

THE SPECTER OF WHITE AMERICA'S SURVEILLANCE IN RICHARD  
WRIGHT'S *NATIVE SON* AND CHANG-RAE LEE'S *NATIVE SPEAKER*  
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THE SPECTER OF WHITE AMERICA'S SURVEILLANCE IN RICHARD  
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This dissertation investigates white America's racial surveillance in various guises and its impacts on the inner worlds and the subject formation of non-white minorities, not only through intertextual readings of Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995), but also by conducting close individual analyses of these early masterful works of Wright and Lee. In particular, the paper focuses on panoptic white surveillance in 1930s Chicago and 1990s New York City, which frames Wright's and Lee's novels. In so doing, I argue that panoptic white surveillance was enacted in order for white society to maintain the status quo through their exclusive possession of national resources in the face of the potential risk posed to white America and white privilege from the influx of non-white people to the major metropolitan areas in the United States—specifically the mass migration of southern African Americans to Chicago and the vast inflow of Asian immigrants to New York City.

This study reveals not only the various external modes of surveillance—such as visible, coercive, disguised, and hidden—which were manifested in the practices of

“Jim Crow” regulation and a private intelligence firm Glimmer & Company, but also the technology of self-surveillance in which non-white people monitor themselves by internalizing the prevalent white gaze. Furthermore, hegemonic white culture induces non-white people to perform habitual self-surveillance in their daily lives; in the meantime, they are striving to transform themselves to achieve “hegemonic whiteness” in most aspects of their life or become successfully assimilated minorities who achieve a socio-cultural status closer to that of middle-class white people in mainstream American society.

Examining these links between panoptic white surveillance and the particular modes of subjectivity that racial minorities feel compelled to take on, this dissertation attempts to extend the ever-growing field of surveillance studies to the arenas of race theory as well as “political subjectivity” that is produced amid power relations such as the white-dominant social structure of the United States. In summary, this study explores what panoptic white surveillance *does* to post-bellum African Americans and post-Korean War Korean Americans through comparative and individual analyses of the representative African American’s and Korean American’s masterpieces

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## INTRODUCTION

### THE SPECTER OF WHITE AMERICA'S SURVEILLANCE IN RICHARD WRIGHT'S *NATIVE SON* AND CHANG-RAE LEE'S *NATIVE SPEAKER*

Well, they [white people] own everything. They choke you off the face of the earth. They like God . . . they don't even let you feel what you want to feel. They after you so hot and hard you can only feel what they doing to you.

—Richard Wright, *Native Son*.

This is the challenge for us Asians in America. How do you say no to what seems like a compliment? From the very start we don't wish to be rude or inconsiderate. So we stay silent in our guises.

—Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker*.

#### Unauthorized Nativeness in White America

The titles of Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995) are remarkably similar and are used to highlight the nativeness of each writer's ethnic protagonist as a crucial marker of their authentic Americanness—Wright's title is suggestive of ontological nativity and upbringing, while Lee's title evinces a linguistic (cultural) ownership for ensuring American identity.<sup>1</sup> However, within a specifically racialized space such as America in which, as Christian Moraru points out, “whiteness” bears “a signifier of Americanness,” whereby “white America” stands “as a signifier of nativeness,” the word “native” also paradoxically signals a racist barrier that excludes Wright's black protagonist Bigger Thomas and Lee's Henry Park—a descendant of Korea—from being genuinely considered American (107). This contradictory

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<sup>1</sup> Wright reveals the intended meaning of his title when he calls Bigger “an American product, a native son of this land” (“How” 446).



condition, in which the racially defined nativeness—white nativeness—confronts the substantive nativeness that Wright and Lee claim as a way to identify their racialized protagonists as natural Americans, demonstrates a persistent ontological predicament that Wright's and Lee's ethnic protagonists inevitably face in white America. Indeed, Wright and Lee share a deep sense of racial alienation from their native land by way of not only the “titular thread,” but also as twin versions of living in the contradictions of the white dominant world—that is, unauthorized nativeness—in these early masterful works (Y.H. Wu 1469). In this vein, Caroline Rody observes that “the stark contradictions of the hero's condition in *Native Son* are evoked—or, I'd like to say, inherited—with a difference, for an Asian American hero. . . . It is striking then that *Native Speaker* strongly links its grief to that of African American forerunners” (69–70).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Two critics in particular notice the intertextual connection between Wright's *Native Son* and Lee's *Native Speaker*: Caroline Rody's ““With Darkness Yet’: Chang-rae's *Native Speaker*, Blackness, and the Interethnic Imagination” (2009) and Yung-Hsing Wu's “Native Sons and Native Speakers: On the Eth(n)ics of Comparison” (2006). Rody's argument doesn't amount to a substantive intertextual reading between two novels, drawing on her assertion that Lee's *Native Speaker* avoids any overt connection to Wright's *Native Son* despite the “strong but muted literary tribute” that Lee pays Wright through his similarly ironic title. In the same vein, Rody points out that “Lee rarely presents African Americans in the hero's immediate experience” and “keeps” Korean-black conflict “simmering in the background” (70, 72). According to Rody, Lee's avoidance of the “overt claim to a relationship to African American precursor” and the absence of his protagonist's direct engagements with black characters in the plot suggest the ambivalent desire of Lee's Korean American hero in between white dominance and black resistance: “Henry desires both to be white (to assimilate) and to resist whiteness through identification with blackness (so as to attain masculinity as well as to resist whiteness in the mode of black men)” (70, 75). Rody, however, concludes that neither of Henry's contradictory desires are possible options due to the U.S. racist structure and the urban Korean-black conflict. On the other hand, Wu explores the more substantive and detailed affinities between Wright's *Native Son* and Lee's *Native Speaker*. She examines three notable connections between the two novels: 1) the supranational characterization in Wright's rendering of Bigger Thomas as not only “a representative African American” but also as “a global type of the countless oppressed,” and in Lee's John Kwang as a spokesman for interethnic alliances between African Americans and Korean Americans; 2) the critique of nativity in the titles of the two novels, particularly “when the texts take two all-American institutions—the legal systems and private-sector capitalism—as targets”; and 3) the “ethnic femininity” that is similarly represented through Bessie and Ahjuhma, the female ethnic characters in the two novels (1466, 1468, 1469, 1471). In fact, there has been considerable preference among most critics for the intertextual connection between Lee's *Native Speaker* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* to that between Lee and Wright, especially, as Gregory E. Rutledge notes, in terms of the similarities of “narrative voice and technique” of the two novels (244). These critics have also commented on the thematic parallels between Lee and Ellison, such as invisibility as an individual—that is, racial hyper-visibility. Nonetheless,

Despite such parallels between Wright's and Lee's novels and the fact that Bigger and Henry are both "native sons by virtue of their birth" and "also native speakers," on closer examination, the interface between Wright's *Native Son* and Lee's *Native Speaker* regarding the issue of nativeness seems split apart (Y.H. Wu 1469). American nativism had long pressured the U.S. immigration policy in restricting Asian immigration until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 led to an influx of the vast majority of Asian immigrants; America's nativist culture still barely recognized Asian Americans as natural Americans in comparison to African Americans by the early 1990s—and up to the present day—during which time a "high level of anti-immigrant sentiment peaked" mainly due to soaring unemployment rates, which is one of the backdrops of Lee's *Native Speaker* (Suarez-Orozco 145).<sup>3</sup>

Out of this ingrained and persistent American nativism came a specifically triangulated racial stratification, which Claire Jean Kim offers as the tripartite American "racial positions" of white, African, and Asian Americans, and in which Asian Americans—on the horizontal axis of foreigner/insider—are positioned to the far left on the opposite side of both whites and African Americans "as immutably foreign and unassimilable" (C. J. Kim 107). These outsiders are equally distanced from the other two

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there are a few critics who have suggested significant differences or contrasts between Lee and Ellison. Among these critics, my intertextual reading between Lee and Wright builds on the arguments in Rutledge's book, *The Epic Trickster in American Literature from Sunjata to S(o)ul* (2013), regarding the essential distinctions between Lee and Ellison and the crucial parallels between Lee and Wright.

<sup>3</sup> The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished the national origins quota system that had limited Asian immigrants since the 1920s, and it permitted immigrants on the basis of their professional capabilities and family relationships with U.S. citizens and residents. According to Helen Zia, "because the new immigration regulation heavily favored educated professionals, the newer Asian immigrants included highly trained scientists, engineers, doctors, nurses" (62). Chang-rae Lee's father, a doctor, was one of the new generation of Asian immigrants. The vast majority of Asian Americans, therefore, came to the U.S. after the Immigration and Nationality Act: "The decade between 1960 and 1970 (following the Immigration Act of 1965)," Zia finds, "was the first census period in which immigrants from throughout Asia rose above 10 percent of the total immigration to the United States" (205).

elements occupying the far right side, thereby ensuring American nativity of whites and African Americans.<sup>4</sup> This triangulated relationship becomes especially clear when Henry Park in *Native Speaker* faces the uncontested privilege of African Americans in relation to nativism compared with Asian Americans and other ethnic groups.<sup>5</sup> Along the vertical axis of superior/inferior, however, as we have seen in Claire Kim's figure, "Asian Americans and blacks switch positions" while whites remain unchanged: "Whites occupy the dominant top position, Asian Americans are in the middle, and blacks are in the subordinate bottom position" on the "relative valorization" axis (J. Kim 132). This type of triangulation indicates that the financial success, high education, and low crime rates of Asian Americans as the "model minority" are generally valued relative to issues of poverty and high crime rates among African Americans.<sup>6</sup> The racial triangulation, after

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<sup>4</sup> My discussion about the triangulated racial stratification draws on Claire Jean Kim's notion of a "field of racial positions" in which she shows how "Asian Americans have been racially triangulated vis-à-vis Blacks and Whites" through "two types of simultaneous, linked process" of "relative valorization" and "civic ostracism" (107). See Claire Kim's 1999 article, titled "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," for more detailed discussion.

<sup>5</sup> In some scenes of *Native Speaker*, Lee demonstrates that African Americans have already gained nativity, as compared to the alienness of Asian and Latino Americans. Henry, for instance, suggests it by observing how differently white and black speech therapy children behave from Asian and Latino children when they eat sandwiches that he and Lelia make as a snack for them: "The Asian and Hispanic kids rarely complain about what we give them; black kids and white kids often do, they act entitled, though in different ways. I don't know what this means, maybe something about the force of fathers, or the Catholic God" (236–37).

<sup>6</sup> The term "model minority" has been used as a racial stereotype to describe East Asian (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) and South Asian Americans who achieved financial and high educational success with low crime rates. This term first appeared in William Petersen's 1966 article for *The New York Times*, titled "Success Story: Japanese American Style." In the same year, *The U.S. News and World Report* also published a similar article about Chinese Americans, titled "Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S." Both attributed those Asian immigrants' achievements to their specific (oriental) cultural heritage. From then until the 1990s, according to Frank H. Wu, "model minority discourse" (Huang 246) was prevalent, "from the news media to scholarly books to Hollywood movies" (41). In particular, mainstream print media such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *60 Minutes*, *Fortune*, *New Republic*, and *Contemporary* referred to Asian Americans as not only a "model minority" but also such terms as "superminority" and "a trophy population" (qtd. in F.H. Wu 41). In addition, "conservative politicians especially like to celebrate Asian Americans. President Reagan called Asian Americans 'our exemplars of hope'" (F.H. Wu 41). Betsy Huang, however, points out that the "model minority discourse" is "a discourse of control that delineates in clear terms acceptable and unacceptable types of ethnics—terms that the 'model minority' in question often internalize and strive to fulfill" (246). And Huang quotes David Leiwei Li's influential critique of the model minority: "a classificatory wonder of the dominant social strategy [that] detaches Asians from their association with

all, shows that “White power and privilege” has remained intact. More importantly, this “triangulated pattern” also foregrounds the different racial vulnerabilities of African and Asian Americans beyond their similar status as non-white minorities, thereby maneuvering African and Asian Americans so as to turn them against each other on the basis of nativism and financial success, and “thus shifting [their] attention away from the exercise of White racial power” (C. J. Kim 108, 115, 117). Hence, Claire Kim notes that “racial triangulation (and the field of racial positions, more generally) has functioned as a normative blue print for which groups should get what, reproducing patterns of White power and privilege” (107-08).

### **The Black-Korean Conflict**

The black-Korean conflict of the early 1990s reifies the effects of such a manipulative racial frame: both African Americans and South Koreans looked down on each other relying upon their different kinds of possessions—nativity and model minority—which purportedly confer legitimacy on their Americanness. That way, African Americans and South Koreans were manipulated in bringing a covert attack to bear against each other through the notably invidious comparisons between them by the dominant racial frame. The escalating hostility and distrust, especially between South Korean storekeepers and African American customers, exploded in the so-called “Soon Ja Du shooting.” It happened when a South Korean storekeeper Soon Ja Du shot a young African American customer Latasha Harlins to death, shortly after accusing Latasha of shoplifting—for Latasha had put an orange juice in her backpack before paying for it—

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other racial ‘minorities’ by hailing them as a white-appointed ‘model,’ while it distinguishes them from the unmarked ‘true’ nationals by calling Asians their ‘minor’” (qtd. in Huang 246).

and then Latasha, outraged by Soon Ja's false charge, "punched" her, "knocking her down twice," then left the store (Zia 176). Soon Ja Du's verdict of five years' probation, and the subsequent acquittal of "four white Los Angeles police officers" for their harsh "beating of [African American] Rodney King" sparked the six-day riots in Los Angeles County, which began on April 29, 1992, and "destroyed and damaged" primarily small Korean-owned stores through looting and arson, though "the looters were also multiracial in composition" (Zia 181, 171). The LA police department did nothing to suppress the riots, so South Korean men armed themselves with guns and "tried to keep looters at bay" (Zia 182).<sup>7</sup> The LA riots showed an exemplary instance of "a convenient way for mainstream America to deflect black rage" from whites to the other target: African Americans' anger "over [white] police brutality had found another outlet," namely "their neighborhood Korean owned stores" (qtd. in Zia 172; Zia 182). Yet it was a thing that could happen enough because black-Korean tension had intensified since the "Soon Ja Du shooting."<sup>8</sup>

In *Native Speaker*, Lee also touches on the implications of the devastating interethnic conflict through a Korean-American councilman John Kwang's speech to his

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<sup>7</sup> Zia reports that the LA riots caused "54 people" to die and "some 4,500 shops" to be "reduced to ashes," and "[n]early half of the city's total financial loss of more than \$ 1 billion in damages was suffered by a single group: the Korean American mom-and-pop storekeepers" (171-72).

<sup>8</sup> Zia observes that "[s]hortly after the killing of Latasha Harlins, two more Korean grocers were killed. A Korean girl who was in her parents' store was shot and critically wounded; the attacker reportedly said, 'This is for Latasha.' In the year following the shooting, 48 murders and 2,500 robberies were reported in L.A.'s Koreatown, and the number of hate crime against Korean Americans topped all other anti-Asian incidents" (178). But Zia also explains African Americans' distressed circumstances in relation to Korean immigrants that seem to defend their resentment over Koreans: "To many African Americans, the Korean American storekeepers were a maddening reminder of chronic poverty and economic injustice in the black community, while yet another immigrant group was advancing, at their expense. . . . In Los Angeles as well as New York and other cities, black people bristled over incidents of disrespectful treatment and false accusations of shoplifting" (174). Indeed, as Rutledge notes, "[s]ince both ethnic groups are equally right and wrong, then a fundamental contradiction lies within the social structure itself that brought them together," which led to the invidious comparison between African and Korean Americans in regards to racial triangulation (244).

multiethnic crowd while black-Korean tensions were running high in the novel, which also reflects the real-life consequences after the “Soon Ja Du shooting” (D. Y. Kim 238; Rhee 168). In his speech, Kwang urges African Americans and Korean Americans who hate and blame each other for their problems to face their own problems: “Let us think it is the problem of a self-hate. . . . The problem is our acceptance of what we loathe and fear in ourselves” (C. Lee 151–52). This is not to say that African and Korean Americans should improve their self-esteem but rather Kwang emphasizes that African and Korean Americans are similarly oppressed and are thus made to awkwardly accept their own degraded identity by a dominant racist system. Therefore, as Daniel Y. Kim articulates, “the hatred that Koreans and blacks directed at each other is a displacement of the hatred that has been heaped upon them by a racist culture” (238).

Such “displacement of the hatred” between African and Korean Americans shows the mechanism of the triangulated racial stratification in which American nativism and the model minority myth—seemingly mainstream America’s approval of black privilege and its compliment of Korean Americans—effect humiliating comparisons between two racial minorities, which invites mutual hostility and deflects common grievances away from white racial power and turns that anger on the similarly subordinated other race. “This submerged dynamic” (Rhee 168) embedded in the black-Korean conflict illuminates the oldest racial ploy of white dominance, a ploy that “displace[s] what is fundamentally a White-non-White conflict over resources (higher education, jobs, business, contracts) onto a proxy skirmish (a minor short-term fight) between non-Whites” (C.J. Kim 117).

It is against “this type of displacement” of racial conflict that Lee, through

Kwang's speech, underscores the importance of the interethnic coalition between African and Korean Americans based on their similar history of oppression, such as slavery and colonization (C.J. Kim 117): Kwang strongly urges his African and Korean audiences to "know what [they] have in common," for "the sadness and pain and injustice" that they shared "will always be stronger than [their] differences" (C. Lee 153). As Yung-Hsing Wu notes in her intertextual reading of *Native Son* and *Native Speaker*, Lee's emphasis on the alliance between racial minorities through empathy with each other's painful experiences in structural inequalities corresponds to "the possibilities of *alliances* between the American Negro and other people possessing a kindred consciousness" that Wright envisioned in Bigger's "hopes, fears, and despairs" in *Native Son*, which represent the oppressed worldwide (1468; "How" 441). As Wu succinctly points out, "if Wright turns Bigger into a figure for a politics based in alliances, Lee figures Kwang as the voice for such a politics" (1468).<sup>9</sup> As a textual extension of "such a politics" for the alliance of the oppressed in similar structural inequalities, in particular, for the solidarity of African and Korean Americans against racial oppression in white America, this dissertation focuses on "the sadness, pain, and injustice" that Wright's Bigger Thomas and Lee's Henry Park share through their common "fears and despairs" that they experience within

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<sup>9</sup> Wu also points out a double-edged aspect of the politics for this interethnic alliance. She argues that whereas Bigger obscures his ethnic "specificity" as "a global type for the countless oppressed," Kwang's minority politics for the interethnic alliance serves to "reduce" him to an "ethnic politician" (1468–69). In this regard, Wu concludes that "Bigger Thomas and John Kwang embody, in other words, the difficulty of interethnic politics" (1469). Michelle Young-Mee Rhee is also skeptical about the viability of "interethnic politics" and argues that "Lee's engagement with minority politics" through Kwang is "a resigned acknowledgement" of "the impossibility of" minority politics: Kwang's "vision of diverse, peaceful" multiethnic politics "is just that: a vision" (166, 169). These Asian American critics' simultaneous embrace and skepticism of "interethnic politics" not only points to the dissonant reality of interracial tension in the U.S. racist culture, but also signals their ambivalent self-positioning in between progressive racial politics and a compromising acknowledgement of the inevitability of interracial tension or of the impossibility of the interethnic alliance.

white America.

### **Panoptic White Surveillance That Links Wright's *Native Son* and Lee's *Native Speaker***

The focus of this dissertation, especially as a key motif that generates intertextuality between these African and Korean American writers, is an investigation of panoptic white surveillance of both 1930s and 1990s American society, and its effects on the subject formation of non-white minorities in Wright's *Native Son* and Lee's *Native Speaker*. The early 1930s Chicago and 1990s New York City settings that frame Wright's and Lee's novels, respectively, give similar historical context that link the two novels: white America had enacted panoptic racial surveillance to completely control the new surge of non-white people—caused by a mass southern black migration to Chicago and the large influx of immigrants to New York—in almost every area of life. The crucial ends behind the panoptic racial surveillance were to maintain exclusive white possession of national resources and white privilege unimpaired by any people of color. Thus, panoptic white surveillance “has two faces” in the United States: it is a security or protection (direct policing) system for white America that contrives, builds up, and operates the surveillance system, as well as a control or discrimination (indirect policing) system toward non-white people confined within this repressive surveillance system. However, the specific forms of panoptic white surveillance in the two periods are very different (Lyon 3).

In 1930s Chicago society, African Americans are controlled or treated with discrimination by very palpable “surveillance practices, policies, and performances.”



Forms of racial division such as “Jim Crow” laws, which established a set of “boundaries and borders along racial line” in all public spheres to separate blacks from whites in their everyday lives, functioned as a panoptic white surveillance system by regulating African Americans not trespass on the territory of white Americans (Browne 72). On the other hand, the 1990s New York surveillance system to control non-white immigrants relies upon an invisible spy business. For example, a private intelligence firm Glimmer & Company collects “personal data” from ethnic immigrants on request from white clients, using ethnic spies to infiltrate their target immigrant’s territory, and circulates the “collected data” for their clients to use for racist, xenophobic, and undemocratic purposes. This new surveillance system operates “beyond—but still includes—the purposeful watching of specific individuals who have aroused suspicion through their activities or words,” but impinges more powerfully upon all immigrants, even those who have even never violated any laws, through its imperceptible racial surveillance to manage the potential risk of non-white people inside and outside of America (Lyon 2).<sup>10</sup> Despite

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<sup>10</sup> This 1990s surveillance method foreshadows the “twenty-first century surveillance” (28), which David Lyon characterizes as “any collection and processing of personal data, whether identifiable or not, for the purposes of influencing or managing those whose data have been garnered.” Thus, the main target of today’s surveillance is “personal data” of an individual stored in his or her computer and cellphone, which is an inevitable phenomenon because our everyday lives now heavily depend on these technologies to communicate with others and gain information. Therefore, as Lyon notes, “the most important means of [new] surveillance reside in computer power” as “communication and information technologies” that have replaced human spies (2). Along with this new aspect and more widespread influence of surveillance in our current society, surveillance studies have also increased in the humanities. For instance, I participated in a multidisciplinary international conference entitled “Surveillance, Form, Affect” held at the Education University of Hong Kong, December 7–9. There were 25 presenters (including me) and two keynote speakers who came from Canada, the United States, Hong Kong, China, Germany, Denmark, and England. Most of the conference papers used either fictional narratives or online materials to explore various surveillance issues such as “drone imaginaries to evoke an intensified sensory regime of (panoptic) non-human (machine) surveillance”; “the development of Cold War surveillance into contemporary ‘global’ consciousness”; “spatial surveillance” manifested in science-fiction media; a “reparative reading” as post-paranoid reading; the potentials for life-logging practices as sousveillance to shift the subject position in contemporary surveillance societies; a Sikh Canadian’s selfie video to reveal and resist racial profiling; “metamorphosis of (the Indian amateur) pornographic video as surveillance and voyeurism coalesce”; the novel “as a model of empathetic surveillance” and “the limits of novelistic empathy”; problems arising

these different forms of panoptic racial surveillance in 1930s Chicago and 1990s New York, white antagonism against—or anxiety over—the influx of non-white people to large metropolitan areas in the United States are similar and equally intense, for it is seen as “affecting life chances” of white America by threatening those aspects of society that it had exclusively dominated, such as professional employment and upper-echelon income (Lyon 25).

Compare Ronald Takaki’s description of white response to southern blacks’ inflow into Chicago with Lee’s description of white protestors surrounding Kwang’s house to impeach him for smuggling illegal immigrants:

The black migration to Chicago sparked an explosion of white resistance. “A new problem, demanding early solution, is facing Chicago,” the *Tribune* warned. “It pertains to the sudden and unprecedented influx of southern Negro laborers.” (Takaki 319)

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from online games and virtual worlds under systemic surveillance of state security agencies; how “freedom of (tracked) movement” and “benevolent dictatorship” “can be mutually constitutive” in video games; how surveillance as a passive “form of sensory data collection” in “the age of big data” “complicates the opposition between passivity and activity, or passivity and will”; “intellectual anarchism”—seeking individual autonomy—as “a strong potential to destabilize the power of surveillance”; “weak surveillance” as “self-surveillance” or “a self-administered self-objectification”; multiple and ambiguous modes of surveillance with no intention and subject in Kafka’s *Trial*; accepting surveillance as a normalized form of existence rather than as a disciplinary coercion; “an optimal degree of surveillance” necessary in schools “between anarchism and managerism”; intensified Internet surveillance and the resistance which that surveillance entails; and how contemporary American fictions critique data flows with algorithmic relations. One keynote paper examined the significance of “paranoid reading” as a literary form amid the current debate over “surface” and “depth” reading, and the “intersection” of orientalism (racial stereotyping) and surveillance. The other key note concentrated on how we are identified (classified or categorized) by our similarities or connections to others (“homophily”), and how our future probability (predictability) is measured by our habits in Big Data. All these presentations clearly indicate that we are living in a world of ubiquitous digital surveillance in an age of Big Data, in which, as someone pointed out, “surveillance takes on a more polyvalent, a more ambiguous, a more democratizing function.” Hence, we have become so desensitized to the milieu of surveillance that we don’t even pay much attention to the dystopic potential of these surveillance societies, and we are willing to participate in this surveillance culture for the purpose of safety, self-disclosure, sharing information, forming social networks, and so on. My primary concern with respect to this surveillance world is what kind of subjectivity can be or will be constructed. It seems to me that categorized identity, narcissistic self-disclosure or self-displaying performances, and superficial but broad human relations have become more prevalent whereas individual subjectivity, the intricacies of the human mind, and in-depth human relations have attenuated. With this concern, my dissertation explores how panoptic white surveillance interlocks the subject formation of racial minorities in white America.

[P]eople stand behind two sewn-together sheets spray-painted with the words: AMERICA FOR AMERICANS. They are generally younger, white, male, mostly talking and laughing and pointing to the house. They are drinking. Several of them intermittently wave a huge flag. One of them raises his fist and jumps up and down and shouts, “We want out fucking future back.” (C. Lee 331-32)

Such white hostility toward non-white newcomers—based on their exclusive ownership of America—needs panoptic racial surveillance as means of controlling or managing all possible non-white menaces to white America, whether their surveillance depends on a visible and coercive framework or a hidden and disguised framework.

In addition, panoptic racial surveillance has thrust upon non-white people a self-inflicted psychological operation in which they watch themselves by the prevailing white gaze. Indeed, as Paulo Vaz and Fernanda Bruno point out, “any practice of surveillance entails [such] self-surveillance.” And “it is the simultaneity [of external surveillance and self-surveillance] that accounts for the acceptance and legitimization of power relations” (273). In this phase of self-surveillance in which non-white people “inscribe in [themselves] the power relation,” racial surveillance is exerted not only as an externally repressive force—for any self-surveillance is induced by external surveillance—but also as the ever-present obsession (Foucault 202). Here the very panoptic effect of white surveillance—through an internalized white gaze—works its way into the minds of non-white people. Furthermore, “in the cultural context of white racial supremacy,” the nature of such self-surveillance mutates into self-improving desires or efforts in which a non-white person tries to transform himself or herself into a white man or woman in most aspects, or a successful and assimilated minority who achieves a socio-cultural status closer to that of white people in mainstream American society (Wiegman 83). In this form of self-surveillance, the distinction between self and white other is more obscured or

even erased, since panoptic white surveillance functions as fully internalized white American norms, values, and beliefs that shape not only non-white person's behaviors and attitudes but also his or her ideal self-image and view of the world. This modified self-surveillance is manifested in the disciplinary and normalizing work that whiteness makes for non-white people in a wide variety of forms.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, through intertextual readings of Wright's *Native Son* and Lee's *Native Speaker* and also through close readings of these novels individually, this dissertation explores—and here I'm using Justin E. C. Tetrault's phrase, "what surveillance *does to us*" (245)— what panoptic white surveillance *does* to post-bellum African Americans and post-Korean War Korean Americans, specifically through a combination of different forms of external surveillance and the technology of self-surveillance.

## Two Key Terms

The two terms "panoptic" and "white America" frequently appear throughout this dissertation. I use the term "panoptic" to signify the surveillance of watching everything; in other words, ever-present and omnipresent watching, which our current social environment of ubiquitous CCTVs evokes. It also indicates "the subjective sense of being a [constant] watcher and of being [constantly] watched" (Marx 303). The term "white America" is employed here with two meanings: white Americans and white-dominated

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<sup>11</sup> I use the term "whiteness" to describe the ways in which middle-class white culture is widely perceived and accepted as the natural and desirable principles of behavior and thought in mainstream American society. Tim Engles even uses the word "doxic" to characterize whiteness, for he finds that "acceptable, mainstream American behavior and mores are doxically white in that they match most closely what have become the ways of most middle-class white Americans, while their status *as such* tends to pass unmarked" (28–29). For his discussion about "doxic whiteness," see his 1997 article, titled "'Visions of me in the whitest raw light': Assimilation and Doxic Whiteness in Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker*."

America or American society. Indeed, “white America” in both senses is the material condition that enables panoptic white surveillance to occur in the United States.

### **Chapter Organization and Concepts Included**

This dissertation is organized into four chapters. In Chapter 1, I specifically explore how the black ghetto of early 1930s Chicago and the ethnic enclave of early 1990s New York City were completely surrounded by external racial surveillance of white America when white anti-black and anti-immigrant sentiments were similarly intense, which unfolds in Wright’s *Native Son* and Lee’s *Native Speaker*. Chapter 2 investigates how such panoptic white surveillance impinges upon the inner life and the formation of personalities of post-bellum African Americans by examining Bigger’s paranoid posture and resentment toward the white world and Green’s self-effacing compliance with white expectations. In both Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, I focus entirely on Lee’s *Native Speaker* by exploring the “complex entanglements” of Henry’s self-effacement, the monitored racial relations of narcissistic white America, and Henry’s Korean cultural and historical legacy (J. Kim 119). Examining three narcissistic characters of white America in its relations with Asia and Asian Americans, as well as with Korea and Korean Americans, these two chapters reveal how narcissistic white America disciplines Henry to become an ethnic spy who betrays his own kind for white empowerment. In the process, we find Henry’s treacherous ethnic spying is a ramification of his self-effacement formed not only through his habitual self-surveillance that hegemonic white culture induces him to perform throughout his life, but also in the Korean cultural and historical context. Yet we also see Henry is in the process of

regaining his soul through his engagement in Kwang's multi-ethnic politics based on traditional Korean values.

In these four chapters, I address not African/African-American, Asian American, and Korean theoretical concepts to enhance comprehensive and deep understanding of Bigger's and Henry's "fears and despairs" in the world of ubiquitous racial surveillance of white America. In particular, I rely upon: Michel Foucault's "panopticon" theory; William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs's concept of "cultural paranoia"; Colleen Lye's notion of "American Orientalism"; Louise Owens's notion of the "tricky mirror"; Frantz Fanon's theory of "colonized mentality"; the Korean concept of self; and Choi Sang-Chin and Kim Kibum's concept of "nunchi." All these concepts are elaborated in the following four chapters.

Although this dissertation concentrates on white America's surveillance of African and Korean Americans, but it also aims to shed light on the larger and more complex internal/international racial control of white America to secure undemocratic white hegemony in and outside of America.

## CHAPTER 1

PANOPTIC GAZE OF RACIAL SURVEILLANCE IN RICHARD WRIGHT'S  
*NATIVE SON* AND CHANG-RAE LEE'S *NATIVE SPEAKER*

Woke up this morning  
 FB eye under my bed  
 Said I woke up this morning  
 FB eye under my bed  
 Told me all I dreamed last night, every word I said.

Everywhere I look, Lord  
 I see FB eyes  
 Said everywhere I look, Lord  
 I find FB eyes  
 I'm getting sick and tired of gover'nment spies.  
 —Richard Wright, “The FB Eye Blues.”

[T]here's an infrastructure in place in the United States and worldwide that NSA has built in cooperation with other governments as well that intercepts basically every digital communication, every radio communication, every analog communication that it has sensors in place to detect. And with these capabilities, basically, the vast majority of human and computer-computer communications, device-based communications, which sort of inform the relationships between humans are automatically ingested without targeting.

—Edward Snowden, *Citizen Four*.

### **Panoptic Racial Surveillance in White America**

Ever since the U.S. chattel-slave system in which black slaves were constantly scrutinized by white slave owners or their white surrogates, not only while working on panoptic plantations but also in their daily routines, white surveillance has been exerted on racialized non-whites as an overt or insidious “exercise of White racial power” to

exploit non-white groups as well as to repress them from encroaching on economic resources and vested interests that whites have sought to monopolize (C.J. Kim 117). In this white America, ethnic minorities such as Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans—regardless of their diverse differences in ethnicity, nativity, and culture—“have been othered into” perilous “neo-Americans,” posing potential threats to white hegemony, and thus must be subject to panoptic white surveillance (Fiske 81; C. Lee 17). Here the white surveillance reifies social control over non-white groups to aid in maintaining white domination in American society.

Furthermore, we are living in a Post-Snowden world, which means we are aware that American intelligence organizations such as the National Security Agency are engaging in mass surveillance of foreign governments and the American public. In such a U.S.-dominated global surveillance state, spy businesses are flourishing with the rapid development and spread of digital technologies. For example, on 8 July 2015, WikiLeaks, a surveillant of the surveillant, released more than one million emails between Hacking Team—a privately-owned Italian spy software firm—and its clients. The released data revealed that governments and corporations around the world had bought spy tools from Hacking Team to covertly and indiscriminately monitor computer and mobile phone users.<sup>12</sup>

Because of its racialized core, this manifestation of the triangulated connection

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<sup>12</sup> According to Wikipedia, Hacking Team’s spy tools—“Remote Control Systems (RCS)” —“enable” their clients “to monitor the communications of Internet users, decipher their encrypted files and emails, record Skype and other Voice over IP communications, and remotely activate microphones and cameras on target computers.” The firm sold them to a number of governments—“dozens of countries across six continents”—and corporations such as Barclay’s Bank and British Telecom in the U.K. and Deutsche Bank of Germany. In particular, Italy, Mexico, and the U.S. are frequent customers and have bought their products more than four times via different governmental agencies. In the U.S., for example, the FBI, CIA, Department of Defense, and Drug Enforcement Agency are all listed as clients of Hacking Team. Indeed, this list indicates the triangulated connection among spy businesses, nation states, and corporations.