglo-Saxon traders."¹⁰⁴ His eugenic vision was also explicitly gendered. Boime explains that Borglum's admiration of Benito Mussolini's virile masculinity was in direct contrast to the effeminacy and weakness he associated with Jews. For these reasons he attempted to disassociate himself from stereotypes of the effete artist by engaging in rigorous physical activities such as rock climbing, boxing, and wrestling and crafting an aesthetic vision based on colossal forms. In this light, Tseng's presence on the face of Mount Rushmore stages a confrontation with the manifest masculinity embedded in the shrine of democracy, a confrontation captured in his eastward gaze and richly evocative of the earlier title of the series, *East Meets West*. In sum, the degenerative excess signaled by Tseng's abstract alien body powerfully underscores the romantic anticapitalism embedded in the settler colonial personification of the landscape as a concrete, racially pure, and masculine expression of a noncapitalist universe.



FIGURE 2.8 Jin-me Yoon, *Group of Sixty-Seven*, 1996, 134 chromogenic prints, dimensions variable. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Acquisition Fund. Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery.

Our Home and Native Landscape

To conclude this chapter I turn to Jin-me Yoon's 1996 photographic work *Group of Sixty-Seven*, which usefully complements Tseng's parodic exposure of romantic anticapitalist ideology projected onto the nationalist landscape. *Group of Sixty-Seven* extends the focus on racial constructions of national landscape that first appeared in her 1991 *Souvenirs of the Self* postcard series, in which Yoon poses, much like Tseng, in front of familiar tourist sites in Banff National Park. Continuing her exploration of the interplay of race and landscape, *Group of Sixty-Seven* connects romantic anticapitalism with the fetishization of Indigenous identity and racializes Asians as a negative abstraction. Here Yoon incorporates the paintings of two iconic Canadian painters, Lawren Harris of the Group of Seven and Emily Carr, an artist deeply inspired by the Group of Seven's nationalist vision who became renowned for her artistic interaction with Native populations in British Columbia. From the view of settler colonialism's triangulation of settler, Native, and alien identities, Yoon's work exemplifies how the Native and the Asian personify opposite sides of an antinomial view of capitalist relations, in which the concrete, noncapitalist dimension is Indigenous and the abstract representation of capitalist modernity is Asian.

Group of Sixty-Seven (figure 2.8) consists of two gridlike panels, each panel containing sixty-seven photographs of Korean Canadians from Vancouver, British Columbia. On the left panel, they face away from us (figure 2.9), and on the right, they face us (figure 2.10). We can first observe the various layers of national citation in this piece. The title, *Group of Sixty-Seven*, makes an overt reference to the Group of Seven. The number "sixty-seven" in the

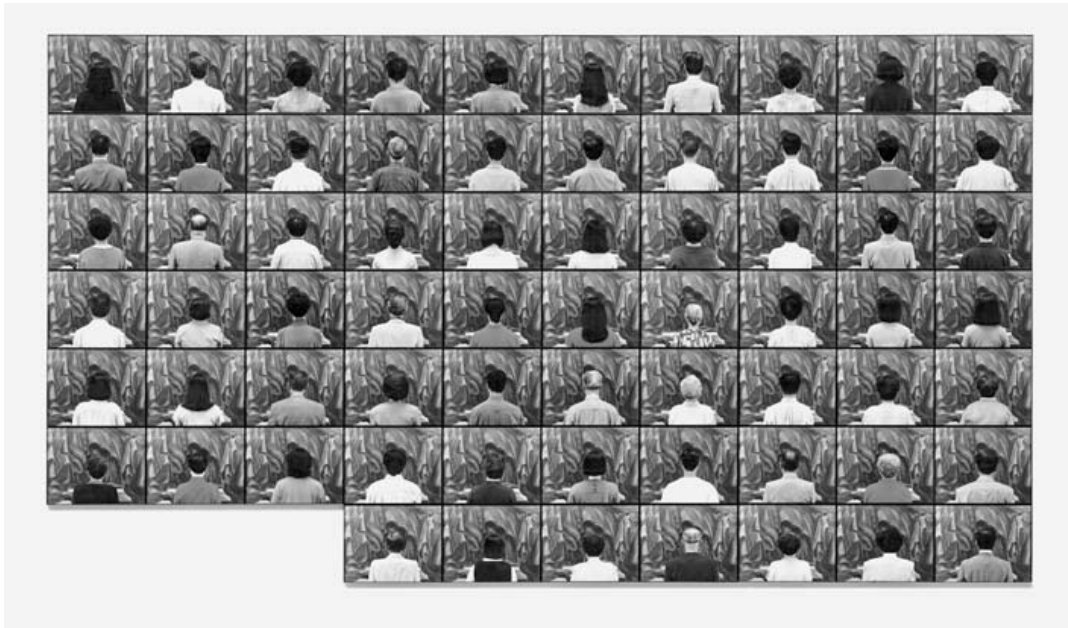


FIGURE 2.9 Jin-me Yoon, *Group of Sixty-Seven* (detail), 1996, 134 chromogenic prints, dimensions variable. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Acquisition Fund. Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery.

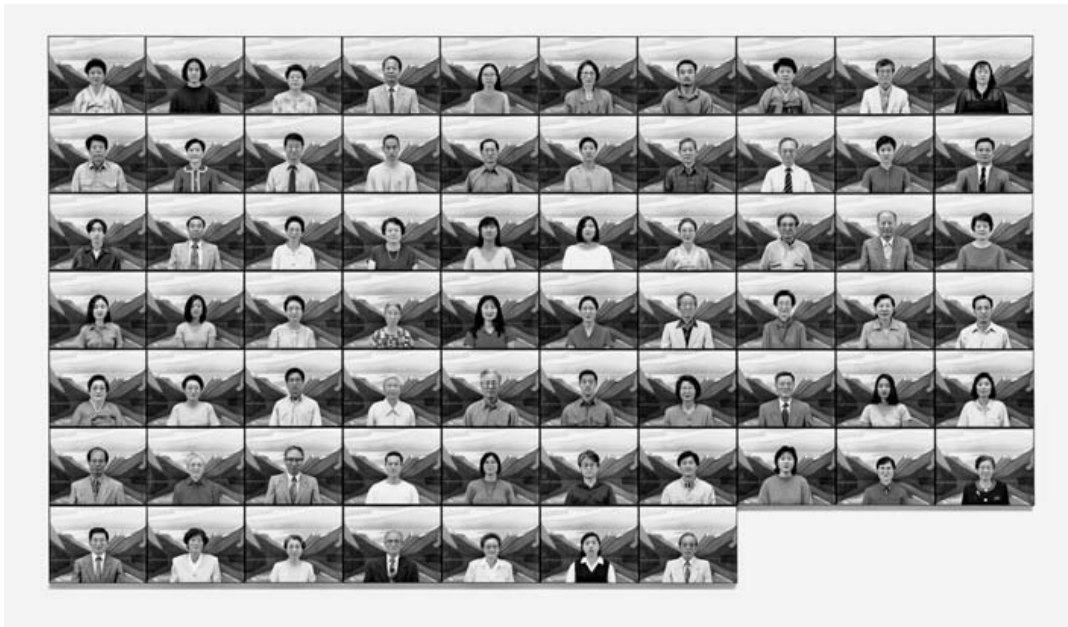


FIGURE 2.10 Jin-me Yoon, *Group of Sixty-Seven* (detail), 1996, 134 chromogenic prints, dimensions variable. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Acquisition Fund. Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery.

title also cites Canadian confederation in 1867 and the elimination of national origins immigration quotas a hundred years later, in 1967—the crucial legal prerequisite for the appearance of many of the sixty-seven Korean Canadian faces featured in the piece. Adding another layer of citation to the Group of Seven artists, we note that behind the heads on the right panel is Lawren Harris’s Rocky Mountain painting *Maligne Lake, Jasper Park*. Building on Tseng’s references to the Group of Seven painters and their association of white male nationhood with landscape, Yoon’s work highlights the commodification of landscape in her use of repetition, recalling the seriality of Andy Warhol’s pop art.

Like Warhol’s Campbell’s soup cans or Marilyn Monroe portraits, Yoon’s piece similarly inverts high and low aestheticism and the values associated with originality and duplication. Her postmodern play of surface and depth presents a dramatic recontextualization of Harris’s *Maligne Lake*, which was considered the most influential painting in Toronto from the time it was painted in 1924 to 1930.¹⁰⁵ As one of the most celebrated nationalist works of art in Canada, art historian Dennis Reid describes Harris’s painting as a “tribute to the spiritualizing force of the country, an incentive to the spiritual capacity in us all.”¹⁰⁶ In keeping with his romantic views of a nation united under a spiritual conception of the North, *Maligne Lake* expresses a sense of control and order that defended against the turbulent social realities of the 1920s. This was a period of increasing industrialization, urbanization, and class struggle that fomented increasing antipathy toward racialized aliens, particularly Chinese labor migrants, who were subject to the Chinese Head Tax and would face exclusion through passage of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act. Thus the “rise of landscape”¹⁰⁷ and escape into a primordial, frozen wilderness in this context can be attributed to an increasing sense of chaos spurred by modernity. By invoking Harris and the Group of Seven so explicitly in this piece, Yoon invites the viewer to explore the intersection of race and romantic anticapitalism in the Group of Seven’s artwork, particularly in the racial and spatial depiction of Canada’s national identity constructed around the idea of the “Great White North.” More confrontationally, Yoon prompts the viewer to consider the relationship between these Korean faces and the essence of Nordic purity celebrated in the Group’s depiction of the landscape.

By photographing sixty-seven Korean faces in front of Harris’s painted landscape, Yoon imposes what Hutcheon calls “an external order upon a

work that is presumed to be original.”¹⁰⁸ However, Yoon manipulates the line between the authenticity of the original by repeating Harris’s landscape sixty-seven times. In terms of the dissonant media presented in the work, Yoon emphasizes the modernity of the Korean faces through her use of photography—a medium whose infinite capacity for reproduction represents an antithesis to notions of artistic originality contained in Harris’s piece. In doing so, Yoon allegorizes the way Korean Canadian bodies become racial signifiers of the abstract dimension of capitalist modernity and, alternatively, how the painted landscape becomes a signifier of the concrete dimension of nature, purity, and originality. But Yoon ultimately frustrates a view of the abstract homogeneity associated with Asians by emphasizing the gender and generational diversity of her Korean Canadian subjects against a *Maligne Lake* that is here reduced to “background,” its unoriginality reinforced again by Yoon’s repetition of the image. In a twist on the visual codes of the tourist snapshot, what is “real” about the photograph are the Korean faces, emphasizing both the commodification of landscape as tourist scene and its artificiality.

The jarring superimposition of Asian faces onto the constructed landscape also serves as an invitation to consider why Asians have or have not been incorporated into the dominant social and cultural landscape in Canada. While *Maligne Lake* is celebrated as a timeless and noncontradictory representation of Canadian nationalism, it is interesting to note that it was completed one year after the passage of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, in a period that saw the rise in organized anti-Asian labor agitation and the continual revision of anti-Asian legislation. What Yoon’s piece suggests, then, is that romantic expressions of Canadian nationalism that are conveyed as pastoral retreat must be read as inseparable from a history of yellow peril and anti-immigrant sentiment. If we shift to a more contemporary context, Yoon’s faces comment on the xenophobic responses to ways recent Asian immigration has redrawn the racial landscape in large urban cities such as Vancouver. Indeed, the public outcry against Hong Kong immigrant “monster houses” in Vancouver’s historically white Shaughnessy and Kerrisdale neighborhoods is one example of how the influx of Asian residential settlement outside the spatial and class confines of segregated Chinatowns reflects, as geographer Katharyne Mitchell observes, “anxiety about the loss of both economic and symbolic control over the defining and marking of place.”¹⁰⁹ Thus the images of these unsmiling faces blocking our



FIGURE 2.11 Emily Carr, *Old Time, Coast Village*, 1929–1930. Oil on canvas, 91.3 × 128.7 cm. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust. Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery.

view of the aestheticized landscape suggest that these faces are always in excess of nationalist constructions of landscape. By superimposing these faces onto Harris's painting in a gridlike parody of Canada's so-called multicultural "mosaic," Yoon suggests that we can draw no unifying, ideological comfort from the retreat into landscape.

The left panel of Yoon's *Group of Sixty-Seven* offers a related parody of the national landscape by emphasizing the romanticization of Indigenous themes. This panel draws on a painting titled *Old Time, Coast Village* (figure 2.11) by British Columbia painter Emily Carr—an iconic figure in her own right. Emily Carr's association with the Group of Seven was established in 1927 when she was invited by the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa to participate in an exhibition of West Coast painting. There she met Lawren Harris, whose praise for the Native themes in her art and subsequent years of encouragement became a key motivator for the artistic and literary projects she undertook, including her Governor General award-winning autobiography, *Klee Wyck*, recounting her experiences with Pacific Coast First Nations communities. The book's title is based on the nickname given

to her by the Tlingit Nation—an Indigenous people she strongly identified with—which translates to “the laughing one.”¹¹⁰ In a revealing journal entry about the 1927 exhibition, Carr notes proudly, “I felt my work looked dead and dull, but they [Group of Seven] all say I have more of the spirit of the Indian than the others.”¹¹¹ Not only for Carr, who identified with the First Nations to the point that she imagined herself an Indian, the merit of her own work was judged on its capacity to reflect Native spirituality and cultural vision.

Because she was a female artist and assumed to be lesbian, the First Nations themes Carr drew out in her work, which included reproducing their art forms in her own art practice, are often lauded as exemplary of her anticonformism, which challenged patriarchal and heteronormative gender scripts. Carr traveled alone to Native communities in British Columbia, such as the coastal Haida, Tsimshian, and Tlingit Nations, and began to feature their totem poles in her paintings. In her pursuit of a Native vision, Carr exemplified the role of the romantic hero—but as a woman. Her attraction to First Nations cultures was clearly based on romanticized notions of the “noble savage,” who she believed existed in a vanishing state of purity in nature. Art historian Dorothy Shadbolt attests to this belief, explaining that Carr “intuitively grasped the sense in which Indian art was an expression of the native’s relation to the natural and supernatural world as he understood it.”¹¹² In figure 2.9 we can observe the proximity Carr observed in the relation between First Nations and “real” nature. In particular, the light-colored totem poles at the center of the piece echo the brown trees in the background, suggesting the indistinguishable features of First Nations culture and nature. From an antinomial view of capitalist social relations, First Nations culture comes to express concrete nature, purity, and originality against the abstract, antinatural oppressions of capitalist modernity. But what complicates Carr’s romanticization of First Nations culture here is the overwhelming foliage that drapes the village in a heavy, molten green and serves as protective cover. The trees in the foreground appear human in form, leaning toward the village in cautious observance. Recalling Alexandra Minna Stern’s examination of the racial undertones of early twentieth-century conservationism and wilderness protection, Carr’s painting betrays not only an ideology of romantic anticapitalism at the core of the settler colonial retreat into nature, but also a suffocating management and control of First Nations cultures. Thus her desire to “go Native” was ultimately more

revealing of a defensive investment in whiteness than a respect for Indigenous sovereignty and land claims.

More extreme than the Group of Seven's northern retreat from social and political upheavals of the 1920s that marked life in urban centers, Carr's psychological withdrawal from urbanization manifested itself in illnesses, to the extent that it appeared she was allergic to the city—an ailment Reid refers to as the “‘city disease’ that was to attack [Carr] whenever she settled in a metropolis.”¹¹³ Her loathing of the city, coupled with her idealization of and identification with First Nations culture and appropriation of their art, exemplifies Shari Huhndorf's description of “going Native” as an appropriation of the identity, images, culture, or practices of Indigenous peoples. A settler colonial logic that finds equal expression in Canada as in the United States, she explains that going Native “reinforces the racial hierarchies it claims to destabilize”:¹¹⁴

Over the last century, going native has become a cherished American tradition, an important—even necessary—means of defining European American identities and histories. In its various forms, going native articulates and attempts to resolve widespread ambivalence about modernity as well as anxieties about the terrible violence marking the nation's origins.¹¹⁵

From this perspective we can reread Carr's gender transgressions as symptomatic of her own white colonial identity crisis, one she attempted to resolve by appropriating and identifying herself with a First Nations identity.

While Carr may have viewed going Native as simultaneously anticapitalist in shunning modernity's spoils and ruins alike, antiracial in her idealization of the coastal First Nations communities onto which she imposed herself, and gender-bending in her adoption of the persona of the lonely romantic genius, she actually reinforced rather than dismantled these structures. In particular, rather than challenging capitalism, Carr's journey to remove herself from the toxic industrial and immigrant-filled environment of the city to find personal and artistic inspiration in Native cultures reinforces capitalism's main values. As Huhndorf explains, “The fixation on self-discovery and self-healing articulate the very Western ideologies of bourgeois individualism.”¹¹⁶ Because her oeuvre relied on the appropriation of First Nations art practice, her relationship with First Nations cultures was largely economic insofar as she profited immensely from appropriat-

ing their cultural practices. Finally, Carr's idealization of the naturalness of the "noble savages" of the Pacific coast was contradicted by her antipathy toward the large urban population of Songhees who lived in her hometown of Victoria. As Janice Stewart explains, Carr's view of the Songhees was in keeping with prevailing ideas at the time: they were seen as "'lazy, gambling, drunks' who were 'a nuisance and trouble to the authorities' as 'individuals warranting charity.'" ¹¹⁷ The practice of either idealizing Native peoples as noble savages or denigrating them as inferior and requiring colonial management ultimately performs the same ideological work. On one hand, the romanticization of Native cultures functions to distance North Americans from their European settler roots, thereby displacing responsibility for the conquest and dispossession of the First Nations. ¹¹⁸ It also reinforces racial hierarchies when settlers identify and imagine themselves as "super-Indian" and therefore the rightful inheritors of the land and its resources. On the other, the denigration of Native communities naturalizes European dominance and its ideologies of western progress. It rationalizes the colonization of Indigenous peoples and expropriation of their resources through suggestions that Natives cannot "accept" modernity and civilization. Last but not least, while Carr's adoption of the Tlingit name Klee Wyck can be read as a rejection of Victorian notions of womanhood and the rigid organization of her father's house; as Stewart observes, "For most of her life, Carr turned to masculine authorities . . . for final judgment of her work rather than to her circle of reading ladies or other women artists." ¹¹⁹ As an artist who rose to iconic fame in the 1930s, after the Group of Seven disbanded, by extending their project of defining a distinctively Canadian art, Carr's persona reveals a problematic desire to escape from a social world marked by social upheavals, anti-immigrant sentiment, and industrialization, and a colonial desire to possess First Nations culture to promote the authenticity of her "Canadian" art. If spiritual replenishment for the nation did not spring from the "true North strong and free," as the Group believed, then according to Carr, "our home and Native land" ¹²⁰ became a national symbol of cultural purity and wholeness.

Yoon's engagement with Carr in the left panel must therefore be read as an engagement with Carr's autochthonophilia and appropriation of First Nations cultural identity. The way Yoon's work performs a disidentification of Carr's painting is registered on multiple levels. If we focus on the way the Korean Canadian heads are turned away from the viewer, we can in-

interpret this “faceless” gesture as a disidentification with the ethnographic gaze embedded in Carr’s painting, a gaze that appropriates the Native other for artistic legitimacy and produces art that becomes a romantic index to a defensive settler colonial identity. But at another level, they stage a disidentificatory encounter for the settler looking in. Given that these Korean heads block the view of the village, they foreclose a settler desire to identify with the Native landscape, whose commodification is reinforced through the repetition of Carr’s painting. A further irony embedded in this panel is that not only do Yoon’s Korean Canadian subjects block an identification with the landscape, but the blackness of the back-turned heads also allegorize the inability of settler culture to “identify” Asians as anything but abstractly homogeneous—as unidentifiable as the black hair in each frame. Adding, then, to the degenerative excess that Tseng’s body performs in the romanticized landscape, here Yoon suggests that Asian bodies are an alien antithesis of settler colonialism’s indigenizing desire. In short, by viewing capitalism as an antinomy of abstract and concrete dimensions, Asians are as unnatural to the landscape as Indigenous peoples are natural. This is the double edge of settler colonialism.

Conclusion

In Tseng’s and Yoon’s disidentification with iconic landscapes of North America, their photographs present, to quote Hutcheon again, “inscription[s] of the past in the present [that] embody and bring to life actual historical tensions” and prompt us to delve into the genealogy of landscape art of the early twentieth century.¹²¹ Disidentifying with a shifting set of clichés and stereotypes associated with Asian North Americans and the landscape while preserving the aesthetic beauty of the latter tradition, their photographs use landscape “as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture.”¹²² Indeed, the alien presence of Asian bodies set against these landscapes foregrounds messy intersections of race science, white nativism, and settler nationalism projected onto the landscape. For Tseng, his parodic repetition of early twentieth-century landscape conventions associated with the Group of Seven’s, Adams’s, and Borglum’s landscapes brings forth the eugenic ideology that conveyed a white, masculine, and paternalistic identification with mountains and trees. Despite conservationists’ progres-

sive environmental agenda, their efforts were often intertwined with a eugenic agenda that opposed the degeneration of the white race by alien races. Juxtaposed with Tseng's alien excess, their projection of virility and obstinate resistance to change onto a mountainous and tree-filled landscape expresses the contradictory way that racist ideology formed a key subtext of so-called progressive, anticapitalist visions of national unity, conservation, and democracy. In a complementary manner, Yoon draws out the indigenizing dimension of romantic anticapitalism that collapse Native cultures into an unchanging natural purity and authenticity. She also builds on Tseng's evocation of the degenerative excess signified by Asian bodies to exemplify the abstractness and unnaturalness of the Asian body against the landscape. From the period of railroad labor discussed in the last chapter to Asian immigrant exclusion in this chapter, the perverse abstraction associated with Chinese labor had by the 1920s and 1930s been supplanted by the settler retreat into the aestheticized landscape, whose unnatural antithesis is the Asian alien.

Despite the romantic tribute to national culture embedded in landscape art of the early twentieth century, Tseng's and Yoon's photographic counter-memories suggest that such a "progressive" vision of national culture was "born in the apprehension of imminent loss," as Lake and Reynolds indicate, and part of the anxious growth of "whiteness as a transnational mode of racial identification in settler societies."¹²³ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, territorial symbols of regenerative whiteness expressed the proprietorial dimension of British settler colonialism and became, over time, synonymous with whiteness. As W. E. B. Du Bois observed succinctly on the whiteness of territorial expansion, "Whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen."¹²⁴

Finally, in the spirit of Kingston's and Fung's reimagining of abstract labor as History 2, the potential of Tseng's and Yoon's parody is not in articulating a more ideal landscape of normative inclusion to symbolize the self-identity of the settler nation. Rather, by queering the aestheticized landscape, Tseng's alien difference animates the contradictions, exclusions, and violent eliminations of settler colonialism that the landscape, as aesthetic object, fetishizes and naturalizes. Similarly, Yoon's iteration of the interrupted landscape lays bare the fetishized commodity function of the landscape. It is from the ambivalence of the parodic gaps between Tseng's and Yoon's difference to the landscape that their photographs allegorize a

state of nonequivalence. Nonequivalence, as Chandan Reddy explains, represents subjects “who are not ‘unified’ by a prior identity.”¹²⁵ Disidentifying with the white regenerative ideal projected onto the romantic landscape, Tseng’s and Yoon’s photographs interrupt and denaturalize the mundane iteration of its symbolic violence.

Following from the first chapter’s examination of the perverse temporality of abstract labor and this chapter’s focus on antinatural landscapes during a converging period of anti-Asian immigration restriction in North America, the next chapter moves forward to the internment of Japanese North Americans. If Asian North American cultural producers have thus far exposed and recircuited the abstract and unnatural signifiers attached to Asian bodies, what might a transnational approach to Japanese internment narratives expose as internment’s governing logics? Continuing my exploration of Asian racialization as a fetishistic alignment with the abstract dimension of capitalist social relations, I track the evolution of romantic anti-capitalism and its antinomial view of concrete and abstract dimensions of capitalism. Probing Asian North American representations of labor and landscape in chapter 3, I demonstrate how Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan* and Rea Tajiri’s *History and Memory* reflect how the perverse abstraction of Asian labor takes on mechanical, nonhuman representation that must be eradicated from West Coast agriculture and fishing industries. However, through the process of labor resignification established through symbolic proximity with Indigeneity, Japanese North Americans emerge renaturalized and re-corporealized as surplus labor.