

Introduction

Illegal Immigration in the Cold War

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein's musical *Flower Drum Song* (1958/1961), remembered as one of their lesser hits, concludes its light-hearted look at the lives of Chinese Americans in San Francisco with a scene in which girl gets boy—by informing on herself. “My back is wet,” she quaintly announces, precipitating a romantic happy ending. Astonishingly, Rodgers and Hammerstein were able to appeal to a popular middlebrow audience by making light of illegal immigration, while Chinese American authors of the same period struggled to normalize and justify the Chinese presence, many of them quietly suppressing the stories of their family's own immigration strategies and deceptions.¹

Illegal Immigrants/Model Minorities: The Cold War of Chinese American Narrative examines how Chinese Americans sought to address a Cold War-driven official narrative of the pervasiveness of illegal immigration, as the wave of “Chinatown novels” and memoirs coincided with immigration scrutiny and investigation on a massive scale. Whether hiding it, explaining it, countering its stigma through a proto-model minority embrace of assimilation and the nuclear family formation, or later, even boldly embracing it, Chinese American writers responded with remarkable strategy and specificity to the developments in immigration policy and surfacing of new public histories. Like the memoirs and novels it examines, this study tells a tale of two narrative authorities about Chinese America: the U.S. government, as told in laws, court opinions, and media appearances, and the voices of Chi-

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nese Americans in the same period. In particular, I focus on the public and private responses of authors in the 1950s and their retrospectives in later decades on the government investigations and attacks on Chinese American immigration. These narratives are inextricably intertwined with the history of immigration that authors seek to conceal and justify simultaneously, offering their own lives in the United States as proof and, later in the era, politicizing fraudulence as resistance.

Across these authors and this archive, two disciplining formations arise in this period: a racialized illegal immigrant and a differently but equally powerfully racialized model minority. Stemming from many of the same social formations and negative stereotypes, these two categories are defined against and in dialogue with each other, as Chinese Americans often wielded the second against the negative image of the first. Both, in the Cold War era, serve to contain the foreign presence within the United States. Indeed, the rise of both of these terms in the 1960s demonstrates how the need to narrativize the rapidly growing Chinese American population during China's communist upheavals led to the creation of new public identities and consciousness for Chinese Americans.

Although Chinese Americans were not estimated to constitute a large percentage of immigrants entering fraudulently or without documentation, the public identification of them as illegal immigrants rose in connection with fears of communist infiltration from China. Decades of restricted and gender-imbalanced migration paved the way for further restrictions and policing. After the "fall" of China in 1950, a cascade of government investigations, specialized programs, and deportations poured forth in concert with rising numbers of attempted family reunifications and refugee entrances. In particular, the high-profile attempted subpoenas of Chinatown family associations and the Chinese Confession Program, initiated by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in 1956, created an atmosphere of suspicion and fear over the course of the 1950s that perhaps has never died away.

However, long before the term "model minority" was invented, one side of Asian stereotyping in the United States focused on Asians' diligence, thrift, quiet behavior, and reliability. The narrative of progress and of good, fully legal and legitimate Chinese Americans was furthered by governmental, media, and community sources during World War II. Ellen Wu and K. Scott Wong have described how World War II military service in particular legitimated the Americanness of Chinese at the same time that the ally status of China placed them as the "good Asians," in contrast with Japanese and Japanese Americans. Madeline Hsu suggests that the students and elite refugees of the postwar era became the "good immigrants," worthy and valuable additions to a booming economy and society. As I chiefly argue, the coher-

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ence and stability of the Chinese American family also became a key point of definition for the model minority formation as it was defined in the 1960s as a means of further pathologizing African American socioeconomic problems. The nuclear family functioned to counter decades of the stereotype of pernicious clans, tongs, and bachelor Chinatowns, then, in the 1950s, to counter attacks on family reunification immigration and to tap into narratives of assimilation and social suitability. Thus, the need to publicly counter government narratives of fraudulent immigration directly fed into the establishment of the model minority. The nuclear and (paradoxically) even the extended family became the primary way for Chinese Americans to normalize their identity and exemplarity *because* the Chinese American family was constantly under attack by immigration investigation through interrogation, blood testing, and court proceedings. However, these narratives could not fully counteract the stigmatization of Chinese Americans as possible infiltrators and illegal immigrants. As Mae Ngai writes, “The community could not entirely redeem its virtue. Cold War politics and the sensationalized investigations against fraud reproduced racialized perceptions that all Chinese immigrants were illegal and dangerous.”²

Chinese American writers in this period take on the mantle of speaking for an entire community, many of them explicitly, understanding that their stories represent the group to a mainstream public largely ignorant of this small but growing population. *Illegal Immigrants/Model Minorities* sets out a rubric by which to understand the literary landscape of illegal immigration in the 1950s, as Chinese American writers in this era reenvisioned national belonging, family, blood ties, and history. Within novels, memoirs, and literary archives, as well as government documents, court cases, and mass media, the battle for narrative authority and Chinese American identity evolves over the course of the Cold War. I create a new understanding of the stigma and anxiety of illegal immigration as it affected the image of the entire Chinese American community and was recontextualized by immigration reform and ethnic activism in the 1960s and 1970s, leading to a politicized revelation of family secrets. This book illuminates the rapidly shifting political and social pressures on Chinese American writers, as I examine not only published works but also revisions, adaptations, and private family narratives. I recognize that a peril of the binary framing of my title is that I may seem to reaffirm the separate categories of illegal immigrant and model minority. However, I believe that close attention to these writers’ negotiations reveals how definitions were historically navigated and combated by many different individuals during this era, working against the narratives of the nation-state.

Blood tells. Interrogation searches. Confession reveals. Law defines. But Chinese American literature can perform all of these and more, selectively

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concealing, revealing, and reconstructing. As with the discussion of silence and speech, the lines between history and fiction have been blurred significantly by theorists of the past few decades, who work against the reification of “truth” and “fact” and instead have exposed the mediated and constructed nature of history and historical narrative. The concept of immigration itself, as Bonnie Honig, Mae Ngai, and others have theorized, is a narrative that promises citizenship, belonging, and inclusion. Thus, the racialized exclusion from the “normative teleology of immigration,” as Chinese Americans were tainted with fraudulence in the Cold War era, depended on the construction of other narratives.³ The hostile narrative of Chinese fraudulence and illegality is continually countered and undercut in this era by strategic Chinese American speakers who appeal to the broader public with narratives of Americanness and belonging, beginning with proto-model minority tales but eventually encompassing even the independence and rebellion of an illegal immigrant identity.

Before I continue, a note about terminology: I have chosen, despite some qualms, to employ the terms “illegal immigration” and occasionally, as in my title, “illegal immigrants,” because historically we see them being increasingly used and solidified in this era around particular ethnicities to specific political ends. Other terms were also frequently used, and I employ them, as well: “passport fraud,” “smuggling,” and more. “Fraud” was the government’s most frequently used word in the 1950s for Chinese immigration. But “illegal immigration,” which has become so pejorative in our time, was a general, popular term that encompassed many different aspects of undocumented or fraudulently documented immigration, and it was employed by many in different fields of endeavor. We see Chinese American writers working deliberately with and against this term, starting when Lin Yutang is told by his editor that he must explain how his characters could enter “legally” in *Chinatown Family* (1948); Maxine Hong Kingston embraces it in her imagination of “illegal” and “legal” versions of her father in *China Men* (1980).⁴ I felt that this term, especially in conversation with the other term, “model minority,” that developed over the course of the Cold War to describe Asian Americans, most accurately conveys the warring narratives that Chinese Americans faced.

Creating the Confession Era

The framework of my study is highlighted not by the traditional global or Eurocentric events that initially dominated Cold War study, but by the U.S. immigration policies of this era, such as the special prosecutions of Chinese immigration cases and the revised acts of 1952 and 1965. However, these policies are parallel with and inextricable from the Cold War, particularly

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as affecting Chinese Americans, because of relations with Communist China and the consequent increase of surveillance on Chinese America; therefore, although I do not continue this study all the way through the popularly conceived end of the Cold War in 1991, I use the terms “Cold War era” and “the era of immigration scrutiny” or the “Confession era” (referring to an INS program for Chinese Americans) somewhat interchangeably in this study to indicate the political entanglements of the period from the end of World War II through the 1970s, examining the literary history and aftereffects of immigration reforms in the Cold War political context.

Writing about Chinese American identity takes place in the context of the United States’ struggle during the Cold War to maintain and further its democratic ideals at home, particularly in the struggle for civil rights. Cindy Cheng, in *Citizens of Asian America*, importantly develops a historical framework in which immigration activism and reform during the Cold War, as well as stigmatization as political subversives, become part of the civil rights struggle for Asian Americans, continuing to enlarge civil rights studies beyond the sphere of the domestic body politic. As both Cheng and Wu discuss at length, the rising communist tide in Asia placed Chinese Americans and other East Asian Americans in public relations peril but also gave them new opportunities to redefine a community identity through what Wu describes as an anti-communist “nationwide crusade.” The author Jade Snow Wong’s overseas tour to Asia, as well as those of other artists and public figures, formed an important part of that reshaping; not only could Chinese Americans serve as a virtuous and integral piece of American society within, but they had a special efficacy in the fight for democracy outside. However, Charlotte Brooks and Peter Kwong have described the deep rifts that political and social differences caused within developing Chinatowns, showing how a small ethnic population was buffeted by Cold War shifts that differently affected individuals based on immigration and class status.⁵

Paradoxes and contradictory policies governed immigration during the buildup of a large bureaucratic apparatus that led to an impossible subject position for small immigrating communities. Hiroshi Motomura exposes the wide discretion that the government applies in regulating and enforcing immigration restrictions, “replac[ing] the predictability and uniformity that is usually associated with the rule of law.” Such unpredictability cascades into the different roles and interests that govern the integration of migrants into U.S. society. Mae Ngai and Elliott Young have examined the contradictory laws, public agitation, and labor conditions that created the illegal immigrant as a figure that was an “impossible subject,” in Ngai’s titular term, excluded and policed, and yet an “alien nation,” in Young’s, moving transnationally and sometimes eluding the scrutiny of the state. Such a complex

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history and confusing policies surface in the split rhetoric that the INS and other government agencies often applied to Chinese (and other) immigrants, who were characterized by turn in sympathetic and condemnatory tones. I likewise link this split rhetoric to the establishment of what I call the proto-model minority, looking at the young Chinese Americans of the 1950s whose writing and work enters into this unpredictably policed society. It should not be surprising that some constructed public personae as close to unimpeachable as they could, navigating the uneasy terrain of coercion and complicity, as Ian Haney López calls it.⁶

The terrain of Cold War Chinese America was the culmination of a gradual process of comparative racialization as economic forces collided with protectionism and nativism. The economic “yellow peril” and associated xenophobic fears surfaced in gender- and class-inflected fears of Chinese immorality, heathenness, unassimilability, and pernicious influence that lasted for decades as the policing of immigration and citizenship was created at the federal and state level. Constantly shifting state or federal policy, corporate or business interests, and labor opposition clashed with more favorably disposed politicians, charitable and Christian groups, those concerned with foreign policy in Asia, and the growing political agency and activism of Chinese Americans themselves.

The constantly shifting restriction of Asian immigration and the attempted conflation of immigrant, resident, and citizen in government prosecutions did much to shape the perception and political position of Asian Americans in the second half of the twentieth century. The common pressures of defining the white, the foreign, and the citizen in legalized processes fell hard on the small but growing Asian presence. Over the decades, as immigration restrictions shaped the Chinese American community, Chinese immigration also shaped the means of modern immigration restriction to a degree out of proportion with mere numbers. Over time, Chinese Americans gradually gained (in greater numbers) the right to immigration, to family reunification, and, in the mid-twentieth century, to refugee status and naturalization. In 1965, with the lifting of national origins quotas, some of the stigma lifted, but legal peril did not. Also, Hsu has presciently noted that the history of *inclusion* must be added to the history of immigration exclusion and deportation. Indeed, as she argues, the active assistance of educated immigrants and political refugees can be read as an origin of the model minority stereotype.⁷

Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, the gradual but steady influx of Chinese laborers into the West led to concerted political opposition. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, passed amid great political contention over its initial severity, strove to protect the U.S. population and the labor market by excluding all family members of Chinese in the United States except for

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those of a certain class status, chiefly merchants, students, and diplomats. This created, on the one hand, a group of separated transnational families, with women and children in China and men in the United States. In the United States, it created what were and are erroneously referred to as “bachelor” Chinatowns, mostly male social worlds that consequently were described as homosexual, pedophilic, diseased spaces; Nayan Shah has brilliantly described how San Francisco Chinatown suffered from characterization in the nineteenth century by white politicians as “an immoral bachelor society of dissolute men who frequented opium dens, gambling houses, and brothels . . . [a] transient working-class world.” Even into the twentieth century, these spaces were so pathologized that Louis Chu’s 1961 novel *Eat a Bowl of Tea* is generally hailed as the *only* depiction of a bachelor Chinatown. *Tea*, however, shows a bachelor society already in decline, superseded by young families, as I discuss further in Chapter 3. Nor were women exempt from these depictions. In 1875, the Page Act laid the foundation for wider exclusion by excluding Chinese forced laborers and prostitutes, chiefly enforced to keep out the immoral Chinese female influence, decades before prostitutes of all races were excluded. The perceived lack of morality and Christianity of Chinese raised fears not only that they were unsuitable for assimilation but that they were unsuitable simply to be present in the West amid white settlers.⁸

With the increasing migration arose the issue of citizenship. Asians were barred from naturalization in 1870 alongside Chinese exclusion. Perhaps the most famous early legal case, *Wong Kim Ark v. United States* (1898), established the principle of birthright citizenship—that is, by birth on U.S. soil (*jus soli*). Wong Kim Ark was born on U.S. soil and denied reentry after a trip to China; the judicial recognition of his citizenship represented an important step in law at the time. Furthermore, his citizenship trumped the Chinese Exclusion laws, so the permission to reenter also represented an important, albeit limited, recognition of citizenship rights over race-based immigration policy. Different cases regulated or increased the power of the state over noncitizens as the bureaucratic regulation of certificates of residency increased.⁹

At the height of the nativist era, the immigration acts of 1917 and 1924 sought to further cut off immigration from Asia, first by demarcating an “Asiatic Barred Zone” and later by creating a circular logic, excluding aliens not eligible for citizenship—a move highly damaging to relations with Japan and other Asian nations. Likewise, the racial barrier to naturalized citizenship for Asians was upheld by courts, cemented by the *Ozawa* (1922) and *Thind* (1923) Supreme Court cases, until World War II for Chinese. In 1952, all general racial prerequisites for immigration were finally ended. The alienness and precarity of Asians, even citizens, thus remained a matter of

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fact and law right up until the Cold War, reaching its height with the mass detention of Japanese Americans during World War II.¹⁰

Just as Chinese immigration shaped the laws of entry and citizenship, it shaped the apparatus of deportation and the federal power over immigration as a national security concern. The bureaucracy of immigration grew immensely over the exclusion period. The Geary Act of 1892 required certificates of residence to avoid deportation, something that Jade Snow Wong would openly reflect on late in her life (see Chapter 4). *Fong Yue Ting* (1893) cemented the federal government's immigration powers as separate from criminal punishment and relieved it of the evidentiary standards and burden of proof of the criminal justice system. Torrie Hester convincingly traces how the federal government then took steps to integrate the special clauses of the Exclusion Act into larger federal policy, removing many judiciary procedures and making it much easier to deport Chinese migrants. At the same time, the judicial system protected the rights of citizens, whose claims were in most cases granted a judicial trial, as well as the rights of Chinese who had entered as merchants under the Exclusion Act to change jobs so that the federal government could not readily deport those who fell from merchant status, an economic aspect revisited in later deportation laws and cases regarding other Asian ethnicities.¹¹

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, industries and circuits of fraudulent immigration sprang up to achieve entry and family reunion. Men who returned to China periodically would report the birth of a child, thereby opening up a slot—real or fraudulent—for the immigration of this child in the future. Immigrants entering falsely through these slots were nicknamed “paper sons,” although women also entered in this manner. Names and identities were bought and sold, invented and charted for memorization, and sometimes could hardly be distinguished from biological family members, who also struggled to remember exactly how many animals the family had owned or the year of their grandfather's birth. The “power of immigrant resistance and agency” is demonstrated, as Lee notes, by the fact that more than 300,000 Chinese managed to immigrate during the exclusion era (1882–1943), most of them laborers and farmers, despite the attempt by the Exclusion Act to admit only the merchant and elite classes. Women gradually entered in numbers closer to those of the men, coming not only as wives but also as widows assuming control of businesses and as miscellaneous workers of all kinds.¹²

A couple of officials and Angel Island detainees estimated that 90–95 percent of entrants were falsely documented in the 1920s–1930s; by the end of the Confession Program in 1965, 13,895 people had confessed, closing 11,294 potential slots. Exactly how many were deported was not heavily publicized. The sheer number is not surprising. Certainly, Wen-hsien Chen's

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sociological study showed no compunction on the part of immigrants about helping others, because they felt that exclusion was racist, unjust, and “inhuman in separating families.” To elude exclusion, the birth certificates, coaching books, and other documents were insufficient; to back up these proofs, they had to maintain these identities and networks to avoid raids and deportation.¹³

In parallel with the development of Chinese immigration policies and the modern apparatus of immigration enforcement, the wrangling over citizens’ or residents’ *rights* racialized the Chinese (and other Asians) as a separate group, holding a tenuous position socially and legally. These cases and laws laid the groundwork for the illegal immigrant/model minority binary in the Cold War. In the first half of the twentieth century, activism by Asian Americans and their allies, including many religious and civic organizations, often urged assimilation via language, dress, religion, and other socially visible measures, and in their political advocacy they appealed pragmatically to the need for better relations with Asian nations, as well as to American and Christian ideals of civic virtue.¹⁴ Thus, the seeds of the model minority were already contained in the efforts to combat exclusion or prejudice.

The slow shaping of Fourteenth Amendment protection at the national level seesawed with anti-Asian laws. *Yick Wo v. Hopkins* (1886) barred discriminatory laws that were written, on their face, as racially neutral but did not settle the question of classification. As Neil Gotanda points out, Justice John Marshall Harlan dissented in both *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Wong Kim Ark* based on the race and foreignness of Chinese; Harlan noted that Jim Crow laws did not specify the status of Chinese, leaving it to be presumed that they might enjoy the higher social status of whites. Though only a footnote in *Plessy*, the economic and social rights of Asians would prove to be intimately tied to the racialized perceptions of them as everything from dirty and economically threatening to quiet and diligent, perceptions shaped by and shaping immigration policy. The early and deeply negative stereotypes of Chinese were cemented in the California state ruling of *People v. Hall* (1854), which enlarged a statute ensuring that no “Black, no Mulatto person, or Indian” could testify in the trial of a white man, citing the “mendacity” and “impassible difference” of the Chinese, “inferior” and “differing in language, opinions, color, and physical conformation.” Such words echoed and justified the restrictions that went into place in 1863 in California and then in the Exclusion Act and its companion laws; indeed, the 1892 congressional dictum that one white witness could substantiate legal residency for a Chinese person was in many ways the twin of *People v. Hall*. Yet only a few short decades later, during Reconstruction, Chinese were imported to replace and subjugate black labor in the South because of their

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presumed docility and diligence, perhaps the earliest proto-model minority formation and one that would last to modern economic patterns of globalized industrial labor.¹⁵

Out west, where the black-white binary was less crushing, the civil rights of Asians were more directly attacked. The Alien Land Law (1913 and 1920) in California, the best known of the similar state laws, kept Japanese farmers at an economic disadvantage for a generation by forbidding sales or long-term leases of land to aliens ineligible for citizenship, which in turn empowered exclusive unions, professions, and other certifications. The culminating cases of Asian American civil rights in this era were the Japanese American incarceration cases, which failed to strike down racially based confinement, tacitly endorsing perceptions of foreignness and unassimilability, but also ruled that citizens could not be indefinitely held.¹⁶

After the war, the inclusion of Asian Americans, who had also pursued school desegregation cases, in the enforcement of desegregation after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) served as only a run-up to the social inequities of the 1950s on which the authors included in this book reflect. The practice of racially restrictive private covenants, which I revisit briefly in Chapter 2, rose in the 1920s in response to the Great Migration and immigration and lasted in private agreement until 1968, though unenforceable by courts after the 1948 case *Shelley v. Kraemer*, in which a black family in St. Louis ran afoul of a covenant excluding owners of the “Negro or Mongolian race.” Such covenants were typical, aimed in different geographical locations at different races or ethnicities and serving to enforce segregation and further economically disadvantage the excluded group. During this era, individual cases of discrimination and segregation, as with contestations of antimiscegenation law (see Chapter 3), saw intermittent progress or rejection at the state level but ultimately were most often decided at the national level in the late 1960s, as with *Shelley* or *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), in cases that featured African American plaintiffs but included other races in decision or enforcement.¹⁷

The Chinese American community went through large changes and growing pains during the World War II and postwar period, as Xiaojian Zhao has discussed: geographical mobility, new waves of immigration (including more women), family reunification and formation, and political conflict in China, to name a few. The supposed reforms of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, better known as the McCarran-Walter Act, did little to open the gates to entirely new Chinese immigration, but family reunification led to demographic shifts in the community. A paltry one hundred Chinese per year were allowed to immigrate freely, a number including mixed-race individuals and ethnic Chinese of every national origin; the bulk of the immigrating population in this era, unsurprisingly, entered

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through other means, whether as refugees or family members (who did not count toward the quota). Nor did the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 do much to relieve this pressure, though as a federal assessment of the act pointed out, the two thousand dedicated slots for Chinese were ridiculously in excess of those allowed under the 1952 Immigration Act, and three thousand more “Far East” slots were often used for Chinese. However, in comparison with the total of 214,000 aliens allowed by the Refugee Relief Act, and the million refugees in Hong Kong, it was but a small addition. The sympathetic attention paid to Chinese refugees was likewise proportional, as most of the dialogue focused on different situations in Eastern European countries and the growth of communism in Europe, also addressed by the Displaced Persons Act, which focused on Europe but allowed Chinese students stranded in the United States to officially claim asylum.¹⁸

My focus is not on the numbers, though those provide important context, but on the construction of narratives that could support either the government crackdown or the better assimilation and acceptance of Chinese Americans in U.S. society, particularly as a U.S.-born generation began to burst Chinatown’s boundaries and demand housing, economic opportunity, social acceptance, and even interracial marriage. The struggle around immigration and this personal and community identity formation took place in part on the page, where writers struggled to reconcile the demands of family and community with those of self and state. Political discussion of the decade focused on “fraudulent” or “illegal” immigration of Chinese, particularly the reunion of families but also other filings for entry and citizenship immediately before and after immigration reform. What is more, the legal peril of Chinese Americans or any person found guilty of immigrating without proper documentation created lasting fears and silence because this status could never be trumped even by the most model of model minorities.

The Literary Cold War

As difficult as the Chinese American population found this era, the mainstream treatment of Chinese illegal immigration encompassed not only the serious, in news coverage of trials and investigations, but the silly, as in the light-hearted *Flower Drum Song*. Illegal immigration reached the awareness of a solidly middlebrow, well-to-do white U.S. audience in the 1950s through fairly frequent coverage in both media and the arts. Nationally known Chinese American writers, whether engaged in fictional or autobiographical accounts, were working within a quickly shifting but still white-dominated publishing landscape. Almost all of the narratives that made their way to publication adhered to middle-class mores; authors dealt individually with

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the hurdles of manuscript review and editorial intervention, not to mention critical reception. Archives reveal this editing process as a form of censorship (or self-censorship) and expose immigration secrets that authors sought to keep hidden for the sake of the community.

The Cold War U.S. literary landscape was characterized by tremendous overall production, as in other consumer industries, and wavering artistic trends, with the slow descent in reputation of recognized masters such as William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway and the rise of younger, more radical, and increasingly diverse writers such as Ralph Ellison. Work by or about Asian Americans made up a relatively small portion of mass-market publications, though I have written elsewhere about the presence of the Asian in the Cold War imaginary. Only a few works in this era explicitly took on the project of depicting Asian American experience, including genre fiction such as mysteries and a few works of children's fiction. (Notably, a short-lived comic book series, *Yellow Claw*, posited a Chinese Communist supervillain against a Chinese American FBI agent, explicitly making the clash of this book's title manifest.) Chinese American literature was a relatively robust field within Asian American literature at this time, meeting a new interest from a U.S. audience. The first novel about Chinese in San Francisco Chinatown (as opposed to thrillers merely set there) was *When the Living Strive* (1940), by the sociologist Richard LaPiere and his collaborator, Pardee Lowe. (Though the novel appeared only under LaPiere's name, both referred to it in correspondence as "our" novel, and Lowe received 25 percent of the royalties.¹⁹) The novel, a rather clunky tale of a Chinese immigrant who is determined to return to China but accidentally passes his whole life in the United States, was chiefly notable—at least to the *New York Times*—for its novelty, but it paved the way within the publishing industry for more works.

The literature chiefly divides into two main categories, both at least superficially realist: memoirs or nonfiction by transnational elite refugees, such as Helena Kuo and Mai-mai Sze, and a slowly growing roster of memoir and fiction by American-born children of earlier working-class immigrants, such as Jade Snow Wong and Maxine Hong Kingston. Focusing as I do on the topic of illegal immigration, my interest is naturally chiefly in the second category, among which there is strong anxiety over illegality regardless of personal status, which serves to differentiate it all the more strongly from the tales of the Court of St. James from Sze or the Harvard- and Yale-set anecdotes of Buwei Yang Chao and her husband (more famous for the cookbook *How to Cook and Eat in Chinese*).²⁰ There are others who also complicate this neat division, such as the Chinese-born, San Francisco-dwelling C. Y. Lee, stranded by the Chinese Civil War on his U.S. student visa in the late 1940s, who wrote widely about the Chinese diaspora, including Chinese Ameri-

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cans, and Lin Yutang, the most famous of the transnational elite, who felt compelled to write a novel about the Chinese American working class surrounding him in New York, also drawing on the sociological work of U.S.-born Pardee Lowe. I therefore look at works by a diverse set of Chinese American authors that treat the important topic of illegal or falsely documented immigration, though this list skews toward the U.S.-born.²¹

The literary output of U.S.-born Chinese Americans in this era was mostly memoir or so-called sociological (which I do not use as a negative, though many critics have) fiction that bears a heavy burden of storytelling through the vehicle of the family. Asian American life writing has been well studied, as by Rocío Davis, who postulates family stories as a mode of conveying a psychological journey: “The history of Asian American life writing, because of the imperative to explain or understand immigrant cultures (for oneself and mainstream America), very often privileges the intersection of generational and cultural issues, focusing very specifically on family stories.”²² The telling of family stories turns into a political journey that informs the psychological. In what I refer to as the *reconciliation plot*—an Asian American play on the marriage plot—the protagonist’s union with the body politic or the mainstream culture is typically effected through an eloquent pronouncement or some vivid bicultural tableau in order to create a sense of a happy ending. Because so many of these books for the most part aim at a mainstream middle-class audience, it is unsurprising that they adhere to a positive narrative of American belonging, but as we shall see, the reconciliation plot only thinly papers over the ruptures and difficulties of immigration that threaten to surface.

This trend aligns with a period in which best-selling white American literature followed a trend of exposing the drama behind happy family formations nationwide, in regionalist works (all made into films) such as the soap operatic *Peyton Place* (1956), set in a New England town seething with rape, murder, and class rifts; *Marjorie Morningstar* (1955) and its unhappily assimilating New York Jewish eponymous heroine; or *The View from Pompey’s Head* (1954), by Jade Snow Wong’s friend and champion Hamilton Basso, featuring a Southern returnee to a society rife with race and class prejudice. Such novels pointed fingers at the hypocrisy and familial breakdown in postwar American society but usually ended by confirming social formations, particularly white heterosexual procreative marriage. Stalwarts such as Faulkner, James Agee, and Conrad Richter likewise meditated on the breakdown of the family in this era of change, while the dawn of the Beats and the rise of a new generation of African American writers marked a willingness to challenge the social status quo. Chinese American literature understandably, as a new entry into the market, hews more closely in form and content to the mass-market mainstream, similar to the perfect happy

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families on the television shows that took off toward the end of the decade. However, this does not mean that the literature refrains from critique or transformation of the symbolic power of the family, especially as social mores shift over time. Instead, Chinese American literature betrays an increasingly critical attitude toward the literary construction and portrayal of these families.

This book's heterogeneous group of Chinese American writers—both sexes, both coasts, with different political and social views—obviously houses many political vantage points on the issue of illegal immigration, an anxiety that manifests differently. Yet, as Wu and Christina Klein have theorized about the Asian domestic and cultural presence, and Ali Behdad has theorized more generally about the American relationship with foreigners, while Asians benefited from racial-liberalist theories of assimilation and a narrative of progress, their work to earn citizenship and inclusion contrasts forcefully with those whose native Americanness was unquestioned. That work and the effort of depicting that work cuts across political differences, manifesting in all of the works that I examine. The dichotomy of foreigner and native or American and Asian is complicated by “good”/“bad” and legal/illegal immigrant, increasing the pressures of self-depiction for Chinese Americans, among others.²³

Juxtaposed against the Chinese American literary archive, which in the 1950s reveals caution, erasure, concealment, and revision, I posit the political and legal framework of the 1950s, which demands exposure, confession, and revelation. Within a strikingly short period of time, the changes wrought by the 1965 immigration reforms and growing ethnic nationalist movements allowed younger authors and public historians to start to work within a narrative of memorialization and celebration instead, though one still fraught by the lingering trauma of decades of scrutiny and secrecy. The lack of a homogeneous politics among these writers may, at first, seem to undercut my attempt to understand the stigma of illegal immigration as a site of artistic production. However, that heterogeneity is, as Lisa Lowe set forth, a paradigmatic aspect of Asian American culture, particularly in the testimony of individuals who critique the lack of inclusion or the deception of inclusive ideologies.²⁴ The confusion of testimony, in the Cold War era, works against the liberal individualism and multiculturalism described by Klein; it is a particularly fraught concept for Chinese America, racked by decades of interrogation.

The Asian American Archive

In another sense, this project takes up the Asian American archive as its primary focus, from the voice of Benjamin Gim, the first Asian American

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lawyer to be lead counsel on a case in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, to the correspondence and drafts of Maxine Hong Kingston. The archival work that I perform is essential to understand the shaping of both official narratives and individuals' voices. The tragic story of Ly Shew, a cook in Chinatown, might have been lost to history if not for his entanglement in the immigration crackdown of the 1950s, and still can be found only at the nexus of lower court opinions, small newspaper mentions in local papers (both Chinese American and mainstream), and a few scattered legal documents. As I outline it in Chapter 1, Ly's story and that of his family illuminate the efficacy and persuasion of narrative, as his fate was left in the hands of judges adhering slavishly to a prevailing narrative of fraud, and his legal and public defenses proved to be too little, too late. These historical narratives are essential to understanding the definition of racial, ethnic, and legal categories in this era, just as the conversations between writers and editors or adapters demonstrate the pressures and limitations of artistic production.

In considering the Asian American archive, I am thinking not solely of a body of texts for study but also of the more institutional definitions of archive, a gathering of documents that establish legal and political authority or a place in which materials of historical and cultural value are gathered for future generations to study. Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown, librarians themselves, argue for the genealogy and importance of archives as bulwarks of modernity, tied intimately and institutionally to the rise of the nation-state. Their argument, based on Benedict Anderson's characterization of the nation as an imagined community centered on certain common cultural materials—a daily newspaper or, as in the Browns' focus, an archive—stakes out an explicitly conservative origin for archives as sources of "social stability and solidarity," deliberately excluding certain narratives from the nation, which now struggle to create new knowledge, as well. Jacques Derrida's theorization of the originary archive as a body of state papers that not only constitutes order but also hermeneutic power (to interpret and then to enforce) gives an even more abstract and absolute notion of the linkage between authority and the archive. The turn toward a more subjective view of history as a constructed narrative and the understanding of representation rather than truth as a prevailing mode of understanding the world have, in turn, the Browns argue, undercut the progressive narrative of the archive as a place that charts the large scope of human progress or offers the free access necessary to democratic government. Such an attitude toward the archive as a place of state power and contestation undergirds my study.²⁵

Indeed, it could hardly not, as Asian American voices so often become difficult to retrieve from the writings of officialdom. Gayatri Spivak warns

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us of the impossibility of retrieving a lost subjectivity from the archive in her examination of one rani “caught in the cracks between the production of the [British Raj] archives and indigenous patriarchy, today distanced by the waves of hegemonic feminism.” Nonetheless, “The account of her representation is enough for the book. To retrieve her as information will be no disciplinary triumph. . . . [T]here is no ‘real Rani’ to be found.” Facing a similar lack in the official archive, I must focus this study on the writings of public figures instead, who have some few archives preserved, though I do also try to highlight other stories retrieved from legal cases and newspapers. In line with Spivak’s warning, perhaps there is no real Ly Shew to be found, but the archive allows us to make our last, best attempt at resurrecting such stories in order to complicate our understanding.²⁶

The well-theorized call to “queer” the archive, to put an evasive, lost, and missing archive in conversation with the preserved archive in order to recontest the definitions of gender, sexuality, and sex, as well as to find archives of queer experience, serves as a useful model to understand how the preservation and reclamation of an Asian American archive may operate twofold to recontextualize racialization, immigration, and the structures of surveillance and juridical power during the Cold War. Furthermore, the queering of an archive demands that we consider just how broad and yet how biased the archive is that controls the definition of such broad terms as “sex” and “gender.”²⁷ In this book, I interrogate how the archive has constituted the categories of Chinese/Chinese American, immigrant, and illegality/fraudulence. We must look to as broad an archive as possible in order to fully understand the construction of these conceptions. Here, I look across media, the literary archive, and legal and other governmental documents and statements, seeking to contextualize the construction of Chinese Americans as inherently fraudulent and illegitimate and, in opposition, as exemplary and exceptional. At the same time, I attempt to reconstitute an Asian American archive of that process.

As important as legal and historical work is to this volume and to the Chinese American authors who signify on the historical record (in the spirit of Henry Louis Gates’s signifyin[g]), I want to focus for a moment on the Asian American *literary* archival research that I perform extensively here, looking at authors’ papers and their less-well-known or all-but-unknown works, from C. Y. Lee’s other novels to Maxine Hong Kingston’s essays. By including *Flower Drum Song* and white editors’ and collaborators’ voices, I am inherently adhering to those who eschew authorial ethnic/racial identity as part of the definition of Asian American literature, but that is not my primary goal. As part of my approach to recovering the author’s relationship to history, *Illegal Immigrants/Model Minorities* delves deep into the available archive with a particular focus on authors’ drafts and correspondence,

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as well as their short (usually periodical) writings, which are much less well known than their novels and memoirs. This gives further voice to these authors, many of whose publication in the mainstream was shaped by white editors and industry pressures; their private papers and drafts serve not as a corrective but as a supplement that allows us to understand how they negotiated and reimagined the categories of Chinese American and immigrant identity in this period.

This type of archival examination is not very common in Asian American studies; expansion of the archive has advanced more vigorously in the crucial directions of microhistory, oral history, digitization, and further ethnic and geographical diversity, often simultaneously. The complications of literary archival work for Asian Americanists are a combination of market forces, copyright issues, geography, and linguistic barriers, all related to a relatively short time frame in which Asian American literature has been recognized as work worthy of collection and preservation. Its relative lack of representation in author collections at major literary archives within the United States speaks to its precarious state; while a few major authors have deposited their papers at universities in California, Asian American literature as yet appears very little in mainstream archival powerhouses such as the Ransom Center and the Library of Congress—both of which I am personally indebted to for their sponsorship of my archival research. Indeed, the Library of Congress's relatively new and very small collection of Asian American individuals' papers, housed in the Asian Division and, at the time of this writing, being reviewed for new placement, raises questions as to the place, quite literally, of Asian America in a national archive.

From the outset of what we might call a field or discipline of Asian American literary study, the archive has always been conceived of as one full of loss and gaps—pyres, even, that reflect the political and physical violence of the racial formation of Asian America. These represent what Derrida might call the death drive of the archive, the “violence of forgetting,” a willful forgetting by a racist and discriminatory society and publishing industry. The story of John Okada's lost second novel, burned by his widow, represents this loss at its most anguished and its most subjugated; Frank Chin and Jeffery Paul Chan used this symbol to substantiate their politicized call for an Asian American literature that reflected their own burning vision of Asian America. The apocryphal tale that they recounted, based on a conversation with Okada's widow, Dorothy, was one of exclusion from the official archive; when Dorothy offered the manuscript to the University of California, Los Angeles, for its collection of Japanese American incarceration papers, the politically opposed project curators supposedly refused and pointedly suggested to Dorothy that she destroy his papers, which she did. As Min Song writes, “Asian American literary studies was partially founded on

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the need to salvage what could be salvaged from this past” of manuscript loss and destruction. I mention this example not to set Asian American literature up as merely a reflection of political occlusions, omissions, and violence. Indeed, as Colleen Lye has noted, given the relative weakness and expansiveness of the Asian American racial formation, literature (and, increasingly, other cultural forms) may well be one of the strongest backbones of Asian America as a political and social entity. It is, however, one in which physical preservation has always been imperiled.²⁸

Literary archival research for this monograph thus has been an almost forensic search online for small collections here and there; through periodicals of the era; publishers’ papers (archived or not); or finding someone who knew and might help me speak to descendants or obtain privately held family papers, in which I was singularly unsuccessful, being perhaps too far personally and geographically removed to forge connections, a failure that speaks to the problems of a lack of preservation and access. What archival theorists have agreed in the past decades is that there is no perfect history to be reconstructed with the aid of archival research. And yet the importance of archival work remains, particularly in discovering the currents of power that have shaped cultural production. Edward Said exhorted us to read the entire “cultural archive . . . not univocally but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts.” Following this behest, in cases where I was not able to find archival documents I nonetheless do my best to read the cultural archive, from the well-known to the all but forgotten, in order to better understand how these productions reflect immigration history.²⁹

The literary archive provides a method for reexamining the narrative construction of Asian America by looking at specific works, as well. The examination of manuscripts and editions has traditionally tended to be a search for the ideal text, the ideal often being characterized by the author’s original or unadulterated intentions. Asian America has been more often in the position of reissuing out-of-print texts than the more privileged one of desiring to reconstruct better versions of them—assuming that the available and preserved manuscripts would even permit such reconstruction. In any case, the pursuit of the ideal text is necessarily a fraught one, and here, as I argue for this group of literary texts, the desire to disentangle author from editor would erase some of the political pressures that irretrievably also made these artists and artistic productions who and what they are. As Richard Jean So writes in his call for more Asian American literary archival work, “Such a method provides some necessary relief to long-standing debates over defining an Asian American aesthetic, and locating authenticity within Asian American literature,” though I would not use the word “relief”

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so much as “complexity.”³⁰ Archival work, in addition to illuminating the material conditions in which a work of literature is produced, illuminates the particular concerns and choices of each author and the dialogue, whether resistant or accommodating, nationalist or assimilationist, that constitute the development of this literature.

In this variant of textual criticism that I employ in looking at drafts, editorial correspondence, and different versions, my goal is not to ascertain the authoritative status of any given version or to uphold authorial intentions as inherently superior, but to look at these writings as historical documentation of the lifelong struggle between secrecy and revelation as inflected by personal and political events—here, related to illegal immigration. (Indeed, because of the paucity of resources, in some cases this literary archive is also a source of biographical and historical information.) My chief concern is instead to ascertain how the Chinese American community in this era stakes its uncertain claim to its own archive—to the ability to narrate and preserve not only individual histories but also wider tales of the community and of Chinese American identity formation. How to do so, then, with few public forebears on whose narrative authority to build and in a political era in which Chinese Americans have such questioned narrative authority? In a time when the authority of family narrative itself is under siege by the government, so that everything from minute details of a house to blood relation itself is considered unreliable by the interlocutor and desperately rehearsed and memorized by the narrator, the archive shows us how Chinese American artists learned to assume their own authority, sometimes from tentative amateur beginnings such as that of Jade Snow Wong, or from a Yale-trained but racially disenfranchised ambition such as that of C. Y. Lee, rebuilt by writing in community newspapers. The anxieties, dissension, and assertions of the archive themselves construct the claiming and reclamation of Chinese American narrative authority.

The archive also allows us to consider an intertextual and dialogic approach to the construction of Asian American literature within a booming midcentury literary industry in which Asian Americans are only newly and fractionally empowered. Asian American literature, which from the anthologizing of the 1970s has reached back to reconstruct a history of the field and the people, signifies, in my thinking, most prominently on the politico-legal texts and mass-media stereotypes that wrote them into being in the first several decades of a substantive Asian American presence (the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century). The narration of Chinese American experience emerges as a blend of literary and historical work for these authors, who in order to explicate ethnic experience for a mainstream audience, necessarily must create, as Davis states of life writing generally, “a significant degree of intersection between the personal and the public, gen-

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erally enacted by the incorporation of substantial historical information—dates, places, names of politicians, descriptions of battles, discussion of ideological commitments, and so on—to supplement the relatives' stories.”³¹ The self-reflexive construction of family history, ethnic history, and personal narrative based on an uncertain archive constitutes the political and literary formation of Asian America in the 1970s and beyond.

Illegal Immigrants/Model Minorities puts published texts, already imbricated with official history, into dialogue with available literary archives and a broad array of historical documentation that are necessary to “queer” the archive that defines race and ethnicity through the immigration process: legal cases, immigration documents, immigration law, political debate, mass-media coverage, and more. By incorporating both but never privileging the official over the personal, this context allows us to see how writers construct stories of self and family or fictional families in relation to the political structures of the nation that are allowing or disallowing their presence, their citizenship, and their blended identity. Far from seeking to undo generations of academic work on the creation of history and narrative, I hope to show yet more of its entanglement on the highly fraught, over-narrated issue of illegal immigration and how Chinese American narrative moves toward an acceptance of the constructedness of history.

The Cold War of Chinese American Narrative

Each of my chapters offers a transhistorical look in miniature, focusing on a particular thematic aspect of the Chinese American negotiation of illegal immigration stigma during part of the Cold War and concluding with a section (“Post-”) that reflects on the later literary transformation and remembrance of those experiences. Chapter 1 lays the foundation of this negotiation in my project as I narrate the intertwining of “Narrative Cold War: Public Faces of Chinese America”: the insistence in government narratives on a community identity of illegal immigration and the constant protest, by the claiming of exemplarity and a solidly American identity, of Chinese American public figures throughout the Cold War. By the mid-1950s, the stigmatization of Chinese America was at its height, and government statements and actions from the famous Drumright Report to the multitude of immigration court cases painted Chinese Americans as inherently fraudulent and foreign, an image that community leaders contested publicly with portrayals of their law-abiding and Americanized lives. Jade Snow Wong’s foundational 1950 memoir serves as one bookend, as her archive exposes her strategic private and public concealment of immigration secrets about her family over the next half-century as a political counterpoint. The battle over the construction of Chinese American identity in the 1950s also ranged

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from nineteenth-century to contemporary race-targeted policies, as government officials and Chinese American leaders and editors contested the history of Chinese America and the claims of Chinese Americans to constitutional rights and protections. I conclude the chapter with Kingston's 1970s meditation on her experiences of suppressed immigration stories, bred by the 1950s Confession era in which she grew up, and her desire to find a way to speak freely of immigration in her experimental memoir. The struggles of the 1950s thus become embedded in both form and content in Chinese American literature, necessitating the reconstruction of Chinese American identity.

Chapter 2, "Happy Families: Modeling the Minority in the Era of Immigration Reform," encompasses perhaps the most important social formation that Chinese American writers could invoke rhetorically in order to defend themselves from the stigma of immigration: the nuclear family. As attacks on family reunification immigration escalated, the nuclear family and the extended family were, at various points, the public face of Chinese America. Government and popular rhetoric in the early 1950s characterized the strength and the non-nuclear structure of the family formation in Chinese and Chinese American society as everything from old-fashioned to pathological, but later in the era, the sociological development of the model minority concept paradoxically espoused Chinatown's kinship and clan structures as its strength. Wong carefully concealed the rifts and "horror and pain" in her own family, all of which threatened her literary construction of a proto-model minority family—a family that must be not only nuclear but happy. Many Chinese American writers were already expressing a more ambivalent attitude toward the supposedly all-powerful nuclear family formation, instead turning to other grounds to stabilize their American identity and image and to redeem the virtue of extended families, clans, bachelor Chinatowns, and, by extension, illegal immigration. I compare the extraordinary cases of two works deliberately revised to include illegal immigration as a plot device by white Americans: first, by the editor Richard Walsh, and in the other, much more popular case, by the foremost musical playwriting duo of their day, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. In the first case, Walsh pushed Lin Yutang to include an explanation of illegal immigration methods in the novel *Chinatown Family*, ultimately composing it himself. In *Flower Drum Song*, Hammerstein and his collaborator Joseph Fields introduced the plot thread of illegal immigration, making reference to its global nature and ultimately creating a cross-racial comparison to Mexican immigration; their unceasing revision reveals the sensitivity of the topic, which they nonetheless used as a key to the understanding of Chinese American culture. The resolutions of both suggest that love and family are, once again, the vehicles of American acceptance, but *Flower*

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Drum Song's politics of confessing and informing leave us in grave doubt as to the price that the community must pay. I conclude by looking at Jade Snow Wong's late-in-life reflections on the hidden stories and subjectivity of her mother, a picture bride, and her mother-in-law, a concubine, written at a political and personal moment when she finally felt free to dwell on other family formations and their surprising happiness.

Turning from family structure to family ties, Chapter 3, "Blood Tells: The Attack on Chinese American Family Ties," discusses how Chinese Americans have uniquely labored under intersecting judicial and immigration attacks on marital and blood relationships. I commence by discussing *The Woman Warrior* and *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, with their concern about illegitimacy and bastardy, as responses to the policing of paternity of "paper sons." In the early 1950s, the INS went as far as to require blood tests to verify paternity of entering Chinese immigrants, though even then some officials saw matching tests as proof of collusion, thereby undermining any evidence of family connection. However, the rise of literary depictions of interracial sexual intimacy and even intermarriage in this era starkly contrast with stories of all-Chinese American families. I reread the historical case of *Naim v. Naim* (1955) to show how immigration difficulties were inextricable from the social pressures of interracial marriage, a problem that C. Y. Lee adapts in his dark early works set in a multiracial, multiethnic San Francisco. *Lover's Point* (1958), the little-known follow-up to *The Flower Drum Song*, argues for love and understanding between Chinese American and Japanese American protagonists caught in a common immigration tragedy of overseas marriage and unhappy war bride marriages. The figure of the mixed-race child, in Lee's and Kingston's works, haunts the protagonists as proof of their inability to fully enter U.S. society. These conflicting drives for racial purity and fears of illegitimate, mixed-race, or illegally married families show how the nuclear family ideal was held out of reach by immigration and discriminatory domestic policies and social pressures. However, I conclude by considering the lighter, more optimistic narratives that appear after *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) struck down anti-miscegenation laws nationwide. Lee's late work *The Land of the Golden Mountain* (1967) and Kingston's famous ending to *The Woman Warrior* use the reconciliation plot to suggest that Chinese Americans may find a way to reconcile or translate themselves to the nation.

Finally, Chapter 4, "History, through Literature: Rewriting the Past after the Confession Era," delves into the reclamation of authority over documentary and legal history in Chinese American writing, particularly examining Wong's and Kingston's works in the context of the later Cold War. The legacy of debate over the uses of history can best be seen in the public controversy evoked by Kingston's claim of ignorance of her parents' immigration

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history in *The Woman Warrior*, which impels her literary journey to find stories that tell her origin. I contrast the orientalist delight taken in this secrecy by high-profile mainstream reviews with the anger from other Chinese American writers who found Kingston's ignorance implausible, at best, arguing for an unbroken line of historical transmission. While Kingston's assertions about silence and the need to reestablish family histories seemed to prevail within the Chinese American community, over time she herself both developed and embraced a more creative attitude toward history. By the mid-1970s, amid the rise of ethnic activism and nationalism, Wong and Kingston had both returned to questioning and probing documentary history, using the newly memorialized history of Angel Island and Chinese American immigration flexibly to inspire and politicize family stories, radicalizing what had previously been narratives of exemplarity. Kingston's manuscripts reveal how she split a more celebratory historical narrative off to become the short historical section in *China Men* while reserving a withering critique for Arnold Genthe's supposedly neutral documentation of turn-of-the-century Chinatown. Looking at Kingston's and Wong's last (to date, for Kingston) works, written after the Cold War, I conclude that they fully demonstrate to the reader that the archive inspires but no longer holds authority as a repository of "pure" or truthful history.

In the Epilogue, "The Failure of the Model Minority Narrative?" I end and enlarge this study—admittedly, somewhat bleakly—by looking at the ways that these narratives, particularly the pressures for undocumented immigrants to become exemplary, resurface in our contemporary political discourse. However, the unceasing attacks on even the most exemplary political figures suggest that our era of divisive debate about undocumented migration and refugeeism has undercut even the dubious power of the model minority to protect. Looking at contemporary literature, Ha Jin offers us an equally profound critique of the model minority image to protect from the greatest enemy of all: one's own emotional insecurities as an immigrant. The literature may, I suggest, at least serve as a road to better understanding the narratives and strategies of communities afflicted by the racialized stigma of "illegal" immigration, even as the model minority defense plainly fails in political efficacy in our own time.

The shift that Chinese America made over the course of the Cold War was nothing short of extraordinary; the postwar transition as China's "fall" to communism turned it from World War ally into new Cold War enemy was itself a huge shift in identity formation, as was the liberalization of Asian immigration that slowly occurred throughout the 1950s, culminating in the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act permitting Asian migrants, including my parents, to enter the country in numbers never before seen. Chinese America literally wrote itself into being in this era, authors grasp-

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ing the authority to create their narratives in the literary sphere to speak of and for the growing and diversifying population in the nation. The stakes of recovering this literature of illegal immigration is in the uncovering of our own critical and narrative biases, which post-1965 continue to be shaped by political pressures of normalization and Americanization. But importantly, we must also resituate the construction of ethnic literary narrative within the tangle of judicial, legislative, and popular narration about immigration that continues to shape the fates of many communities today.