



**NO-NO BOY'S DILEMMA:
GAME THEORY AND
JAPANESE AMERICAN
INTERNMENT LITERATURE**

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Asian Americans, the model minority myth tells us, are winners. They don't just work longer, study harder, and do math better than anyone else around; as the last few Olympic Games have demonstrated, their brethren can also swim faster, jump higher, and hit a shuttlecock farther than seems humanly possible. Indeed, as the recent doping scandal that erupted over Chinese swimmer Ye Shiwen and the American media's many exposés of China's draconian athletic training schools for young children collectively suggest, the Asian body's capacity for play, like its capacity for toil, *is* something more (or less) than human.

In this essay, I attend to that racial ludic potential as it became an increasing source of national anxiety during one of the most "unplayful" moments in American history: the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent evacuation and imprisonment of over 100,000 Japanese Americans. Through my readings of three internment-era Japanese American novels, I demonstrate that games, as both formal and thematic vehicles, fundamentally shaped representations of racial and national identity for both Asian American novelists and for State-sponsored discourses surrounding the nation's entrance into the Second World War. Drawing on a Cold War phenomenon that Steven Belletto has recently dubbed "the game theory narrative," I suggest that the concepts of strategic play and gaming are crucial to

understanding broader questions in Asian American literature about identity, authenticity and national belonging - and to recognizing, furthermore, the fundamentally game-like attributes which inhere in the internment as a site of historical memory.

In the wake of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the long-standing stereotype of the "inscrutable Oriental," which had been an extant source of national consternation,¹ took on peculiarly ludic resonances in the American imagination. According to the Roosevelt Administration, the 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent who called the West Coast home were problematic essentially because they were as superhumanly good at playing games as they were at farming. Their "inscrutability," in other words, was troubling precisely because it constituted the ultimate poker face, making it impossible, as Dillon S. Myer, Director of the War Relocation Authority, would complain, to tell whether they were thinking "what we think they are thinking" (55); which meant, after Pearl Harbor, that their outward declarations of loyalty to America might be nothing more than strategic bluffs to conceal their subversive intentions.

Thus, testifying before a House Committee in 1942, Earl Warren, then Attorney General of California, would rationalize the relocation and internment of Japanese Americans not by referring, as the military had, to the *physical* menace that their bodies supposedly presented to national security - nor, like the media, to the *economic* threat engendered by their extraordinary agricultural competence - but to the far more galling problem of their "hearts and minds":

When we are dealing with the Caucasian race, we have methods that will test the loyalty of them, and we believe that we can, in dealing with the Germans and Italians, arrive at some fairly sound conclusions . . . But when we deal with the Japanese we are in an entirely different field and we can not form any opinion that we believe to be sound. (qtd. in Weglan 38-39)

Like Myer, Warren essentially defines whiteness as a "tell" which need only be "read" correctly in order to decode a person's intentions; or at least, to make "some fairly sound conclusions" about where their allegiances lie. But, also like Myer, he is ultimately forced to admit that the nation's

investment in a particular set of racial assumptions had produced its own paradox - making race, for non-Caucasians in general and Asian Americans in particular, into a kind of "anti-tell."² (This is especially evident in the logical fallacy which underwrites his statement: if, as he claims, race *is* the determining factor in establishing loyalty - i.e. Caucasians can be tested because they are Caucasians - then it does not follow that the loyalty of Japanese Americans cannot be determined *because* of their race.) Such a contradiction reveals, in short, that the discursive strategies which denied the possibility of non-Caucasian interiority (and humanity) in the first place are the very ones which backfire when those bodies' intangible loyalties need to be ascertained. The dilemma facing the national security state after Pearl Harbor, then, was how to separate, as John L. Dewitt, Commanding General of the Western Defense Command and the man behind the relocation plan, would put it, "the sheep from the goats"³; to develop, in other words, a quasi-scientific method for "reading" the intentions of Japanese Americans.

Within a decade, such a method would in fact emerge: it was called game theory. In recent years, scholars working in Cold War Studies have begun to turn away from Alan Nadel's influential paradigm of "containment culture" and have increasingly attributed the peculiarities of the atomic age to mid-century America's brief but memorable flirtation with an applied branch of mathematics called game theory. This theory, which, according to Steven Belletto, claimed to be able "to prevent nuclear exchange by conceptualizing the cold war as a game, and by playing this game according to specific rational strategies" (333), would become the explicit basis of the Eisenhower Administration's foreign policy, most evident in its response to the U.S.-Soviet nuclear conflict.⁴ I argue, however, that several years before critics have identified its first atomic applications, game theory was being used against a yellow menace rather than a red one. America's obsession during the Cold War with the terrifying threat of "death from above" was, I suggest, both anticipated and shaped during the decidedly hot war which preceded it by the country's fear of destruction from *within*, its long-standing anti-Asian sentiment whipped into a frenzy by sensational media outlets which (fallaciously) reported on the growing strength of a "Fifth Column" of Japanese American saboteurs ready to blow up military bases, burn down the Golden Gate Bridge, and massacre whole cities of God-fearing American people along

with their democratic ideals.⁵

Game theory was, in essence, a way of allaying those fears by reassuring the American public that "scientific redemption" was near at hand. Most often associated with mathematician John von Neumann, game theory emerged from von Neumann's conviction that there was something decidedly "untrivial" about games like poker, bridge, and even baseball; for him, such games were not metaphorical but literal models of real-life conflict in miniature, and he set about translating their logic to economic, and eventually military, applications. "Real life consists of bluffing, of little tactics of deception, of asking yourself what is the other man going to think I mean to do," he is reported to have said, "and that is what games are about in my theory" (qtd. in Poundstone 6). And that, I will argue, is also what they were about during the internment years. While neither veteran military commanders like DeWitt nor Japanese American writers like John Okada would explicitly invoke the term "game theory," their Manichean approach to the internment and the explicitly self-reflexive language they used to describe the loyalty questionnaire - not to mention the novelists' extensive uses of games like poker, bridge, boxing and craps to thematize that dilemma - provocatively anticipated von Neumann's interest in defining international (and interpersonal) conflict as a high-stakes parlor game being played out in real-time.

Reading the internment's game-theoretical dimensions is fruitful in part because the question of loyalty is, at its core, a question of self-reflexive observation - of, as Myer put it, figuring out whether someone is thinking what you think they are thinking. This is the same question which von Neumann asked when he wondered whether there was always a rational way to play a game; which is to say, a way of choosing an optimal strategy given an inherent amount of uncertainty about the other players' intentions.⁶ It is also the question which we find being asked, in a variety of ways, by Japanese American novels that revolve around World War II and the interment, especially John Okada's *No-No Boy*, Milton Murayama's *All I Asking For is my Body*, and Hiroshi Nakamura's often-overlooked *Treadmill*. For Murayama, the choice between racial and national allegiance is neatly resolved through the main character's discovery of "padrolling" (increasing the odds of a particular dice roll by picking the dice up in certain combinations), which allows him to win enough money at craps games to pay off the family's debt and, at the

same time, justifies his treasonous and "unfilial" decision to enlist in the U.S. Army.

But for Okada and Nakamura, who were themselves both ex-internees, the government's infamous loyalty questionnaire produced a complex web of contingency and uncertainty in which characters find themselves insisting that their decisions to answer yes or no "count" even while recognizing the inherent contradictions and injustice of being asked, as one character in Okada's novel puts it, to "prove that [one] deserved to enjoy those rights which should rightfully have been his" (120). Officially known as the Leave Clearance Form, the loyalty questionnaire was a document distributed by the government to all internees older than 17, and has in fact become one of the most defining moments in the internment experience and in its critical appraisal. The controversy that subsequently erupted in the camps was over two specific questions:

27. Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty wherever ordered?

28. Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization?

What is perhaps most fascinating about Okada's and Nakamura's novels, then, is what they reveal about the "real" reasons behind individual responses to the loyalty questionnaire and the *strategy*, rather than merely the injustice, that characterized those decision-making processes. While political convictions, ideological stances and cultural values are all offered as possible motivations for answering in a particular way, most of the characters wind up answering the *reverse* of their desires, guided far more often by their attempts to respond, as in *Treadmill*, based on how they think the other internees will respond, or on what they think the government expects them to say.

Taken as a whole, then, these works suggest that the internment was in many ways a game, one in which, as Nakamura puts it, "we cheated, we lied, we were honest, we were brave, we stood on the hot burning sands and made our

decisions, each according to his own conscience" (Preface, unpublished). The formal preference for parataxis that we see in all three novels, but particularly in those which deal directly with the loyalty questionnaire, reflects, too, their contention that racial, national and gender identities are not exactly static - though, with Okada's Ichiro Yamada, his decision to answer "no-no" both defines and confines him for years to come - but neither are they entirely performative. Rather, they are peculiarly modern in the way that Niklas Luhmann defines modernity, in which "identities" essentially become "'frames' that we take for ourselves" (101).

The world, it would seem, is no longer a stage upon which we play our roles; it resembles much more a giant poker table across which we silently scrutinize our opponents, observing, as Mark Seltzer puts it, "what and how the observed observer can't observe—and whether he can observe that or not" (101). The question then becomes: how can games, with their rule-based contingencies and their forms of self-reflexive observation, change the ways in which we conceptualize an identity like "Japanese American," particularly in a historic moment that makes race the limiting case for observation? If, in our current era, racial identity is increasingly characterized as a "race card," what might closer attention to games tell us about the value of play-as-politics? And, finally, how might literature, which might be considered a "form game" in its own right, allow us to rethink the stakes of racial difference through the distinction between form and content, between game and world?⁷ These are the questions which guide not only this essay, but the novels themselves; my goal, then, is to ask not only *why* they are interested in games, but to think about how that interest becomes a vehicle for their political and aesthetic representational aims more broadly.

I should make it clear from the outset that I am not interested in uncovering documentary evidence of a causal connection between game theory as it was used by the RAND corporation during the Cold War and its employment during the early years of World War II; I will be the first to admit that no military correspondence nor white paper suggests as much. Instead, I use game theory as a way to take games seriously, and to disengage with their vernacular definitions as temporary diversions or "win-lose" propositions. I consider game theory most useful for its insights into the structural similarities between strategic conflict and parlor games; its ability to translate the alien terrain of "modern, scientific

warfare" (McDonald 126) into a far more familiar cultural analogy; and its novel expansion of the limited common usage of "game" to include a much wider variety of social interactions. The ability to understand social interaction as a literal rather than metaphoric game, one in which the issue of "choice" collides with multiple forms of constraint, is, I suggest, crucial to understanding the persistent preoccupation with individual and national interdependence that characterizes both official and literary narratives about the internment.

Since the 1950s, and especially over the last decade or so, critics in the humanities in particular have taken game theory to task for its ostensibly "dehumanizing" mechanisms, its ability to foreclose the "real life" complexity of decision-making - and the equally real and complex facets of race, gender and class - by overemphasizing conflict's purely "rational" dimensions. These critics' readings of influential postwar American works like Philip Dick's *Solar Lottery*, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, and Stanley Kubrick's Cold War classic film "Dr. Strangelove" thus tend to treat such cultural productions as categorical denunciations of game theory as a "deterministic model of behavior that evacuates human agency" (Cagle v). Such readings have in turn served as the basis for larger arguments being made about Cold War America's embrace of game theory within a broader framework of psychic and structural fragmentation that is understood to characterize an inherently "postmodern" sensibility.⁸

While there is no denying that authors like Dick, by their own admission, wanted to critique the nation's over-reliance on game theory (and on "science" more generally), my response to those accusations, and those regarding the prudence of applying such a "dehumanizing" theory to an indisputably anthropocentric field like Ethnic Studies, would be to point to game theory's inherent affinity with secular humanist discourses more broadly. Game theory was *not*, despite prevailing critical arguments to the contrary, primarily an attempt to use binary logic as a substitution for "real" human complexity; nor did its axiomatic assumptions about the rationality of its players preclude their inherent "humanity." Far from it: being "rational," for von Neumann, was part and parcel of being human. Rationality is what allows us to foresee the consequences of our decisions; it is also what lets us weigh the various "human" factors inherent in those choices - and hence allows us to make decisions (and

play games) in the first place. As Oskar Morgenstern, who with von Neumann authored their seminal *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*, points out, "rational behavior is not an assumption of [game] theory; rather, its identification is one of its outcomes" (267).⁹

Games thus represent a particularly "human" cultural innovation: as Roger Caillois has argued, they discipline the universal impulse to "play" found throughout the animal kingdom into a formal ludic framework particular to *homo sapiens*; they are, as J. Huizinga points out, a "humane," because no longer fatal, means of demonstrating one's indisputable superiority.¹⁰ Recognizing, then, that game theory is not some anti-humanist bogeyman, but offers a nuanced account of what it *means* to be human in an era characterized by rapid technological development and the increasing globalization of conflict, is also to recognize the compelling affinities between games and certain post-human, rather than just post-modern, elements of contemporary American literature and society. In short, Asian American literature's desire to foreground the "humanity" of its characters - and, especially, to use this humanity as a way of affirming the universality of those characters' experiences despite the particularity of their racial difference - is facilitated, not impeded, by its simultaneous foregrounding of games.

What would you do?

William Poundstone's critically-acclaimed *Prisoner's Dilemma*, the *San Francisco Chronicle* notes, is simultaneously "a fascinating biography of von Neumann . . . and a brilliant social history of game theory." Combining, in other words, the math with the man, Poundstone remains expressly invested in the entirely "human" foundations of game theory that I have just been discussing. He thus opens his book like this:

A man was crossing a river with his wife and mother. A giraffe appeared on the opposite bank. The man drew his gun on the beast, and the giraffe said, "If you shoot, your mother will die. If you don't shoot, your wife will die." What should the man do? (2)

This is not, the author readily admits, a story of his own

invention; it is a traditional African "dilemma tale," told by the Popo of Dahomey. But as the inaugural example in a book which is all about games and game theory, it tells us several things. First, that the concept of dilemmas which require interdependent and often undesirable choices to be made are universal; second, that "realism" is of only partial importance (how the giraffe is able to talk, and how it might make good upon its sinister promises, are rather beside the point); third, that such dilemmas are often the result of our own initiative (after all, it was the man, not the giraffe, who first exposed his murderous intentions); and finally, that they reveal the most sacrosanct values of any given society; which, as in this example, most often revolve around the concept of family.

Compare Poundstone's example to a scene drawn from Milton Murayama's *All I Asking For Is My Body*, an internment-era *Bildungsroman* narrated by Kiyō Oyama, a young Japanese American boy growing up in a series of Hawaiian plantation towns:

[My teacher Mr. Takemoto said:] "Don't bring any shame to the Japanese race. Don't shame your family name and your parents . . ." In my eighth grade class he'd said, "If your mother and wife were drowning and you could save only one of them, which would you save?" . . . "There's no doubt that the white man would save his wife. But what would you do? You have only one mother, you can have only one mother . . ." he'd rub his fingers. (65)

Here, the question "What would you do?" is entirely rhetorical, because race works to make independent thought both unnecessary and undesirable: if one is white, one saves one's wife; if Japanese, one's mother.¹¹ Race, in other words, functions as what game theory defines as a pure strategy, "a complete description of a particular way to play a game, [one which] must prescribe actions so thoroughly that you never have to make a decision in following it" (Poundstone 48, emphasis omitted); as John McDonald, one of the journalists who introduced game theory to the popular imagination through publications like *Fortune* magazine, put it, "strategy is a policy devised to reduce and control . . . uncertainties" (81).

Game theory, as rhetoric, is powerful precisely because it allows individuals to forego the uncertainties associated with emotion and thought in favor of swift and decisive action,

reducing complex situations to binary decisions which can be made despite moral ambiguities. On the one hand, as we see in *All I Asking For*, this means that affect has no effect; national loyalty is not a *feeling*, it is a strategy. Such an assertion allows Mr. Takemoto to downplay the transformative effects of immigration and assimilation by aligning racial and national values, using the dilemma tale to draw a didactic line that yokes the nation-state to its diasporic communities. Dedicated "to the family," Murayama's novella is particularly interesting because it constructs, even while it critiques, a narratively coherent Japanese "transnation" by foregrounding the same rhetorical strategies that General DeWitt had himself deployed to justify the internment.¹² "In the war in which we are now engaged racial affinities are not severed by migration," DeWitt insisted. "To conclude otherwise is to expect that children born of white parents on Japanese soil sever all racial affinity and become loyal Japanese subjects, ready . . . if necessary, to die for Japan in a war against the nation of their parents."¹³

That the parent-child relation would serve as a metonymy for the nation-subject relation is nothing new; but its formal, rather than affective, centrality to the novel is worth emphasizing. Like a number of other internment-era works, *All I Asking For* draws an explicit parallel between filial piety and national loyalty, suggesting that the same cultural values of obligation, obedience and reciprocity underwrite and mutually reinforce one another. The primary conflict in the novella, after all, is between Kiyō's parents and his older brother Tosh: as the eldest son in a family besieged with a \$6,000 debt accumulated by previous generations, Tosh is required to surrender not only his educational aspirations and then his wages, but, as the novel's title implies, his very body to the voracious demands of his familial and national obligations.

While Mr. Snook, another of Kiyō's eight-grade teachers, becomes the novel's official mouthpiece for lodging a Marxist critique against the plantation hierarchy, explicitly using Japanese "filiality" and other cultural values to explain the group's "passive" acceptance of their place at the bottom of the social structure (32), Tosh serves, in more ways than one, to translate that discourse into an impassioned rallying cry which, like the pidgin English of the title, seeks to unify the oppressed across racial and linguistic divides by literally taking back the means of production: the body. The plea for autonomy, for "my body," becomes, however, a simultaneous

plea to allow that body to keep for itself not simply the fruits of its labor, but those derived from its sportive *play*. After getting his hands on a series of Jimmy DeForest's "How To Box" pamphlets, Tosh becomes obsessed with boxing, a pastime which disturbs his parents not only because it takes time away from his familial obligations, but because it threatens to turn his oratory skills - "you punch with words," Kiyō berates him - into threatening physical advantages. And indeed, it isn't long before the Oyama supper table becomes a boxing ring and, while Kiyō looks on, Tosh "thr[ows] a left hook to father's solar plexus, as Jimmy DeForest called it" (44).

Lest we read this "unthinkable" (45) martial confrontation between Tosh and Mr. Oyama as a blunt analogy for the struggle between youthful American "individuality" and patriarchal Japanese "group-think," however, Murayama sets this scene on the eve of Pearl Harbor, making the difference between punches thrown to defeat a matched opponent in play, and those aimed in earnest at an unsuspecting victim, into a subtle distinction between war and surprise attack. For Kiyō, war's similarity to a game - "everything, even wars, had certain basic rules" (84) - makes it, like Tosh's boxing, an inherently "noble" pursuit in spite of its casualties; whereas the Japanese military strike, like Tosh's attack upon his aged father, seems not only "criminal," but evidence of the Japanese nation's unsportsmanlike "cowardice."

Recognizing, suddenly, the pragmatism of Tosh's depiction of their father as "the guy that holds all the cards," Kiyō rebels simultaneously against his parents' and the Japanese nation's refusal to "play fair" by deciding to volunteer for the American draft. I read this moment as an enabling rhetorical strategy which allows Murayama to critique the hypocrisies of American exceptionalism while remaining fully aware of its captivating appeal to the national subject who finds opportunities for self-determination within those elisions. Just as boxing allows Tosh to find a more acceptable physical outlet for his psychic and emotional aggression, enlisting allows Kiyō to reclaim his body for himself - though he remains seemingly unaware of the irony that he can only do so by offering that body up as a sacrifice to an equally oppressive set of national ideals. Here we see the fantasy of escaping one's circumstances, a theme that runs through so many immigrant narratives, getting translated from labor, to sport, to war. Mr. and Mrs. Oyama's failed attempts to realize the American dream through

immigration engender Tosh's alternative strategy to win fame and fortune through boxing; when he gets knocked out after just a few match-ups, Kiyo trades fighting games for war games, believing, like Tosh, that "once you fought, you earned the right to complain and participate, you earned a right to a future" (98).

For a novel which is resolutely realist - which, as Jinqi Ling has noted, takes advantage of that mode's transformative rather than homogenizing potential to capture the complexity of its subject matter¹⁴ - the last four pages of *All I Asking For*, which detail Kiyo's actions after enlisting, seem almost to mock the book's painstaking portrayal of each character's inability to escape the entrenched institutional constraints placed upon him. While sporting games, as I have shown, provide Murayama with both metaphor and means to lodge a critique of Japanese American social and cultural conditions in early twentieth-century Hawaii, those games ultimately produce little more than moral victories for Tosh and Kiyo; as they, and the reader, are constantly reminded, boxing has done nothing to ameliorate the \$6,000 debt which plagues the family like a terminal illness. How, then, are we to read the novel's closing section, in which Kiyo enters the Army with \$25 in his pocket, starts joining craps games, discovers a way to "padroll," and in less than forty-eight hours wins enough to mail a \$6,000 check back home with instructions to "pay up all the debt"?¹⁵

Given the novel's explicit use of boxing as a means of cleaving together "war" and "game," it seems reasonable to read Kiyo's actions within his own framework for understanding Tosh's attack on Mr. Oyama and Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor: which is to say, as cowardly perversions of the game's noble ideals. After his craps victory, Kiyo is haunted by the unspoken charge of "playing dirty," of robbing his unsuspecting fellow soldiers - "Thank God they were strangers!" (101) - by feigning unfamiliarity with the game. But, he tells himself, "it wasn't really cheating . . . it was dog eat dog, every dog was after something for nothing, you never gave a dog an even break" (103). It is difficult as a reader to recognize amidst this newfound callousness the same young boy who decried the dehumanizing machinery of the plantation system a mere fifty pages earlier. Indeed, what is especially disturbing about his victory is that it becomes "too easy" for Kiyo to slip into the mindset of Mr. Nelson, the plantation boss: "it was their fault if they couldn't spot it," he declares of

his now-impooverished fellow players. "Besides, if I didn't take their money, another padroller would've."

The point here is not that games allow one to entirely dismiss the question of moral responsibility or to wholly justify its abuses; rather, as I suggested at the beginning of this section, the goal of developing a strategy for play is to allow one to act *in spite of* the logical and ethical uncertainties that emerge. For most of the novel, the racial valence of "Japaneseness" proves to be a particularly effective strategy, mostly because it calibrates the individual's transnational value system. But after Pearl Harbor, when the Japanese nation itself adopts an entirely different strategy - what Mr. Takemoto labels "pragmatism," arguing that "nations act on a pragmatic basis, they do what they think is best for the moment" (82) - Kiyoo, too, opts for a policy of self-interest. From this perspective, the craps game represents a particular form of capitalist accumulation, and Kiyoo's inherent faith in the opportunities, rather than limits, of that game - "believe in the odds. That's the only way" becomes his mantra - suggests that his victory is also a victory for American capitalism and the structural inequalities upon which it relies.

Conscience v. Contrivance

Because the Japanese population of Hawaii was never interned - largely due, as Murayama's novel suggests, to their crucial role in the plantation economy - we can read *All I Asking For* as a way of affirming the centrality of games to mid-century Japanese American literature more generally, rather than seeing gameplay as the exclusive province of internment narratives. At the same time, however, *All I Asking For* shares with its mainland counterparts a preoccupation with the racial and national dimensions of those games, as well as an impulse to define "Japaneseness" as a set of behavioral and psychic strategies (rather than intangible cultural affects) whose contradictions are brought into sharp relief by the watershed event of Pearl Harbor. Here, I use Hiroshi Nakamura's often-overlooked novel *Treadmill* to trace the rhetorical residues of that conflict as it intersects with what General DeWitt would call the "truly American" innovation of the internment, investigating the often unexpected ways in which the State's reductive attempts to determine Japanese American loyalty were reproduced, rather than contested, by the internees' own decision-making strategies; "inscrutability,"

in other words, becomes a problem not only for the American government, but for the "inscrutable" Japanese Americans themselves.

The story of Hiroshi Nakamura, the author, is nearly as tragic as the one which he weaves about the internment in his remarkably ambitious novel. The third son of immigrants from Hiroshima, Nakamura was a brilliant individual whose life became a painful testament to the crushing limitations of racial difference. After graduating from UC Berkeley, Hiroshi's attempts to publish a series of short stories were met with constant rejection, despite his strategic use of an American pseudonym. After the war, his efforts to publish *Treadmill* - an internment novel which is unique for having been written during the camp experience itself - under his own name met with similar resistance; as his widow Mary, who typed the manuscript during the couple's imprisonment in Tule Lake, explains in the Foreword, "several publishers liked *Treadmill* but wrote to him that they could not publish it because they feared . . . it could damage their reputation." This seemed to be the final straw for Hiroshi: he gave up his dreams of becoming a professional writer, went into the coin-operated washer/dryer business and, twenty years later, died of stomach cancer at the age of fifty-eight.

The historical parallels between *Treadmill*'s subsequent rediscovery and the almost simultaneous rehabilitation of its contemporaneous counterpart, John Okada's *No-No Boy*, are, to say the least, uncanny. Like *No-No Boy*, *Treadmill* was discovered entirely by chance by an Asian American literary critic in the 1970s; Peter Suzuki, like Jeffrey Paul Chan four years before him, immediately sought out the author, only to be informed by his widow that the writer had died literally months before, believing, as Okada did, that "Asian America had rejected his work." Vowing to remedy this tragic oversight, Suzuki, also like Chan, set about trying to find a publisher for the novel, eventually convincing Mosaic Press to release it in 1996.

Why, then, did *Treadmill* immediately lapse back into obscurity while *No-No Boy* has since become a canonical mainstay in Asian American literature? Both novels tell us much about the hostile literary market facing Asian American authors in the postwar years; but I think they tell us even more about Asian America's historical investment in a particular aesthetic response to its own institutional position, especially the largely bellicose and defiant stance associated

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with Frank Chin et al. which No-No Boy perfectly epitomized but which Nakamura's novel in many ways resisted. Treadmill's meditations about the internment's divisive effect on cultural and national solidarity thus serve as a broader comment on the inherent contradictions underwriting various forms of literary and political representation. Such an investigation sheds light not only on the representational conflicts within the Japanese American community which were the historical consequence of the internment, but on the protracted afterlife of that conflict as it continues to afflict Asian American Studies and its self-avowed representational crisis.

Treadmill is on every level a narrative about interdependent, strategic decision-making. At times, it uses literal games to dramatize this process, and the novel is shot through with scenes of characters playing bridge, baseball, and go. But just as often, it documents the far more nuanced games which the characters play, documenting the complex rhetorical strategies which they develop in order to combat the ever-present uncertainty and instability which define their daily existence. Peter Suzuki is entirely sensitive to such ludic elements:

[An] underlying theme [of the novel] is that, despite the seemingly clear-cut nature of many War Relocation Authority policies, there were always two sides to each of them . . . they required great thought and deliberation on the part of the people in deciding which to follow, and when, ultimately, choices were made . . . there were no satisfying solutions as the choices themselves generated unanticipated situations and problems. As a consequence, the incarcerated were forever facing dilemmas. (Introduction, emphasis mine)

We might read the novel's full title - Treadmill: A Documentary Novel - as an early example of Nakamura's grappling with that dilemma. The very term "documentary," with its factual and didactic connotations, belies an attempt at authorial transparency, a keen awareness of conflicting responsibilities to both an "objective" historical perspective which shows the internment "as it really was," and at the same time to a certain literary impulse to make that body of facts aesthetically meaningful. Nakamura's choice of narrator,

too, reveals his negotiations between these two representational scales: the "big picture" of history and the "microcosm" of a Japanese family. Despite its autobiographical origins, *Treadmill* is narrated through neither a first-person perspective nor even by a male protagonist: it unfolds through the third-person, and is mostly centered on Teru Noguchi, a young woman who, according to Nakamura's widow, shares both a name and a number of historical parallels with Hiroshi's younger sister.

True to its title, *Treadmill* essentially documents the absurdity of the internment, and particularly the loyalty questionnaire, as an exercise which becomes an end in itself. The physical exhaustion which epitomizes the inmates' constant struggle to survive in the camp - to scrounge up food, ward off the bitter cold, and run through blinding dust storms from one end of the compound to the other in search of basic human comforts like toilet paper or a broom - testifies also to the mental and emotional depletion which is most evident in characters like Teru's mother. Faced with the loss of her home and the FBI's seizure of her husband, Ayame Noguchi goes mad, her slipping grasp on reality explicitly and metonymically linked to the incomprehensibility of the American government's decision to imprison its own citizens. No longer able to care for her children or herself, Mrs. Noguchi responds to the Sisyphean (or more precisely, treadmillian) task of internment life by retreating into her own mind, reliving various childhood experiences aloud and failing, any longer, to see "the point" of performing chores like bathing, brushing her hair, or housecleaning because, as she points out, they will only need to be done again and again.

Exposing life itself as a kind of purposeless play, the internment also produces, especially for the younger generation of niseis (American-born Japanese) like Teru, an increasing sense of paranoid skepticism about just what kind of game the American government is playing. The first half of the novel, in particular, is largely dedicated to the conversations and debates within the camp community about whether, for instance, the State's repatriation offer "was simply a trick of the American government to secure what amounted to an outright expression of loyalty to Japan and thus lay open the road to prosecution" (61). Similarly, the first round of loyalty hearings (internees were later offered an opportunity to change their no's to yeses) leads to a widespread anxiety that the questionnaire is actually an

elaborate attempt to ensnare traitors and thus justify the internment program; although, as Mr. Noguchi himself suggests, echoing almost verbatim General DeWitt's protests to the loyalty questionnaire, "What an asinine question. Who is going to put down in writing that he intends to break laws?" (154). But after the second round of loyalty hearings commences, the American government, as well as Teru's voice, recedes into the background, replaced for an extended period by an unspecified omniscient narrator and a shift in the perspective of the game players, too, whose greatest desire becomes to predict what all of the other internees, not the State, are planning to do in response to the questionnaire.

Thus we encounter the following anecdote being offered by a nisei woman whom Teru meets on the train to Tule Lake, the internment camp in which "no-no"s were segregated:

My husband, he's Issei [a first-generation Japanese immigrant], so we went on the same day to register and I went and answered no-no. Then I came home and find he's answered yes. It was funny because I'd expected him to answer no from the way he's been talking and he thought I'd answer yes because I always used to fight with him about it. (197)

Crucially lacking, here, is any reference to the moral or ideological factors guiding the wife's decision; rather, the operative phrases are "I'd expected him to answer no" and "he thought I'd answer yes." What is "funny" about this scene is precisely its absurd irony, in which each spouse's attempts to answer as they expect the other to leads both to adopt positions which directly oppose their own convictions; moreover, their desire to use logic to arrive at the same answer is precisely what leads to their divergence. If this sounds like the plot of a Shakespearean comedy - or, to cite the literary example von Neumann himself used to illustrate game logic, like a passage lifted from a Sherlock Holmes novel - a number of other vignettes reveal the equally reflexive but far more tragic consequences for those internees who were, similarly, trying to "take comfort in having done what the others had done" (138) by "doing what they were expected to do" (180). On the same train to Tule Lake, a scuffle breaks out in a nearby car between Kurisu, a former leader of the pro-Japanese camp riots, and Bob Santo, one of his most loyal followers. Teru's friend Ichiro explains the cause of the fight:

"Kurusu advised Bob and the rest of his group to answer no-no . . . Bob had a lot of faith in his judgment; and so, he did as he was advised, satisfied that they were all in the same boat together. However, at the last moment, Kurisu's son changed his answer and now Kurisu isn't coming to Tule lake [sic] with us. Bob feels that he's been double crossed and is quite upset as you can see." (195, emphasis mine)

Bob's faith in one set of ideals - those of solidarity among the oppressed - has turned him into a martyr who has not only lost his rights as an American citizen but, just as importantly, has fallen victim to the shifty tactics of his treasonous mentor. "You with your fine talk about Japanese spirit," he screams at Kurisu, "Well, I'll show you who's the true Japanese" (195). The irony, once again, is that Bob is in fact revealing precisely those "Japanese" characteristics that DeWitt and his office used to rationalize the internment, particularly the latter's assertion that the members of this "unassimilated, tightly knit racial group" (Dewitt, "Final Report" vii) were entirely incapable of independent thought and autonomous action.

What is especially disturbing about this scene is Ichiro's, and indeed the novel's, tendency to blame Bob for his own wretched fate, depicting him as a petulant child who throws a temper tantrum for being "double crossed" - "hitching up his pants truculently" as he advances upon Kurisu, fists raised - rather than sympathize with his entirely admirable (and, as game theory would suggest, completely rational) decision to choose a cooperative course of action by throwing his lot in with a political movement that might lead to actual social change. The final injustice in *Treadmill*, then, is not so much the indignity of being imprisoned by one's own government, but rather the shame of being betrayed by the very people who are most intimately connected to one's plight.

The game which the novel seems most interested in, then, is a social dilemma known colloquially as the Stag Hunt. Various called a "trust dilemma," "coordination game," "or assurance game" in game theory literature, the stag hunt - a term drawn from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *A Discourse on Inequality* - has also been discussed as a peculiarity of atomic logic. Essentially, it is a group game in which each player's desire to "catch a stag" - to cooperatively bring down a quarry which is impossible for a lone individual to subdue - is

constantly threatened by his temptation to "defect," as game theory calls it: to leave his post and pursue a single hare which has happened by, a prey which he can easily catch by himself. Despite the fact that bringing down a stag, rather than several individual hares, constitutes the most advantageous outcome for the group as a whole (as game theorist John Nash proved through the famous equilibrium theorem which bears his name) the fact remains that mutual cooperation, like mutual defection in a prisoner's dilemma, remains as elusive as the noble stag. What Treadmill reveals, then, is not merely that self-interest trumps common interest during the internment, but that even the most admirable attempts at political solidarity and coalition-building are constantly threatened by their own internal contradictions; a reminder, one might say, that the distinction between the "irrationality" of the American government's decision to intern its citizens and the internees' own decision-making processes is not as clear-cut as we might want to assume.

Identifying Systems

In "Application of Game Theory to the Identification of Friend and Foe," a working paper published in July 1949, three RAND scientists embarked on an early quest to translate game theory's mathematical insights to the military context. "An important problem in warfare has always been the identification of friend and foe," it begins. "A current example of this problem is the 'loyalty oath': the purpose of which, as the paper's title suggests, "is to separate friend from foe." The oath which the authors are referring to is not, however, a binding document to which an individual signs his name or ceremoniously reads aloud; rather, they define the oath as "one of two signals: (F) or (E)," through which some given target, encountering an observer (O), represents itself as either friend (F) or enemy (E). This signal could refer to any number of oral, written, or even physical communications: a Morse code transmission, a sworn statement of fidelity, the raising of a particular flag. Game theory's ingenuity is in reducing those various expressions to a binary model, and in understanding the interaction between observer and target as a game in which four payoffs are possible, which the paper defines as "1) if O identifies F as F; 2) if O identifies F as E; 3) if O identifies E as E; 4) if O identifies E as F" The question then becomes: how should the observer respond to the signal "friend"?

The authors' grim conclusion is, in fact, the same one that the Roosevelt Administration arrived at regarding Japanese denizens after Pearl Harbor. In lieu of a code or password known only to the observer and his friends, the observer's optimal course of action is to treat *every* signal as an enemy signal; one can't, in other words, be too careful. But this is more than a mathematical justification for the trampling of civil rights; it tells us something rather more interesting about the way that games like the one above, and like those I have been discussing, are bound up with what Niklas Luhmann has called second-order observations. As Mark Seltzer puts it, these are complex games "in which we move against opponents whose intentions, or what look like them (bluffs), enter into the form of the game" (101). In other words, the way that O interacts with an incoming signal depends less on the actual content of the signal (whether F or E) - or, for that matter, on whether the signaler is "really" F or E - than on the fact that O treats it as a *signal*, which is to say, as the form of intentionality itself.

The RAND authors' decision to name an *observer* - rather than an interpreter, a decoder, or a reader - makes sense precisely because O's observations are not synonymous with identifications: the latter defines the target, as Luhmann considers first-order observations to do, "as that which is" (47), whereas the former incorporates the recognition that it could, in fact, be otherwise. The distinction between observation and identification, in other words, is like the distinction between the game's payoffs and its moves; the payoffs, as the authors make clear, are not that O makes a "correct" identification, but correspond to the *contingent* outcomes of those identifications. The point, then, is not merely that modernity, as Luhmann points out, is defined by contingency - that which is "neither necessary nor impossible" (45) - but that such contingency is what makes our choices, as modern subjects, look more like game moves and less like grocery shopping. As Luhmann expresses it, "second-order observations offer a *choice* . . . whether certain designations are to be attributed to the observed observer, thereby characterizing him, or seen as characteristics of what he observes" (48, emphasis mine).

This is, in many ways, the central issue of John Okada's novel *No-No Boy*, where choice as a process of attribution/identification - and hence *identity* - rather than selection gets replicated in the formal arrangement of the

physical manuscript itself. *No-No Boy* is a story about the rehabilitation of no-no boy Ichiro Yamada, who has just returned home from prison after the war's close, bookended by two accounts of its own rehabilitation by Asian America's own Gang of Four, the men who are perhaps best known for the widely-criticized brand of misogynistic cultural nationalism that they preached in their infamous Asian American literary anthology *Aiiieeeee!*¹⁶ Both literally and figuratively imprisoned by the conditions of its own rediscovery and subsequent critical reception, then, Okada's novel has largely been read as a tragic reminder of the nation's own elisions and contradictions - as Ichiro himself laments in the novel, "it was a terribly incomplete thing to be American if one's face was not white" (54) - and of the enduring psychic trauma wrought by the internment.¹⁷ Its content, in short, is what the *Aiiieeeee!* editors would consider the stuff of a "real" Asian American novel. More compelling to me, however, is the syntactic and strategic *form* which that specifically racialized trauma takes, and how its self-reflexive, contingent elements - in essence, its *gamefulness* - might be refigured as a novel rubric for understanding Asian American literature and the intersections between identification and identity.

The curious figure of Ichiro's mother is arguably the character that best captures *No-No Boy's* acute interest in these feedback loops of observation and contingency described by the RAND authors: Ichiro endlessly struggles with the question, "how is one to talk to a woman, a mother who is also a stranger because the son does not know who or what she is?" (104) In the end, Ichiro's attempts to determine whether his mother is friend or foe are frustrated, primarily, by her own interest in that distinction. Mrs. Yamada believes - and not entirely without reason - that the American media is a vast propaganda machine, dedicated solely to broadcasting false news, writing fake letters, and staging fake photographs as part of a massive self-affirming conspiracy to deny that the country has, in fact, lost the war to Japan. And while Ichiro initially attributes her behavior to mental instability, he cannot help but regard it as a certain kind of rational irrationality: "Was it she who was wrong and crazy not to have found in herself the capacity to accept a country which repeatedly refused to accept her or her sons unquestioningly, or was it the others who were being deluded, the ones, like Kenji [a *nisei* veteran], who fought and gave their lives to protect this country where they could still not rate as first-class citizens

because of the unseen walls?" (104)

The slippery distinction between rationality and insanity in turn raises a much more fundamental question about the difference between seeing and knowing, one which is particularly fraught in the post-Pearl Harbor collisions between racial and national identity. For example, Mrs. Yamada's friend and fellow believer in Japan's victory, Mrs. Ashida, recounts with a snicker her encounter with a recently returned nisei veteran who shows her photographs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the devastation of the atomic bomb:

I asked him if he was ever in Japan before and could he prove that he was actually there and he said again to look at the pictures and I told him that what must really have happened was that the army only told him he was in Japan when he was someplace else . . . he got so mad his face went white and he said: "How do you know you're you? Tell me how you know you're you!" (22, emphasis mine)

The point is, of course, that you can't know. Mrs. Ashida's dismissal of the photographs is not a privileging of first-hand human experience over second-hand media representations; rather, it seems to suggest that there is essentially no difference between the two, in part because the same uncertainty is inherent in both. Knowing thus begins to look like doing; the epistemological dilemma that Mrs. Ashida scoffs at is essentially the same one which we saw Mr. Takemoto raising in *All I Asking For* between one's wife and one's mother. "What should you do?" and "How do you know you're you?" are, in neither case, an appeal to feeling or reason; "Japaneseness" always provides the answer, just as it does for Mrs. Ashida, who, like Ichiro's mother, "conduct[s] herself as a Japanese" (40). The fact that such logic is tautological – "Japan did not lose the war because Japan could not possibly lose" (Okada 24) – says less about these women's rationality and more, as Mark Seltzer points out, about the affinities between the modern world and the game world, in which we witness an increasing "nullification . . . of extrinsic determinations" (107). Like Kiyō's "too easy" craps victories, Mrs. Yamada's assertion leaves Ichiro gaping in disbelief: "the overwhelming simplicity of the explanation threatened to evoke silly giggles which, if permitted to escape, might lead to hysterics" (9).

Like Niklas Luhmann's second-order observer, Ichiro stands in his own blind spot - hence the novel's provocative Oedipal resonances, which this essay lacks the space to do justice - but his tendency to blame his mother for his decision to answer no-no reflects the novel's larger preoccupation with mediated vision. The morning after their visit with Mrs. Ashida, Ichiro's desire to communicate with his mother turns, once again, into a game of (mis)identification: when he calls her crazy - "softly and deliberately, for he wanted her to know that he meant it" (42) - she responds, "Ah, Ichiro. I thought for a moment that you meant it." Intention, in other words, can no more be "proven" through language than photography can secure the reality of its representations; and this, it would appear, is the final straw for Ichiro - he decides to use language in the only way that seems to have any effect: "Balls! Balls!" he shrieked" (43). Just as unexpected is Mrs. Yamada's response: she doesn't cover her ears, but her eyes. Faced with her refusal to "see," in more ways than one, Ichiro leaps up from the table, wrenches her wrists away from her face and drags her to the bathroom while screaming "Look at me! . . . I'm as crazy as you are. See in the mirror the madness of the mother which is the madness of the son. See. See!" (43)

The strangeness of this scene is in part due to its contradictory impulse - not to mention the fact that it takes the reader a long, awkward moment to realize that the reason Ichiro is dragging his mother to the bathroom is because it (probably) contains a mirror. The son's attempt, in this curious inversion of the traditional mirror stage, to bring his mother's broken mind back to reality paradoxically involves engaging her in a *fantasy* of coherence; but at the same time, the mirror itself is utterly redundant because he considers his own face mirror enough. Indeed, his choice to answer no-no, "in a frightening moment of insanity" (134), rehearses this same refusal to look: he "turn[ed] his back on the army and the country and the world and his own self" (40). Such repetitive syntax, which in fact becomes the novel's most enduring stylistic hallmark, is in essence the form which internment logic takes: for internees, certainly, there *was* no difference between the army and the country, because one could only secure his American citizenship if he agreed to enlist. There *was*, in other words, no *maybe*, just a "life-giving yes" (241), an "and" which coordinates the individual with the nation and with reality; or, for Ichiro, an "empty no," a "total rejection"

(242) of one and hence all of those terms.

There is, in other words, a reflexive relation being established between one's own body and the bodies of others, whether human, textual, or national, one which we see rehearsed even in the novel's opening pages, when Ichiro encounters a former classmate and newly returned war veteran. Like some real-life T.J. Eckleburg, Eto Minato's "round eyes peer[ing] at [Ichiro] through silver-rimmed spectacles" (2) are simultaneously screen and mirror: "the eyes confronted Ichiro with indecision which changed slowly to enlightenment and then to suspicion. He remembered. He knew" (3). Eto's "knowing" eyes, however, reflect not only Ichiro's shame, but the shame of his having been nothing more than a reflection; it is Ichiro's inability to "think *for himself*" (19, emphasis mine) that, as a no-no boy, makes his body strangely continuous with his mother's: "it was she who opened my mouth and made my lips move to sound the words" (12).

But despite Ichiro's discomfiting vacillation between these two extremes - Eto, on the one hand, described as "God in a pair of green fatigues, U.S. Army style" (4), Mrs. Yamada as "a Japanese who breathed the air of America and yet had never lifted a foot from the land that was Japan" (11) - the novel on the whole makes it quite clear that there is in fact no difference between any of these three positions, mostly because they are all equal in the eyes of white America. As Okada rather blithely puts it in the Preface, once Pearl Harbor is attacked, "the Japanese who were born Americans . . . no longer worried about whether they were Japanese-Americans or American-Japanese. They were Japanese . . . the radio had said as much" (viii-ix).¹⁸ Even those like Eto, who answered yes-yes to the loyalty questionnaire, are not exempt from this category; Kenji himself suggests as much: "they think just because they went and packed a rifle they're different but they aren't and they know it. They're still Japs" (163). Are we, then, meant to read this disheartening verdict - delivered, in fact, just after Kenji's own realization that he is about to die from his gangrenous war wound (his response to Ichiro's question, "Did the doctors say so?": "Not in so many words, but they know it and I know it and they know that I do" [162]) - as Okada's implicit endorsement of the statement which General DeWitt had become famous for: "a Jap's a Jap whether he's an American citizen or not" (qtd. in Papanikolas)?

Well, in a sense, yes; it would be both naive and just plain

wrong to suggest that the vast majority of the American public thought any differently. Far more troubling, certainly, is that its echo comes from a Japanese American character who has sacrificed his life to defend such an ideal. What Okada is pointing to, however, is not a problem specific to the internment, but one which afflicts Asian American Studies more broadly; the fact that, to paraphrase Frank Chin, the only thing that holds "Asian America" together is a shared history of exclusion. The self-avowed representational crisis which has characterized the field for the last twenty-five years is just another version of this problem: now that "Asian American" refers to a heterogeneous population that is internally dissimilar not only in ethnicity but in class, language, birthplace, religion and political preference, is there any site of coherence besides the fact that they "all look the same"?

What *No-No Boy*, like *All I Asking For* and *Treadmill*, seems to suggest is that the dilemmas staged by the internment were due to a *lack* of distinction between the government's and many internees' assumptions about the meaning of racial and national identities. "Japaneseness," in other words, is what allows the game to continue: it provides, in all three novels, the "too easy" answer to the question "What should I do?" It is simultaneously a way of acting, knowing, and observing: a way of *playing*. Whether it is tied spatially to a nation or genetically to a race remains irrelevant to characters like Mr. Takemoto and Mrs. Yamada; in its very oscillation between the two, it becomes the unity of the distinction between race and place. What we have to consider, then, is whether the term "Asian American" is doing something quite similar, even while it purports to reject an essentialist definition of identity as such. The turn to games, in other words, should not be mistaken for an optimistic endorsement of the spontaneity and freedom of play. Quite the opposite: the same "rules of irrelevance" (Goffman 18) which allow us to play games look, in the end, an awful lot like those which allow race to function as a fictional constraint with real consequences.

Notes

I am deeply grateful to Professors Rachel Lee and Mark McGurl for reading several drafts of this piece, and to the

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1. For a cogent account of the historical trajectory of this stereotype, see Robert Lee's "Orientals," which also traces the evolution of the model minority stereotype as a recognizable offshoot of the "inscrutable Oriental" image.
2. Also noteworthy of Warren's statement is its anachronism; this was, after all, the same man who would, thirteen years later, deal a crippling blow to segregation as Chief Justice in the landmark ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education*. This suggests that the internment can be understood as part of, and perhaps even partly responsible for, a broader shift in American racial politics towards (at least superficially) a more expansive definition of civil rights.
3. DeWitt, "Conference."
4. See Belletto.
5. See C.B. Munson, "Japanese on the West Coast," circulated on Nov 7, 1941, reproduced in Daniels.
6. See von Neumann, "On the Theory of Games and Strategy."
7. The term "form game" derives from both Mark Seltzer and Dirk Baeker, but I am also drawing on Colleen Lye's brilliant essay "Racial Form," in which she argues that "race construed as form rather than as formation may help us keep in focus how race is an active social relation rather than a transhistorical abstraction" (99). See, too, Lye's analysis of another historical event involving Asian American loyalty and strategic representation, "The Literary Case of Wen Ho Lee."
8. See, for example, Booker; Grausam; and Piette.
9. Morgenstern, "Game Theory," *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, p. 267

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10. See both Caillois and Huizinga.
11. The fact that, as with the Popo example, the listener must adopt a male point of view, suggests an interesting correlation between gender and decision-making which are expanded further in the chapter-length version of this article.
12. For a compelling discussion of the internment's transnational dimensions, see Kandice Chuh, especially *imagine otherwise*, wherein she notes that "Asiatic racialization may be understood as the technology of the production of an imagined transnationality ascribed to Asian-identified individuals and groups" (61), a mechanism which she connects to the concept of Derridean undecideability to trouble the stability of an identificatory term such as Asian American.
13. DeWitt, "Final Report" 34. Chuh's discussion of internment undecideability (see n.13), in which "loyalty and disloyalty are possibilities in the determination of what race means" (*imagine otherwise* 70), further clarifies the ways in which game theory intersects with transnational discourse to construct Asiatic racialization vis-à-vis (extra)national forms of affiliation.
14. See Ling, *Narrating Nationalisms*, especially pp. 22-25.
15. Whether the reader is meant to take this scene as an explicit invitation to seek his own fortune at craps, or whether Murayama simply wanted to draw a stronger connection between Kiyō's craps victory and the young man's ingenuity remains a source of critical debate. Stephen Sumida reads Kiyō's decision to send the money home as evidence of his ultimate reaffirmation of the Japanese familial institution and its cultural values, while others have argued that it serves as a *deus ex machina* which shores up Kiyō's faith, however misguided, in the transformative potential of America's democratic ideals (see Chang). Disagreeing, ultimately, only over which nation's values are eventually endorsed, neither approach

takes much critical interest in Murayama's choice to dramatize that ideological conflict through a *game*.

16. That is: Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, Shawn Wong, and Frank Chin.
17. Hence, critics too numerous to list here have attributed Ichiro's fragmented psyche to an "identity crisis" produced by the "liminality" of his Japanese American subject-position or, even more explicitly, by his failed "attempt to claim an identity as an American" (Yogi 64). These are certainly not the only interpretations, of course; those which distinguish themselves in particular are Jinqi Ling's reading of the novel as a site of authorial negotiation ("Race, Power, and Cultural Politics"), Kandice Chuh's attention to its transnational resonances, and Joseph Entin's ambitious framing of the book within the *noir* genre. See also Daniel Kim's compelling account of the novel's imbrication with dominant discourses of Cold War masculinity, which introduces a crucial discussion of the gendered implications of internment game theory that unfortunately exceeds the purview of this essay.
18. Certainly, this sentence should be read as more than a little tongue-in-cheek. However, its sarcasm serves to underscore, even while it critiques, the hegemonic authority of State-sponsored discourses and their ability to (mis)identify its subjects, even simply by making semantic distinctions.

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