INTRODUCTION

Warring Genealogies

Oh mighty man of war
How we tether
together
I know you make a fool of me forever

—Thao & the Get Down Stay Down

On July 25, 1950—just a month into the Korean War—Ezekiel Gandara of Lincoln, Nebraska, arrived in Pusan, Korea. The young Mexican American army engineer, like many after the Incheon landing in September 1950, was eager to return home, back to his family for Christmas: “You take a 17-year-old kid and tell him that and that’s the best thing that’s going to happen to him. It didn’t happen.” He was instead posted on burial detail, not to return home until 1952. While on burial detail, he encountered an elderly couple in a run-down hut who had frozen to death. “We called them mamasan and papasan,” he narrates. Gandara dug their grave, difficult in that frozen ground, and buried them. “I’ve often thought to myself,” Gandara recalls, “they’re somebody’s mother, father, grandma, grandpa, brother, sister. Did they ever find them? . . . Did anyone ever find them?” As far as Gandara knows, his recitation of their imagined kin is what remains of their family story. While strangers, his burial and half-century-long mourning of the elders, and his 2001 interview ruminating on whether they were ever found, routes complex transnational kinship affiliations.

The following spring, on April 27, 1951, an Associated Press photographer captured a Confederate flag waving from the tent of SFC Eugene Bursi, of Memphis, Tennessee (fig. 1.1). For those who could claim blood descent, the United Daughters of the Confederacy would confer the Korean Conflict Cross of Military Service, itself fashioned after that flag. The Daughters, pedigreed in the Confederacy, thus sought to secure a settler genealogy of “a nation that rose so pure and white.” All the while, U.S. military personnel such as PFC
Gandara and others—Latino, Black, Indigenous, and Asian—would encounter the sharp, familiar paradox of risking their lives for democracy abroad, even as by “a special act of Congress, the Fifth Maryland Regiment flies the Confederate flag” in Korea. How do we understand these racialized narratives and racializing events emerging from the Korean War? And in what ways does this war, and knowledge production about it, impact how the United States leveraged race and kinship for Cold War expansion? Navigating the contradictions of a nominally integrated U.S. military, Mexican American soldiers like Gandara identified considerations of kinship that questioned the violence implicit in maintaining and reproducing the white nuclear family.

These stories—which I provisionally frame here as family stories of the Korean War, unorthodox as they may appear—only become stranger in the following years, making unfamiliar the presumed logics of kinship. In the summer of 1954, the year following a ceasefire that ended combat but not the war, prisoners of Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary in Kansas adopted by proxy a Korean boy named Bok Nam Om and documented their mail-order

Figure I.1 In Korea on April 27, 1951. (Courtesy of AP Images)
adoption in Leavenworth’s prison magazine, *The New Era*. The prisoners’ efforts to claim kinship with Bok Nam Om, however, are underwritten by their attempts in 1950 to leverage the Korean War for their release from the penitentiary, to send “Americans, your own flesh and blood,” to the war, in place of racially suspect “Asiatics: Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos [sic].” And the prisoners did mean blood, quite literally, as they participated—voluntarily or not—in Red Cross blood drives throughout the Korean War, blood that both the Red Cross and U.S. military segregated by race. Even as the white prisoners mobilized the Korean War to access conditional belonging to the national family, Chicano veterans negotiated the return to a racially segregated United States by writing literature that imagined Asia as an alternative space for building kinships. Both the white prisoners’ carceral participation in the Cold War U.S. phenomenon of proxy adoptions and the formation of transpacific kinships in Chicana/o literature devise unlikely kinships from the Korean War.

Such narratives, as family stories, compose subterranean archives of Korean War knowledge productions that reshape our understanding of the war’s profound, and often underacknowledged, impact. The Korean War has interrupted our senses of kinship, crafting it into a series of proxies: familial, epistemological, spatial. I argue in *Warring Genealogies* that proxy kinships, emerging from literary, cultural, and archival texts, critically recast hegemonic formulations of kinship in the wake of the war. While the memorialization of the war in archives, monuments, and dominant historiography asserts exclusive imperatives of who constitutes the national family, Chicano veterans and Korean diasporic writers refashion kinship through critiques and queer mobilizations of knowledge production. Especially within the context of the military as renewing itself toward progress rather than dismantling the U.S. military as an apparatus engineered for imperial outputs, understanding the extant queer imaginaries of the Korean War offers a challenge against discourses of homonationalist incorporations of the war. How might the configuration of the Korean War as a queer formation unsettle the war’s conscription into familiar nationalist rehearsals?

Within Chicano cultural production, for instance, I deliberate on the figuration of East Asia as spatial proxy for kin making. Reconsidering Ramón Saldívar’s 1990 reading of Rolando Hinojosa’s work, which situates Korea and Japan as proxies for South Texas, I trace the multiple proxies emerging from Chicano/a cultural production about the Korean War. In doing so, the theoretical implications for Chicana/o studies and the Cold War become apparent: Chicano subjects in the Korean War are themselves selectively figured by the state as a proxy for racial inclusion in the U.S. military, which necessitates
tactics of refusal to be known, culminating in racial and national disaffiliations. Such refusals to sanction U.S. Cold War imperatives in the Chicano/a works, operating in direct contrast to comprehensive knowledge claims, offer critical affiliations and distinctly nonlinear temporalities of the Korean War. Among the affiliations, one of the most significant includes historical imaginings of kinship that glimpse transformations of cultural and epistemological possibility beyond Cold War limitations.

_Warring Genealogies_ examines the elaboration of kinships between Chicano/a and Asian American cultural production, between white penitentiary prisoners and the Korean proxy adoptee, and between the United Daughters of the Confederacy and their acts of memorializing Confederate veterans of the Korean War. By considering white supremacist expressions of kinship—in prison magazines, memorials, U.S. military songbooks—to critiques of such expressions in Chicana/o and Korean diasporic works about the war through poetry, plays, and novels, this book conceptualizes racialized formations of kinship emerging from the Korean War as a problem of knowledge. The cultural texts’ reflections on kinship theorize entwined formations of genealogy and knowledge production as central preoccupations of the unended Korean War. Attempts to manage the violence of hegemonic familial relationships obscure the possibilities of understanding the Korean War as integral to ongoing anxieties about race and kinship. Indeed, the contemporary resurgence of explicitly white supremacist imperatives of kinship coalesces through transnational relationships with militarized empire, even as alternative kinships challenging white supremacy emerge through such U.S. imperial actions.

Decolonization, Racial Intelligence, and Cold War Politics of Knowledge

A normative Cold War politics of knowledge, disciplined into area studies and history in the U.S. academy, scripts not only a singular understanding of the Cold War but also the very questions that could be posed to confront the limits of Western liberal governance. In this dominant emplotment, rehearsals on the Korean War go like this, with the marginalized undercurrents of the war parenthetically responding to the normative U.S. Cold War script:

The United States liberated Korea from Japanese colonialism in August 1945

_(even as the terms of the 1905 Taft-Katsura agreement negotiated Japanese control of Korea in exchange for U.S. access to the Philippines.)_
The United States established military governance in September 1945 to help Koreans learn democracy

(a contradictory “decolonization through military occupation”5 undercutting a transitional People’s Republic of Korea, which by September 1945 had “drafted a radically democratic constitution.”6)

The North Koreans made war on an innocent South Korea on June 25, 1950, inaugurating the Korean War

(coversing over guerilla warfare and U.S.-sanctioned anticommunist massacres as early as 1948, when war had already begun.)

And the heroic efforts of U.S. and UN forces brought an end to the Korean War on July 27, 1953.

(The war remains unended.)

The continuance of this emplotment, echoed in U.S. national memory through an indefinable yet unequivocal defense of South Korea from communism, suggests an epistemological forfeit. This emplotment requires diminishing the multivalent complexities of race wars, from the “heterogeneity of the Asia-Pacific War(s)”7 to the Cold War representational deployment of U.S. racial equality. This emplotment requires an unquestioned conviction in linear progression, an orderly timeline that has been “securitized, with the risks unevenly distributed” on the deferred decolonization of the peninsula.8 More broadly, it requires an unwavering fidelity to the nation’s monopoly on historical authenticity.

The Korean War itself, as a problem of knowledge, contends with unsanctioned memories yielding incompatible genealogies. The origin story of the war in U.S. historiography opens with a conflict—the North Korean attack on South Korea on the hot, hot day of June 25, 1950. This origin story unfolds in the hardships endured by GIs, the tedious gains and losses of territory for three years, the firm belief that the boys, as they say, will be home in time for Christmas.9 This origin story is insistently cycled in dominant U.S. discourse, if noted at all, as a war that saved South Korea from the perils of communism. This origin story unequivocally locates the beginnings of the war in the North Korean attack on South Korea on June 25, 1950. This origin story simultaneously reifies and erases the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea, from 1945 to 1948—reifies, because the United States capitalized on the symbolic value of “liberating” Korea from Japanese colonialism in 1945, and erases, because of the military government’s status as yet another occupying force in the peninsula, despite the demonstrated predictability of the U.S.
disavowal as itself an imperial power. This origin story represses the long history of anticolonial resistance against Japan, evacuates the complex struggles by Korean peoples to determine their own governance, underplays global decolonization movements, and selectively memorializes June 25, 1950, as the day North Korea attacked. This selective, temporal memorialization, rather like an image, excludes anything exceeding its frame—other dates, other times, other possibilities for explaining who, when.

Scholars working at the interdisciplinary intersections of ethnic studies, gender and sexuality studies, and transpacific critique have established the Korean peninsula’s suspended decolonial condition as provisioning the durability of the global Cold War’s afterlives. Such scholarship composes a growing body of vital critique on the Korean War, challenging continual reproductions of nationalized knowledge formations that are governed by Cold War ideological and disciplinary logics. U.S. Cold War historiography situates the United States as architects of democracy, equality, and freedom, positioned to accommodate difference and inaugurate official antiracism, the very necessity for which emerged as a condition for post–World War II U.S. global ascendency. Jodi Melamed observes the epistemic continuity of white supremacy in the state’s transition to a nonredistributive antiracism, “making the constitution of modernity as much a knowledge-based racial project as it was an economically and politically based one.” I present below two related instances of the Korean War as a project of racial intelligence, codified within nationalist Cold War frameworks to “achieve white supremacist outcomes.”

The first is Melinda Pash’s In the Shadow of the Greatest Generation: The Americans Who Fought the Korean War (2012), a narrative history in which she writes, “Americans today still grapple to make sense of this abbreviated, limited, half-won conflict that became the first hot war of the Cold War.” For whom is this war half won? For the millions of Korean refugees, civilian casualties, and diasporic subjects, in what temporality is the war abbreviated? And in whose sensibility is the war limited, when as early as 1948, the U.S. Army Military Government “encouraged scorched-earth policy” in its anticommunist suppression of the April 4 Cheju Uprising? To be sure, Pash identifies important white supremacist perspectives—such as Corporal Clyde Queen’s exclamation in September 1950, “Those Gooks! They’re not even part human!”—yet continues on to explain that “South Korean civilians looked so much like North Korean adversaries that it could be difficult to tell the difference.”

Contextualized within the U.S. Air Force’s indiscriminate carpet-bombing of the peninsula, “it could be difficult to tell the difference” offers multiple readings. The immediate reading absolves the mass killing of Korean civilians by aerial warfare, implicitly sanctioning a militarized genealogy of U.S. aerial
warfare from the Korean War through the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Another reading evokes the U.S. orientalist history of racial knowing, from William Elliot Griffis’s *Corea, the Hermit Nation* (1882), to the 1941 *Life* article “How to Tell Japs from Chinese,” to the Korean body’s “capacity for veracity,” for truth telling and self-governance as measured by U.S. military lie-detector experiments, by turns classifying the knowability or inscrutability of “Oriental” bodies. The white supremacist difficulty of grasping complex difference is telling indeed. At issue is not whether white supremacist structures can index with more precision but rather the accepted narratives generated to obscure and absolve culpability while ensuring white supremacy’s continuance, a protraction of the Western liberal epistemic violence anchoring what Lisa Lowe observes as an “economy of affirmation and forgetting.”

Likewise, the knowledge-based racial project of the Center for the Study of the Korean War, located in Independence, Missouri, coordinates epistemic reinforcements of Cold War modernity. The center was founded by Paul Edwards, a Korean War veteran and prolific author on the subject of the war. While my chapter 4 considers the center itself in more detail, I examine here Edwards’s 2018 book, *The Mistaken History of the Korean War: What We Got Wrong Then and Now*. As the title suggests, the book’s focus is provisioning a corrective to the mistaken and the wrong. One of the infrastructural challenges Edwards identifies for getting it right occurs in the educational system, which has fallen “under the influence of publicly accepted social sciences, ethnic studies, [and] sensitive history.” Offering no understanding of ethnic studies as a field of knowledge, Edwards attributes the problem of the Korean War’s mistaken history to the “emergence of gender consciousness, labor studies, racial and ethnic considerations . . . and a whole range of ‘specialists’ [that] have left little time and less money for considerations of the military.” This pedagogical parallel universe, in which critical intellectual thought centering gender, labor, and race is very well funded at the expense of the military, repeats logics of the late twentieth-century culture wars and indicates their rehearsals in moments of crises.

Edwards recommends a solution to this grievance, a recourse to the educational victimhood of military history posed by critiques from gender, labor, and ethnic studies: “If we are not going to teach military history in our educational system, then it may well be time to reinstate the draft, to reenact a selective service agency that organizes conscription and the reintroduction of the citizen soldier. There are a lot of good reasons for reconsidering this.” The corrective to the mistaken history of the Korean War is not critical inquiry but the institutional resurrection of the militarized logics and procedures that themselves organized the conditions for the Korean War. My intent here is
not a simple dismissal of such claims, bewildering as they may appear. Rather, by elaborating on two recent scholarly texts on the Korean War, I seek to contextualize the epistemological tenor established by liberal nationalist frameworks. The Cold War politics of knowledge generate racial anxieties about the war, preoccupied with sustaining an unmarked whiteness in U.S. liberal knowledge production and in treating Korean War discourse as the nation’s property.

Pash’s unintentionally suggestive phrase excusing the U.S. military’s bombing of Korean civilians (“it could be difficult to tell the difference”) offers another perspective with broader epistemic possibility for Korean War knowledge production as a project of racial formation. Telling the difference, in the mode of distinguishing, is a racial project. The difficulty in telling the difference, in the mode of historical recounting, is a racial project. And not being told at all, to live burdened by what Grace Cho has described as the “process of nurturing a ghost through shame and secrecy,” is a racial project. In the context of empirical and evidentiary methodologies, Avery Gordon asks: “How can we tell the difference between one story and another’s? It will all hinge, as we shall see, on that double modality of telling—to recount and to distinguish.” So how telling is this observation from Edwards? “A significant number of Korean [War] veterans did not tell their wives or children that they had been in Korea. Of the populations that visit the Center for the Study of the Korean War over a year’s time, much of it is made up of older women and teenage children who, on their husbands’ and fathers’ deaths, had just learned they served in Korea.” The possibility for radical Korean War knowledge production, conscious of, critical of its tethering to U.S. Cold War politics of knowledge, dwells at the thresholds of epistemology, genealogy, and kinship.

Epistemological Proxemics: Studying Queer Proximities

Warring Genealogies considers the historically specific and culturally articulated interplays among race, kinship, and genealogy during the Korean War as epistemological concerns. The Korean War, obscured within academic and popular discourses, continues to function as epistemological proxy “in language nonidentical with itself”: as a precursor to the Vietnam War in occasional U.S. history classes, as an antecedent to the buildup of the U.S. security and counterintelligence apparatus, as an unended war to endless wars, and perhaps most visibly in the peninsular manifestation of a Cold War binary—capitalist, communist. Such epistemological adjacencies further obscure the disciplinary quandaries constructed around the Korean War. Critical scholarship has theorized an apparent inscrutable quality of the Korean War, described by Jodi
Kim as an epistemological conundrum, by Daniel Kim as a kind of translation, by Roderick Ferguson as inhabiting a ghostly nature, and by Crystal Parikh as presenting an “incommensurability of any analogizing.” Attending to such epistemological tension about the war brushes up against area studies imperatives to perpetuate bifurcated Cold War logics. Critical memory practices and cultural studies methods pose a continual defiance to the Cold War narrative affixed to U.S. security rationales. This book takes as a central concern the preoccupation with controlling knowledge production and traces the history of U.S. knowledge production about Korea, as well as the material sites of archival knowledge production about the Korean War. In particular, the book contends with disciplinary limits that isolate and assert singular histories presented as neutral arbiters rather than as situated in political particularities. This contention, at heart, questions disciplined epistemologies that obstruct thinking across the boundaries of what can be known.

The epistemological conundrum of the Korean War composes Cold War anxieties about knowledge production, which convene empiricist modalities as ideologically untouched. A rearticulation of epistemology, then, departs from the Cold War paradox concerning the simultaneously replete and empty characterization of usable knowledge against racialized enemies of the state and moves toward what José Esteban Muñoz conceptualizes as an “epistemologically and ontologically humble” queer hermeneutic. Such a queer hermeneutic defamiliarizes privileged sites of Cold War inquiry and attends to the ephemeral, which “does not rest on epistemological foundations but is instead interested in following traces, glimmers, residues, and specks of things” otherwise made incomprehensible, whether in a state archive, a static methodology, or an inventory of nationalist history. In upending Cold War historiography’s gravitational will toward the possessive corrective of the Korean War, queer critique’s intervention animates the war’s multiplicities and “permits the tracing of U.S. militarism’s racially queer genealogy in Asia and the Pacific.” How might the Korean War be considered otherwise, if configured through a queer of color critique? And how might the Korean War as queer formation extricate from the homonationalist reproduction of gay incorporation and selective endowment of cultural citizenship into the state’s liberal regime?

An assimilationist project of Cold War historiography’s possessive corrective could be demonstrated in Pash’s book, which presents the inclusion of gay men to the narrative history of the Korean War:

In addition to cigarettes and liquor, some men in the war theater found love or something like it. Especially for gay men, who faced persecution and suspicion back in the States, Korea and Japan provided the
opportunity for both openness and fulfillment. . . . Indeed, most homosexuals found commanders more than willing to look the other way so long as they performed well on the job. In the zone, one “could be as open as you wanted to be” and there existed little pressure to act straight. Gay men stationed in Japan frequented gay bars there, but willing partners turned up elsewhere as well. Straight men in Korea, Japan, and aboard ship courted homosexuals when women were in short supply or likely to be infected with venereal diseases and when they needed sex but could not endure the thought of being unfaithful to their wives with another woman. In general, gays found serving overseas a refreshing experience, free of some of the fear and repression they suffered at home.33

The presentation of this narrative history functions in remarkable tandem to bolster “homonationalism”—structures constituted of juridical, legislative, political, and other entities that strategically enlist and selectively endow homosexual cultural citizenship in service of U.S. national security interests.34 The scenic violence of nostalgia scripted above, colored with cigarettes, liquor, and “love or something like it,” storyboards an egalitarian promise of (presumably white) sexual fulfillment without its liberal contradictions. At issue is not the narratives themselves but rather their representational deployment of sexual freedom that obscures contextual materiality: the profound destruction of the Korean War, as well as the conditions that ensure homophobic “fear and repression” back home.

What disallows this Korean War historical narrative from inquiring “what kinds of emancipation are being generated in and through sexuality?”35 The emphasis on the “openness and fulfillment” of deracinated gay inclusion in racialized systems of destruction operates to exclude radical queer visions to dismantle such structures of militarized violence. Rather than cruising utopia, a war of profound destructive magnitude is scripted into “a refreshing experience,” an occasion for “aboard ship” cruising. It serves as liberal narrative precursor to the U.S. military’s inclusion of gays and lesbians prior to “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and its repeal and anticipates the U.S. military’s weaponization of homophobia as rationale for military intervention in postsocialist regions and across the Middle East.36 Enlisting “homosexuals” as proxy, “when women were in short supply,” for both wives and “another woman,” disengages from the misogynist operations of the U.S. military, which furthermore understands women as vectors “likely to be infected with venereal diseases.”

Such Cold War narrative histories place in unlikely proximity the Korean War “liberation” of both Koreans and gay U.S. military personnel. And per-
haps what it reveals in this Korean War context is an accidental acknowledgment that, despite how the U.S. nuclear family is posited as a normative aspiration, its very engineering and social reproduction has always been “queer.” Returning to Muñoz’s queer hermeneutic, this book asks: How do these proximities upend reproductions of patriarchal kinship structures and Cold War knowledge formations? In what ways do such warring genealogies affiliate with queer genealogies? What might facilitate the destabilizing of structures that render unthinkable queer knowledge productions of the Korean War? And what entanglements produce the queerness of the Korean War? I suggest that Chicano/a literature, in its engagements with race and kinship in the Korean War, theorizes queer temporalities of the war.

Scholarship in critical fields of inquiry has traced the Cold War and neoliberal university’s incorporation of the radical political desires of differentially positioned social movements into such disciplines and fields as ethnic studies to manage, order, integrate, secure, and rule subjects marked as unruly. Tethered through Cold War militarization in Southeast Asia, Asian American studies and Chicana/o studies function as familiar strangers that share historical moments of formation. Activating a convergence of the fields reveals insights about forgetting, incorporation, and coalition. The Chicano/a cultural production I examine in chapters 2 and 3, which includes works by Rolando Hinojosa, Luis Valdez, Rosaura Sánchez, and Tomás Rivera, compellingly theorizes the paradoxical problem of the forgotten Korean War, presenting the war in a series of absences, unknowns, and proxies. The importance of working through unknowns in Chicano/a cultural production operates partially in the refusal of empiricist Cold War logics. Also significant, however, are the discourses animating Chicano/a studies as a field, in particular the vulnerabilities presented in the perception of the field as being forgotten. Rather than insist upon a definitive conclusion, the Chicano/a cultural texts I examine instead meditate, through representations of kinships, queer temporalities that refuse to anticipate closure, remarkably mirroring the unended status of the Korean War itself.

Chicana/o literary scholars, from Rosaura Sánchez to Ramón Saldívar to José Limón, have argued how Chicano/a cultural production about the Korean War has particularized the contradictions undergirding Cold War racial operations. Inspired by their debates, I suggest that Chicano/a cultural production refuses to authorize nationalist impulses that seek to affix the Korean War within Cold War area studies logics. In distinct contrast to area studies imperatives to master knowledge about racialized subjectivities, the formally diverse and genealogically subversive Chicano/a cultural works I examine cast the Korean War as a series of unknowns—family members missing in action,
the possibility of children fathered by GIs, the deeply unsettling uncertainty about why the war is happening and so relentlessly impacting Chicana/o communities. The conceptualization of an “epistemologically and ontologically humble” queer hermeneutic, in relation to Chicano/a writings about kinship in Korea, destabilizes Cold War knowledge production. Queer, multiracial kinships offer gorgeously disruptive modes for undoing normative parameters of family, expanding ideas for not knowing who is kin, gesturing toward a relatedness and sociality that requires interdependent material care. In his study of the family in Chicano/a cultural politics, Richard T. Rodríguez theorizes the uneven and at times contradictory mobilizations of family, reflecting a “desire to conjoin sources that fall outside traditional disciplinary locations or historical mappings—illustrat[ing] la familia as a genealogical tradition that entails successive shifts contingent upon changing kinship discourses and formations.”37 I consider a Chicana/o literary genealogy from this framework, which theorizes Cold War anxieties—not least of which include racially disproportionate military participation—specifically in relation to Chicana/o literature’s preoccupation with the Korean War.

Thinking across disciplinary divisions and logics on the Korean War’s unended legacies yields critical, seditious knowledge. The context of the Korean War opens up adjacencies of familial thematics alongside the concern with knowledge production. Imperative to articulating “that which breaks through social narratives to permit a bleeding, meanings unanchored and moving away from their traditional moorings” within the Korean War context is a method of bringing together the familiar strangers of official documents and disciplined histories, in relation to cultural works and memories gone rogue.38 Such a reflection charts the distance of what is knowable or within sight: a range of perception, which mediates thresholds of perception, of that which is within archival grasp or evading disciplinary recognition. Knowledge, after all, hinges on the edge between what is familiar and what is beyond one’s ken.

Disciplined Genealogies and the Production of the Forgotten War

In the United States, the Korean War earned the designation of the “forgotten war” prior to ceasefire in 1953, a designation that persists even as mainstream discourse frames North Korea as an ontological threat, while obscuring its embeddedness in that war.39 The Korean War is selectively and unevenly remembered in the United States: by those directly affected, by a slim column of academic texts (in contrast to World War II and the Vietnam War), by the stone and mortar of its memorials and those who visit them. U.S. nationalist
discourses enclose the complexities of the Korean War, preserved in U.S. history as an event that liberated South Korea from communism. Given such a construction, it is important to discern how the Korean War is remembered, in particular how it serves to both reinforce and disrupt memories of racial terror, normative kinship, and imperial expansion. The passive construction of the forgotten war linguistically removes the agent of memory from the equation, leaving in its wake the idea that there remain only the inculpable inheritors of an unknowable history.

Indeed, scholars theorize the production of forgetting as central to practices of selective remembrance, theorizations that are pivotal for apprehending the epistemological aporia of the Korean War. On the intertwined imperial investments between Japan and the United States, Lisa Yoneyama asserts that they “in fact mutually coproduce amnesia about their histories of colonialism and military expansion in the Asia-Pacific.” On the Korean War more specifically, Monica Kim writes “the Korean War seems to confound the usual elements of historical narrative. The difficult contradictions one comes across when attempting to give shape to this war seem to multiply with every attempt. The Korean War is a war that is ‘forgotten’ in the annals of United States history but that has been in plain sight of the world continuously through the latter half of the twentieth century into the second millennium in the form of the hypermilitarized Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) on the Korean peninsula,” in the midst of which are the psychic implications of “enforced forgetting,” as Grace Cho articulates by both U.S. nationalist processes and “families like mine where someone survived the horrors of war to bring us here.” Tracing discourses of genealogy disorders the powerful, continual exercises of nationalist and disciplinary obfuscations.

While genealogy is commonly understood as family history—a positivist charting of kin, a practice of simultaneous excision and incorporation—the concern with genealogy as method animates how we might come to “establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today,” with acute attention to how “genealogy as a method thematizes the body, power, and social institutions where fictive truths and values are enacted upon the body,” as Emma Pérez offers in *The Decolonial Imaginary*. This book considers both family genealogy—whether articulated as supremacy for white nationalists, discordantly truncated for Korean children orphaned by war, or queerly fashioned within Asian-Latinx imaginings—as well as the conceptual elaboration of genealogy at the thresholds of knowledge production. Definitional anxieties about genealogy, on the violent fictions sedimented in U.S. nationalist origin stories, underpin the Korean War’s epistemological parameters. Disciplinary preoccupations with ordered singularities, via
the evacuation of complex narratives out of state-sanctioned history, do more than preclude connections across multiple fields of study. They also function as secretary, as a keeper of secrets, on the emergence and unfolding of the Korean War. Genealogical disclosures therefore inhabit politicized terrains of knowledge production, explicitly attentive to shifting matrices of power.

Genealogy bears specific meanings within critiques of colonialism and empire in relation to gender, race, and sexuality. Indigenous studies in particular makes acute inquiries into the colonialisist logics of biological parsing, and Black studies has long theorized the paradoxical derivative logic of the one-drop rule, in critical dialogue with kinship.43 While genealogy as method invites “lineal associations, amalgamated intimacies, the speculative horizons of kinship, and insinuated exclusions, inclusions, and indifferences,” a fidelity to U.S. nationalist genealogical interests represents “the potentially dangerous and reactionary practice of what we can call settler genealogy,” as David A. Chang states in his study of mo’okū‘auhau (genealogy) and expansive Kanaka kinship as transgressive decolonial methodology.44 For Kanaka Maoli scholar ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui, considering “one’s disciplinary or academic genealogy” is of equal importance, as Erin Suzuki observes in Ocean Passages, which foregrounds “engaging more directly with Indigenous Pacific concepts of relationality [as] a necessary step in decolonizing transpacific critique.”45 Yoneyama’s vital call to continue interrogating the transpacific, especially in relation to Native Pacific critique, animates what she calls, inspired by Keith Camacho’s work, a decolonial genealogy of the transpacific.46 Each of these studies shares the concern with how knowledge production has been organized and disciplined, indeed how “the institutional division of knowledge into discrete academic disciplines is itself a legacy and effect” of U.S. racial governance.47 Against the foundational limitations of discrete disciplines, Camacho considers how we “understand Pacific Islander interventions across the U.S. empire need not be limited to any one field of study, nor to any single genealogy or territory.”48 Finally, Danika Medak-Saltzman theorizes that the very condition and structure of periodization in academic disciplines function to elide and naturalize disengagements with Indigeneity.49

Given the disciplinary elisions noted above, a tension laced throughout Warring Genealogies is the reckoning with genealogy as epistemological emergence and an inquiry into genealogy’s queer refusal of reproductive logics, in particular at the level of disciplines. The state-sanctioned origin story of the Korean War itself is tethered to the production of Cold War area studies. Even as the U.S. Army Military Government occupied the Korean peninsula during 1945–1948, area studies in U.S. universities proliferated and used social scientific methodologies that “not only privileged Western modernity,
but also produced evidence that non-Western or nonmodern societies needed industrial development and social modernization.”50 The concomitant genealogical suturing of Cold War area studies to the provisional prehistory of the Korean War offers a metacritical framework from which to analyze knowledge production. Such an attention to genealogy, to the way it is conceptually affiliated to knowledge and to kinship in Korean War epistemology, reorders another alternative genealogy—that of the United States itself. It foregrounds the violent fictions and contradictions constituting white nationalist U.S. genealogies, the perversely avoidant family stories—framed here as U.S. Cold War historiography, perceived more broadly elsewise as the state’s history—devised to continually reconstruct the national family.

The Korean War has been characterized in popular culture and history through metaphors of masculine kinships: as a fratricidal war, as brothers at war, as the brotherhood of war. Two of the most profound, ongoing legacies of the unended war are the division of families following the division of Korea and the inauguration of transracial adoption from the peninsula. Within U.S. history, dominant understandings of family operate as fundamental discourses determining power and privilege. The common applications of family in nationalist discourses reveal their roots in the settler conception and biopatriarchal extension of U.S. nationhood, from Founding Fathers and Republican Motherhood to the ongoing weaponization of “family values” used to demarcate rigid parameters of normative sociality. Family delimits access to property and inheritance and, through the mid-twentieth century, defines which gendered and racialized subjects were themselves constructed as property. Patriarchal authority self-naturalizes family hierarchies. Such definitions symbolize the nation, reproducing and stabilizing meanings of family and justifying uneven power relations within the state and between the United States and Korea.

In the U.S. context, those who live beyond the state’s approved boundaries of kinship are not only marginalized but constructed as deviant threats to the social order, a construction that strives to perpetuate a consistently normalized reinforcement and obfuscation of a manufactured, fluctuating, and unstable metric of kinship. Those whose lives exceed the state’s definitions of family also continually disrupt the naturalized conceptions of kinship to expose the selectively inclusive and exploitative functions of dominant notions of family. Expanded further, such a queer understanding of kinship intimates possibilities for alternative formations of relationships that can reconfigure dominant notions of family.51 As constructions that are always in process and continually being made and unmade, family and kinship are evolving dynamics. While the nationalist metaphor of kinship is not unique to the Korean War, applying scrutiny to how the metaphor is wielded allows us to disrupt
normalized representations and envision alternative socialities otherwise obscured by permitted uses of kinship.\footnote{52}

Kinship is central to Korean adoption studies, with scholars identifying critical interventions that destabilize transnational adoption as a naturalized outcome of the Korean War by illuminating its role “in fortifying militarized humanitarianism and white heteronormative constructions of family and nation.”\footnote{53} This body of scholarship also indexes the lived materiality of Korean adoption, locating the entangled policy practices that sanction states’ rehearsals of normativity, from the “domestic Korean social welfare policy” to how U.S. immigration policy “works simultaneously to encourage transnational adoption.”\footnote{54} Furthermore, Korean adoption studies scholars have critiqued the erasure of infants and children from the parameters of Korean family registry and broader genealogical frameworks, identifying transnational adoption as “one of the Korean modernity project’s most long-lived mechanisms of power, used to cleanse the country of ‘impure’ and ‘disposable’ outcasts in the name of social engineering and eugenics.”\footnote{55} If akin can also mean analogous and affiliated, the Korean War era yields reactionary discourses that attempt to consolidate the assimilation into hegemonic formations: to enforce narrow definitions of family, to tether the experiences of nonwhite peoples’ socialities to that of the white nuclear family model, and to politically compel the building of a South Korean state that functions in analog with U.S. imperial mandates.

Nested within the absenting of the Korean War is a genealogy underscoring the anticommunism of the U.S. public’s mundane vernacular, such that uses of the term \textit{communism} could be experienced as what Crystal Baik identifies as \textit{reencounters} “of return and remembering that denaturalize naturalized temporalities, solidified presumptions, and historical knowledges.”\footnote{56} And as scholars and cultural producers have observed, the extreme violence of anticommunist surveillance and punishment by the South Korean state has exploited Korean kinship structures, by politically targeting family members of those suspected of affiliating with communism.\footnote{57} Traces of anticommunist violence can be found in the absence, the \textit{excision} of, family members from South Korean genealogies and reflects how the Korean War is so commonly censored out of family histories across the Korean diaspora. What transnational relationalities and kinships might emerge from such transpacific anticommunist surveillances of kinship? And more specifically attending to the Korean War’s impact on U.S. racial formations, what conditions of Cold War erasure, knowledge, and memory contributed to the difficulty of contending with the Korean War in Chicano/a studies?
Another Cold War proxy, the U.S. war in Vietnam, is perhaps the clearest catalyst for what we understand as antiwar activism in the Chicano Movement—an ethnic nationalist movement met with vital critique by Chicana feminists, who challenged its internal hierarchies to work toward collective, redistributive liberation. The impact of Chicana antiwar actions, as Grace Kyungwon Hong and Belinda Rincón have observed, identified transnational enactments of grief, an echo of Ezekiel Gandara’s mourning for the elderly Korean couple he buried during the Korean War. The U.S. state’s FBI surveillance of organizations (including the American Indian Movement, Black Panthers, and Brown Berets) and individuals within the Chicano Movement and its rhetorical equation of antiwar protests with communism represent another convergence of kinship, knowledge production, and Cold War anticommunism: “Chicana/o antiwar activists also posed a threat to the nation-as-family as the state became increasingly preoccupied with quieting antiwar protestors. . . . The state justified its probe into these groups by labeling them as subversive Communist organizations and therefore threats to national security.” Not only did such antiwar activism disrupt the U.S. framework of nation-as-family; it also theorized a form of transpacific affinities through explicit uses of kinship, whether in embodied public performances of grief as Chicana mothers, siblings, and other relations or in conceptualizations that “Chicanas/os and the Vietnamese were engaged in parallel anticolonial struggles for autonomy from U.S. imperialism. This inspired many Chicana/o activists to identify the Vietnamese as ‘kindred spirits’ in battle against U.S. imperialism rather than as enemies of the state.” The significant scholarly corpus on Chicana/o studies and the Vietnam War invites working against linear historical progression to trace the Korean War’s impact in the field, suggesting the epistemological affinities that might emerge from broader Cold War anticommunism.

Critical feminist scholarship in Chicana/o Studies theorized essential conceptualizations of erasure, memory, loss, and recovery, challenging the very frameworks by which Chicana subjectivities are, as Emma Pérez observes, written out of history or, as Catherine Ramírez states, “simply did not exist” in both dominant historiography and “their textbooks,” as well as within Chicano histories. Maylei Blackwell offers “retrofitted memory” as a framework with the dexterity to confront hegemonic projects that are also incomplete and, as with the Korean War, unended. Returning to my earlier concern with the disciplinary conditions of Cold War erasure that disallow theorizing the Korean War in Chicano/a studies, and attentive to Chicana feminist critiques of epistemic violence, I follow Sandra K. Soto’s argument that “the quest for
Chicana visibility can only take us so far. We need more broad-based, substantive, and innovative techniques and methods in order to interrupt the inherently limiting divergences that uphold “our reliance on mastery” to instead read like a queer.62 The Korean War’s manifestations through the Chicano/a cultural production I examine as a series of unknowns, Muñoz’s “epistemologically and ontologically humble” queer hermeneutic, and Soto’s invitation to demaster “epistemological disciplining” inform the methods of this book.63

**On Methods**

*Warring Genealogies* examines the conflicting strategies employed by white nationalist archives and Chicano cultural productions to argue that contradictions of U.S. racial citizenship and kinship are routed through U.S. militarization in Asia. Indeed, examples such as Leavenworth prisoners’ reframing of racial discourse for the purposes of proxy adoption and military enlistment during the Korean War suggest the necessity of examining how such discourses are refined in the practices of U.S. imperial war in Asia. Even as white prisoners in Leavenworth used the Korean War as an occasion to petition for their release, Chicano cultural production reveals the extent to which Mexican American subjects were disproportionately recruited for the war, often facing incarceration if they refused enlistment. Critical studies of whiteness and critical race studies scholars have observed that whiteness maintains power and perpetuity through its naturalization as unmarked. Such critiques have inspired me to consider that in the context of the Korean War, it in fact served as an occasion to entrench whiteness by explicit and intentional discourses of kinship, such as proxy adoption, segregated blood donation, and the efforts of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. While the mobilization of kinship as metaphor and material condition in the service of securing white supremacy is itself fundamental to establishing the United States as a settler formation, I am interested too in how Chicana/o cultural production theorizes horizons of kinship that strive toward dismantling such structures. The book thus broadens comparative studies of race, kinship, and empire through the war. It does so by examining how the Korean War was leveraged to re-fashion U.S. articulations of race and kinship, which persist in unexpected formations to the contemporary moment.

Recent U.S. scholarship has enhanced historical and literary considerations of the war.64 However, not only are Latino/a and Korean relationships emerging from the Korean War underexamined; the condition of forgetting emerges in unanticipated forms of Chicano studies in particular. Yet discourses about the highly visible anxieties on the Korean peninsula selectively
obscure the emergence of such tensions in the Korean War, which continue to reverberate throughout U.S. national and foreign policy. This study advances conversations about the Korean War in transnational American cultural studies and theorizes the limitations and possibilities of disciplinary conditions binding Asian American and Latinx studies. This interdisciplinary project charts the undertheorized racial and kinship formation of the Korean War, through literary frameworks and informed by methods from cultural studies and feminist and queer of color critique. Rather than excavating the empirical data of the Korean War and enclosing it within an authoritative historical record, I look to official histories, archives and archival materials, and literature and oral histories to examine the different operations by which race and kinship in the war are disclosed and forgotten. The untold stories of the Korean War through these sources, often partially expressed and imperfectly narrated, allow for more nuanced understandings of race and kinship along and against the grains of U.S. nationalism.

I therefore bring together a set of texts, archives, and populations that may appear counterintuitive but, taken together, collectively theorize cultural memories of the Korean War as a site of knowledge production through which understandings of race and kinship are renovated. *Warring Genealogies* centers archives as generative sites of contradictions embedded in theorizing kinships. Lisa Yoneyama and Lisa Lowe have posited the critical importance of reading across archives to consider previously disaggregated imperial histories as essential for perceiving the unfolding violence of liberalism.65 Continuous with the Benjaminian critique of universal history’s method, which lacks “theoretical armature,” this book declines an additive “mass of data to fill [an] homogeneous, empty time.”66 *Warring Genealogies* looks to unlikely archives of the war to illuminate other epistemologies that yield comparative critiques of U.S. empire. The archival densities and diversities relocate understandings of how Korean War knowledge is produced and destabilize hegemonic conceptualizations of knowledge production. Indeed, in addition to deliberating on why these legacies should be considered in relation to each other, this book takes as its concern how they have been epistemologically disciplined into being kept apart. The affiliations I chart in the chapters are often terrible white supremacist narratives and unlikely stories of transpacific yearning, tethered in discomfiting formations. Yet tracing such warring genealogies produces ways of bypassing binary understandings and instead conjures alternative possibilities nuancing how race and kinship are configured through the Korean War. Cultural memory is therefore an important analytic in this project, as both a critical terrain on which knowledge production about the Korean War is diverted from prevailing narratives and an ambivalent terrain that can be
as nationalist as official, linear history. Within this intensely contested site of struggle, the production of the Korean War as a benevolent intervention is shaped in such a way that replicates nostalgic nationalism and obscures stories that embody critiques of U.S. wars in Asia. Such stories, partially expressed and imperfectly narrated, unsettle the fictions of totality that attempt to project narratives, fully formed, from nationalist archives and libraries.

Outline of the Book

The Cold War has registered historically through proxy engagements in geopolitical terrain both distant from and intimate to the United States and the Soviet Union. To consider the Cold War’s military actions as manifested through proxy wars is understood as foregone. Yet the term proxy registers an enduring afterlife of the Cold War, during which “proxy’ became inseparable from ‘war,’ and while proxy states were inflamed, the superpowers unleashed a proliferation of geopolitical calculations. Indeed, once proximity gave way to proxy, material conditions gave way to figuration. Every war is fought with figures of speech, but proxy war launched a new logic of substitution.” Such a “logic of substitution” aligns proxy in a set of discourses derived from and more robustly conceptualized than the Korean War as proxy war. More specifically, I consider the significance of proxy in relation to adoption, as in the first chapter’s focus on the proxy adoption of a Korean boy by Leavenworth penitentiary prisoners, and to queer kinship, especially in the Asian-Latino proxy kinships elaborated by Chicano/a cultural works.

The book, in chapter 1, opens with a close reading of a letter from a Korean adoption sponsor agency, reprinted by the prisoners of U.S. Penitentiary (USP) Leavenworth in the penitentiary’s prison magazine, The New Era. The letter thanking the prisoners for their sponsorship is radically misunderstood, operating as an allegory for Cold War knowledge production. This chapter focuses on the 1954 proxy adoption of a Korean boy, Bok Nam Om, by USP Leavenworth prisoners. I examine the logics undergirding the kinship between USP Leavenworth prisoners and Bok Nam Om, arguing that Cold War ideologies allowed prisoners to situate their claims of national belonging against the use of Asian American GIs in the Korean War. I suggest that the same ideologies also justify, rather than contradict, their proxy adoption as “rightful fathers” of Bok Nam Om. By adopting Bok Nam Om, the prisoners participated in the burgeoning post–World War II U.S. phenomenon of sponsoring orphans abroad, particularly in the East Asian nations destroyed by war. Through analyses of The New Era, this chapter constructs an argu-
Chapter 2 builds on the notion of proxy to consider the triangulation of Asian-Latino kinships that contest the structure of racially inclusive liberal discourse during the Korean War. In chapter 1, I argue that white Leavenworth penitentiary prisoners asserted their stake in racially configuring the national family through their engagement with proxy adoption. While the white prisoners mobilized kinship discourses to consolidate their affiliation with white patriarchal nationalism, Chicano veterans of the Korean War negotiated complex challenges of returning to a racially segregated United States and began to write literature that constructed Asia as an alternative, proxy space for building kinships. And even as white prisoners in Leavenworth used the Korean War as an occasion to petition for their release from the penitentiary, Chicano cultural production reveals the extent to which Mexican American subjects were disproportionately recruited for the war, often facing incarceration if they refused enlistment. Chicano cultural production about the Korean War further particularizes such contradictions undergirding Cold War racial operations. Theories of Asian-Latino proxies, and the continued discussion of the proxy, elaborated through forms, wars, and kinships, guide this chapter. While the previous chapter focuses on the Leavenworth prisoners’ reframing of racial discourse occasioned by the proxy adoption and military enlistment during the Korean War, this chapter considers the proxy of the Korean War in Chicano literary discourse, as both a site of alternative kinship as well as a queer temporal and spatial disruption for theorizing the war and Chicano literature.

Chapter 2 examines the cultural works of Rolando Hinojosa (Korean Love Songs and The Useless Servants) and Luis Valdez (I Don’t Have to Show You No Stinking Badges and Zoot Suit), which constitute complex counterrepresentations of the Korean War and critique U.S. racialization—in particular the narrative of the United States as a benevolent savior—that structure mainstream histories of the war. The narratives offer unique theorizations of Asian-Latino kinship emerging from the war, devising new intimacies that exceed state-sanctioned formations of marriage, family, and inheritance. In particular, they rescript the white nationalist imperatives of the U.S. military in military songbooks. An examination of their works, while addressing the lacuna of scholarship on Latinos and the Korean War, aims beyond the inclusion of recovering veterans’ narratives. It also advances possibilities for capacious theorizing among multiple fields of knowledge production as disciplinary interlocuters in the context of the Korean War.
In chapter 3, I take up what Raymond Chandler characterizes in his 1950 essay “The Simple Art of Murder” as “the coolie labor” of writing detective stories to frame the hierarchies of “racial hatred and an inflated sense of pride” in Martin Limón’s novels Slicky Boys and The Wandering Ghost. The date of publication for Chandler’s 1950 essay also marks the official beginning of the Korean War, a war that was critical for shaping the urban spaces of East LA and the U.S. military districts of Itaewon and Tongduchon. I examine Limón’s portrayals of an impoverished East LA as a gritty California counterpart to the desperate, sexually violent, and racist military districts in Itaewon and Tongduchon. This chapter builds on the Asian-Latino and proxy kinships of the prior chapters, considering the Chicano protagonist’s own status as a former foster child who as U.S. military police adopts Korea—via proxy—as home and family. I argue that Limón’s military police procedural genre functions as an aperture into sexual labor and the twinned militarized expansion of U.S. bases from Southern California to Korea. The novels’ relationship to notions of home, domesticity, and “coolie labor” suggests operations of power via circuits of empire, including how militarized white womanhood is leveraged as a savior figure of Korean women.

Explicitly leading from the figure of militarized liberal white womanhood in the third chapter, the final chapter analyzes the role of white supremacist women’s organizations and the politics of funding Korean War archives that frame the war within a rubric of white nationalist kinship. This chapter traces the genealogy of U.S. histories about Korea to Korean War archives and memorials sanctioned and supported by the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Throughout this chapter, I analyze Susan Choi’s The Foreign Student as a novel that proposes alternative temporalities to dominant Korean War narratives, ultimately disrupting the orientalist moves of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Building on the United Daughters as a counterpart to the “rightful fathers” of USP Leavenworth in the first chapter, this chapter brings the discussion of kinship in the context of the Korean War to an uneasy fruition. Returning to the Korean War vignettes presented in the introduction, and working in continuity from the final chapter, the coda takes up the dismantling of Confederate memorialization amid the contemporary visibility of white supremacist demonstrations in relation to knowledge production about and memories of the Korean War.

Although the book is structured at the thematic axes of white nationalism and Asian-Latino kinship, I do not suggest an easy opposition between the two in its organization. This book takes as its concern continuing debates on the stubborn yet sophisticated templates of racialization, in particular those conversations that center deep-rooted legacies of colonialism, exclusion, and
assimilation. As a central critical apparatus, this book foregrounds the occupation of Indigenous lands, racial slavery, and gendered racial labor exploitation as undergirding the development of the modern U.S. state. It examines such ongoing and historical violence at the intersections of U.S. imperial war in Korea. While the chapter arrangements begin and end with white nationalist narratives, with Asian-Latino kinship chapters constituting the middle, each chapter negotiates the complex workings of white supremacy, a preoccupation with white purity that manifests its will through an exclusionary kinship. Therefore, chapter 1 examines the settler colonial logics that echo logics of white possession enabling Leavenworth prisoners to claim proxy adoption of a Korean child in the wake of the Korean War; chapter 2 focuses on U.S. military ballads that craft long histories of military empire and Chicano literary defiance to such forms; chapter 3 considers the strange reappearance of liberal white womanhood in a Chicano military police procedural in Korea; and the final chapter examines the liminal status modulating the apparently contradictory inclusiveness of white supremacy and the lethal rigidity of anti-Blackness, buttressed by the Korean War.

Fictive Kin

As a consequence of this confluence, thinking through Korean War legacies across sites structured to be siloed, other voices insisted upon their presence. The accidental witness to Rolando Hinojosa’s useless servants, the desire to inhabit the trajectory of a letter addressed to USP Leavenworth, to punctuate terrible family histories and intervene in the forms of war—these moments are bound to be both strange and familiar. Genealogical rifts, speculative kin torn asunder, imperfectly convened by dint of genre and form in Chicano/a cultural production, are all forged through how we understand the war. The Korean boy, proxy adopted by prisoners, dwells alongside the cinematic deaths and proxy resurrections of the Chicano GIs who may have known him, who themselves speculate on their own unknown Korean Chicano sons and daughters, left behind in 1953. Twenty years after this phantom sibling, a Chicano foster kid from LA enlists in the U.S. Army and for the first time finds kinship in his adopted homeland of the Korean peninsula. All the while, and never thinking they would meet, in fact grounded in the surety of disciplined knowledge production to ensure that they do not meet, archives rooted in Confederate impulses draw on much longer settler genealogies of violence to capture the stories.

But elsewhere, otherwise, are those who long for complex iterations of kinship.