

Reimagining "Tense and Tender Ties" in García's Monkey Hunting

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Abstract: In her article "Reimagining Tense and Tender Ties in Garcia's *Monkey Hunting*" Yu-Fang Cho analyses Cristina García's re-narration of transnational histories of the multi-racial, multi-generational Chinese Cuban family in *Monkey Hunting* (2003) Drawing on recent scholarship on comparative racialization including Ann Laura Stoler's formulation of "tense and tender ties" as a method, Cho examines how García's family saga unsettles the temporal and spatial logics of Euro-American modernity through the deployment of cyclical narrative structure that spatially maps emerging or even unintelligible connections between disparate life stories. Reading *Monkey Hunting* as a piece of imaginative critical historiography, Cho argues that it is through creative reconceptualization of the structure of history and social relations that García's narrative puts forward towards a radical vision of imaginatory and epistemological emancipation.

Yu-Fang CHO

Reimagining Tense and Tender Ties in García's *Monkey Hunting*

Set against the backdrop of nineteenth-century indentured labor migration from China to Cuba, acclaimed Cuban American writer Cristina García's *Monkey Hunting* (2003) narrates cross-cultural encounters and multi-racial identity formations that emerged from this largely forgotten history, which scholars have recently begun to excavate (Hu-Dehart; Hu-Dehart and López; Lai and Tan; Sui; Yun). García's imaginative re-narration spans from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1970s, staging "a 120-year dialogue between Cuba and Asia" (259) that unfolds in the shadows of historic events which transpired in China, Cuba, the United States, and Vietnam: from the aftermath of the Opium War, the introduction of indentured labor from China in Cuba upon the demise of the African slave trade, Cuba's struggle against Spain for independence, World War II, the Cuban Revolution, the Cultural Revolution to the Vietnam War. While contemporary ethnic US-American (im)migration narratives are often framed as individual struggles with cultural conflicts between two generations, *Monkey Hunting* is structured as a family saga with vignettes from five generations on three continents. As such, this mini-epic recasts the familiar individual, developmental immigrant narratives as part of the emerging cultural archives of global migrations between Asia and the Americas dating back to the nineteenth century. As a prominent example of recent creative expressions which unsettle the long-standing perceived separation between Asia and the Americas — from Sigrid Nuñez's *A Feather on the Breath of God* (1995), Patricia Powell's *Pagoda* (1998), Angie Cruz's *Let it Rain Coffee* (2005) to Daína Chaviano's *The Island of Eternal Love* (2008) — García's ambitious undertaking probes how the histories of "Chino Latinos" and their ambiguous, shifting multi-racial identities problematize artificial racial categories — presumed to be intrinsically attached to particular geographical locations and nations — that Euro-American colonial knowledge produces and naturalizes. Originally conceived of as an investigation of contemporary multi-racial identities (García 259, 263), García reaches far and deep into the past taking up the task of imaginative historical re-narration not simply as an act of documenting the past, but as an epistemological critique of the problematic paradigms of multiculturalism and cultural nationalism where differences are construed as separate and equivalent to one other and always defined in relation to an imagined monolithic universal such as a nation, a cultural group, or other institutions of Euro-American modernity (see Hong and Ferguson; Lowe, "Imagining").

In the article at hand I read García's re-narration of transnational histories of multi-racial formations as a critical response to the long tradition of Euro-American travel writings and Orientalist narratives which reproduce White Euro-Americans as the privileged subjects and the authority of colonial enterprises (see, e.g., Lowe, *Critical*; Mills; Rafael; Said). Through creative re-narration that foregrounds transnational cross-racial formations, in *Monkey Hunting* García takes up the critical project of the reconstruction of colonial histories in comparative and global frames — most notably represented by Ann Laura Stoler's edited collection entitled *Haunted by Empire* — by bringing into light what colonial archives render invisible. In reconceptualization of North American (i.e., Canada and the U.S.) colonial historiography, Stoler proposes a comparative method which traces the "tense and tender ties" across established geographical divides in order to better comprehend the workings of empires. For Stoler, "tender ties" refer to the "relations between colonizer and colonized [which] could confound or confirm the strictures of governance and categories of rule ... 'Tense ties,' on the other hand, refer to transfer points of power at 'sites of production of colonial inequities'" (24). Building on Stoler's formulation, I read *Monkey Hunting* as a piece of imaginative critical historiography: I seek not just to grasp how colonial relations are produced, managed, and perpetuated, but more importantly, how fiction creates transformative historical visions. Instead of reading *Monkey Hunting* as a work of postmodern historical fiction that simply interrogates the stability and legibility of history and relinquishes historicization, or as one that imagines utopia through a direct critique of the content of history (such as totalitarian communism or U.S. militarism and capitalism) (Moiles 169-70), I argue that it is through creative reconceptualization of the structure of history — and the social relations that

produces and regulates — that García's narrative puts forward a radical vision of imaginary and epistemological emancipation.

Set in motion by popular tall tales about Cuba's abundance in southeastern coastal China's colonial landscape marked by foreign sailors and decadent pleasures, the family saga in *Monkey Hunting* unfolds with the family patriarch Chen Pan's quest for prosperity abroad that, in his mind, would eventually allow him to secure his masculinity and hetero-patriarchal privilege at home. As the narrator relays what prompts his decision, "if all went well, Chen Pan speculated, he could return home a wealthy man, perhaps a stronger man if the story about the drinking water [which would dramatically enhance a man's strength and sexual potency] wasn't a lie. Then he'd build a splendid house by the river, huge and on stilts, better than any in his village's memory. He'd buy two or three more wives, comely and fecund as hens, found his own dynasty. At the end of this life there would be four generations of Chens living under one roof" (6). Hinting at the shaky foundation of this "Cuban dream" and its dubious prospect, this depiction of Chen Pan's motivation amplifies the suspicion surrounding the mysterious person — "the man in the Western suit" with a ring on his little finger, whose age is impossible to guess — who tells Chen Pan those dramatic stories about Cuba and who eventually talks him into signing a labor contract. This aura of suspicion also foreshadows the entirely unexpected turn that Chen Pan's dream eventually takes as well as the global dispersion of the Chen family.

Chen Pan's departure from Amoy (Xiamen) for Havana simultaneously references two narrative traditions — immigration and diaspora — that typically hinge on a singular nation state as the origin of the destination of presumably uni-directional movements or the point of belonging and attachment. However, framed as an immigrant story that also alludes to the sojourner myth, García's narration of Chen Pan's journey refuses to privilege either tradition: this sets the stage for the emerging connections among disparate routes of global histories of (im)migration, travel, and forced relocation evoked by the three main characters' developing stories. With a woman African slave whom he purchases in Havana, Chen Pan forms a new family that marks the presumable biological and historical origin of the multi-generational Chinese Cuban/Cuban Chinese family featured in the novel. During his stint in the U.S. military in Saigon, Chen Pan's great-grandson Domingo Chen develops an intense emotional attachment to a Vietnamese prostitute, who becomes pregnant with his child. In Shanghai, Chen Fang, Chen Pan's granddaughter who is raised as a boy until adolescence, falls deeply in love with a French diplomat's wife. Structured around these cross-racial intimacies, the fifteen stories unfold in a cyclical fashion: in each of the three sections, vignettes from the three main characters' lives are interspersed and thematically connected across time and space while each character's stories unfold roughly chronologically, often with significant gaps. The geopolitical outer limits of the century-long dialogue between China and Cuba and their attendant cultural boundaries, established in the first section, converge and transform in the second section ("Traveling through the Flesh"), which thematizes optimism about the possibilities of social economic, cultural, emotional, and geographical crossings despite institutionalized barriers — from Chen Pan's upward mobility and his lifelong bond with Lucrecia in Havana; Chen Fang's gender crossing and her romantic relationship with Dauphine in Shanghai; to Domingo's journey through the racial landscapes of U.S. imperialism in Guantánamo, New York, and Vietnam and his temporary yet deep emotional attachment to Tham Thanh Lan in Saigon. However, the initial two ends of the geopolitical spectrum remain structurally separated in the last section, which concludes with Chen Fang's imprisonment in China during the Cultural Revolution and Chen Pan's contemplation on the impossibility of return and his lonely death in Cuba.

Through a cyclical narrative structure, *Monkey Hunting* evokes disparate pages from the history of Western imperialism — from the Opium War, Spanish colonialism and U.S. military presence in Cuba to the Vietnam War — while bringing into being persistent stories of subaltern struggles that are almost entirely lost in Euro-American colonial archives. Both in form and content, the novel interweaves different types of individual journeys and collective histories of migration, thus engendering emergent knowledge about the relationship among subject formations and subject matters that are either largely absent or exist in separation in dominant historical narratives. Chen Pan's stories follow his upward mobility as an indentured laborer from a penniless bachelor to a

propertied patriarch, whose materialistic hetero-patriarchal fantasy turns into a deep, genuine, and enduring cross-cultural bond — albeit it is made possible by his stepping into the place of his former oppressor. Chen Pan's stories — from his friendship and political coalition with African slaves on the plantation, his ultimate separation from them as well as from the local Chinese community, and finally to the emotional home in which he ultimately settles with Lucrecia — point toward the various forms of sparsely documented, fleeting, or even unknown sociality that emerge from the converging histories of Asian indentured labor migration, African slavery, and Asian settler colonialism, thereby prefiguring others hidden cross-racial intimate encounters in Domingo's and Chen Fang's stories.

While general optimism about upward mobility and cultural crossings characterize Chen Pan's stories after his successful escape from the plantation, the later parts become increasingly contemplative, nostalgic, and even pessimistic. Set in the turbulent year of the "Little Race War" — during which Afro-Cubans who fought for Cuba's independence and their rightful share in the government were massacred, the second to last story particularly delineates Chen Pan's increasing sense of alienation after Lucrecia's death (see Helg). During the train ride with his son and grandchild from Santiago to Havana to escape explosive racial conflicts, Chen Pan's thoughts reveal the fragility of the optimism that has driven his narrative: "Chen Pan noticed a garland of geese flying resolutely south. A tumbledown shack sat neglected at the edge of a sugarcane field. If the arguing men didn't look too closely, they might take his son for a light-skinned *mulato*. At second glance, they would see that Lorenzo's eyes were 100 percent Chinese. Would they lynch him to be safe?" (188). Provoked by an external landscape that symbolizes two large-scale collective movements during this tumultuous time, Chen Pan's fear for his son's life underlines the precarious position of Chinese Cubans, who were socially discriminated against despite the fact that they were generally categorized as White in Spanish censuses and that their skin color was lighter than many Spaniards in nineteenth-century Cuba (see Lee; López). The ambiguity of Lorenzo's race, the unintelligibility of his "Chineseness" to Afro-Cubans, and the unpredictability of their response to his racial status all further underline the tenuous basis of Chinese-African political alliance that falters with Chen Pan's upward mobility and the tremendous cost of his "Cuban dream," even for mixed-raced Chinese Cubans with "African blood" and for those who fought for Cuba's independence, like Chen Pan. Prompted by explosive racial tensions between Spanish settlers and Afro-Cubans and that exacerbate long-standing racism against the Chinese (García 66), Chen Pan's painful realization of the cost of his naïve aspiration foreshadows his growing nostalgic longing for China as the local Chinese community continues to dwindle due to deaths, return migration, and political instability.

This kind of racial violence against (im)migrants — despite the declaration of their steadfast loyalty through their participation in anticolonial nationalist movements — does not stop at the borders of Cuba. The precarious conditions of Chinese Cubans in early twentieth-century Cuba persist in Pipo's (Domingo's father's) and Domingo's relationships to Cuba and the United States in the second half of the twentieth century, the accounts of which appear in the novel anachronistically before Chen Pan's train ride from Santiago to Havana in 1912. Domingo's stories relay a perhaps even more extreme form of political violence: Pipo is arrested and brutalized in an asylum due to his refusal to aside with Fidel Castro's regime after it comes to power after the Cuban Revolution (1953-1959). The account of Pipo's refusal further highlights the cost and vulnerability of having multiple affiliations even if they are necessary for survival: "when revolutionary officials had ordered his father to give up his job with the Americans [as a short-order cook at the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo where he worked for seventeen years], Papi had refused. Working the grill had made him a traitor? No amount of haranguing from the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution could convince him of that" (55). Fleeing the political oppression in the era after the Cuban Revolution, Domingo relocates with his ailing father to New York City only to encounter more racial injustices: Domingo is instantly racially marked as non-white; as a result, first his masculinity is devalued in a romantic relationship (47), and then such devaluation continues in different forms during his service in the U.S. military. In addition to general racial discrimination against non-whites in the military due to Domingo's dark skin (209-10), he also becomes particularly vulnerable due to U.S.-Asia antagonism: "His biggest fear was that in the heat of a firefight, his fellow soldiers would mistake him for a Viet Cong and shoot him dead. Enough of them were suspicious of him to begin with. With his heavy accent and brown skin, how could he be

American?" (107). While appearing in the novel anachronistically prior to the description of Chen Pan's concern about Lorenzo's safety, Domingo's fear exposes an even more extreme form of vicious racial violence. Later in the narrative, the detailed account of Chen Pan's distrust of Cuba's political leaders and his agitation against entrenched racism further underscores the persistence of such violence: "Not long ago, President Menocal had passed laws allowing more Chinese immigrants into the country for the duration of the war and for two years beyond it. ... Chen Pan knew it was only a matter of time before the Chinese no longer would be welcomed in Cuba. In times of economic necessity, they were usually the first scapegoats. This infuriated Chen Pan because thousands of *chinos* had fought hard for the country's independence. ... They'd stayed long years in the war, too, not like those *criollos* who swelled the ranks after news of a victory and disappeared when the losses began to mount ... When they were captured, they pretended to speak no Spanish, but not a single one ever surrendered or betrayed the Cuban cause" (247).

These recurring anachronistic narratives of the disenfranchisement of racialized male (im)migrant subjects across different national contexts unsettle the linear temporality and discrete spatiality of modernity, nationalism, and history, thereby mapping connecting heterogeneous patterns of racialization across temporal and spatial differences. Throughout the novel, many other recurring stories with variations in specific contexts further illuminate this point. More than one hundred years apart, Chen Pan and Domingo both endure violence specifically directed toward male racialized subjects of the world imperial order: Chen Pan is brutalized by the British crew and Spanish slave owners; Domingo Chen, interpellated by the false promise of U.S. national belonging, sustains severe injuries during the Vietnam War. Similarly, more than one hundred years apart but not related by blood, Lucrecia and Tham Thanh Lan both experience unspeakable sexual traumas, to which their visceral memories remain the only testaments: Lucrecia is raped by her master in nineteenth-century Spanish Cuba, while Tham Thanh Lan is subjected to relentless sexual exploitation and physical abuse throughout her entire life in mid-twentieth-century Vietnam. In early-twentieth-century China, Chen Fang, the only female protagonist with her own stories in the novel, is forced into an arranged marriage, impregnated by her husband who later attempts to kill her baby, and then expelled from the family in order to ensure the baby's safety, according to superstitious folklore. Highlighting gendered and racialized patterns across time and space with distinctive specificities, these anachronistically connected stories redefine the concept of "origin": it is a singular, originary point of reference according to which temporal and spatial differences are measured, but a dynamic process that is multiple and reformulated relationally to emergent pasts and presents.

The juxtaposition of specific gendered forms of violence also illuminates both the hidden connections between different forms of movement and the relationship between mobility and immobility. While white men are often the privileged Euro-American historical and narrative subjects of travel and migration, *Monkey Hunting* juxtaposes distinct external and internal gendered violence — on the one hand, physical violence specifically directed at male racialized subjects by colonial and imperial regimes; on the other hand, sexual violence against women committed not only by external forces, but also by their family members. In this way, the novel insists that the forgotten stories of those who are "left behind," the stories of those who are rendered immobile to make others' mobility possible, and very many other lost stories — must be understood also as part of the narrative tradition of travel and (im)migration shaped by global networks of historical power relations. Such relational articulations also make visible the structural contradictions among different "actors." For example, Chen Pan is not simply an exploited migrant laborer in relation to British and Spanish colonizers: he is also a temporary political ally with African slaves and later a settler colonialist. Chen Pan and Domingo are both victims of racism in Spanish Cuba and in white supremacist United States, but their exercise of male privilege also causes the suffering of the women whom they abandon, who often remain invisible and voiceless.

Through the pairing of Domingo's and Chen Fang's stories as equal representation of the Chen family's past and future, *Monkey Hunting* contests this prevailing female invisibility and the artificial separation between narratives of male mobility and female immobility that inherently naturalizes patriarchal order. In addition to the specific gendered forms of disenfranchisement and violence, Domingo's stories set in New York City and Vietnam (1968-1970) and Chen Fang's stories set in

Shanghai (1924-1970) both further delineate other insurmountable systemic discriminations and the resultant sense of alienation that become increasingly prominent in later parts of Chen Pan's stories. Domingo's first story in the first section, set in New York City in 1968 within a year after his relocation, prefigures the sense of loss and liminality that permeates Chen Pan's last story: "Domingo had used his father's contacts at the U.S. naval base to get Papi and himself out of Cuba. Finally, they'd left the island behind like a rainy season. But what was their world now? What belonged to them? Was it possible, Domingo wondered, to be saved and destroyed at once?" (56). This passage conveys a sense of seeming casualness overshadowed by trepidation and the cost — or even the destruction — of being "saved" becomes evident soon. After receiving the shocking news of his father's suicide, Domingo wanders across the hostile, alienating landscape of New York City, where "it was always cheaper to kill something than to save it" (59). At this moment, his thoughts about Cuba reveal that what once made Cuba a place where he "felt right in his own skin" — the music tradition of African drumming — is also violently destroyed: this heritage, which is carried on by male relatives in his mother's family, is removed from his uncle's life by the authorities in Guantánamo and put on display at a museum (56-57). For Domingo, his home is taken away from him multiple times: he is first displaced by the government's political oppression against his father, and now the same oppressor has destroyed his spiritual, emotional home — which he still constantly gravitates toward even during his time in Vietnam.

An uprooted lost soul, Domingo's journey culminates in a temporary sense of "home" that comes to him after his first intensive physical contact with Tham Thanh Lan in Saigon. The depiction of their encounter highlights the intricate and powerful ways in which shared memories create unlikely emotional connections between people who appear to have very little in common. During their initial contact, Tham Thanh Lan keeps Domingo at bay despite his desperate request to reminisce about their mutual friend who is killed at the battlefield. As soon as she begins to concede, her voice instantly conjures up the sound of home for Domingo: "'What happened to you?' Tham Thanh Lan's voice was pitched high and thin, like an Okónklo drum" (156). This intuitive feeling initiates a series of thoughts that connect Cuba and Vietnam in contrast to New York City: "Domingo didn't know where to begin ... He wanted to talk about the forests of rubber trees he'd seen, about the elephant grass and flame vines that reminded him of Cuba. In Vietnam, he'd noticed, everything flowered all at once, not in fits and starts like deciduous New York. At what point had all this foliage turned into camouflage?" (156). Alluding to different forms of militarization in Cuba and Vietnam that entail U.S. involvement, this passage instantly evokes numerous possible routes that, in Domingo's mind, connect Vietnam, Cuba, and the United States, which remain largely unintelligible in official history. The instantiation of these unmapped connections later paves the way for the communication between Domingo's and Tham Thanh Lan that closes the gap between them. In her analysis of the connections between the colonization of the "new world" of Africans, Natives, and Asians in the Americas and the rise of European modernity Lisa Lowe explains that these connections — or what she alternatively calls intimacies — have multiple, related meanings. Lowe argues that intimacy should not be understood narrowly as romantic or sexual relations, familiarity, or domesticity, but also as spatial proximity or adjacent connection and "the variety of contacts among slaves, indentured persons, and mixed-blood free peoples" that could form resistance against colonial power (192-93, 95, 202). García's portrayal of the interaction between Domingo and Tham Thanh Lan represents a similar attempt at reformulating the concept of "intimacy" for emancipatory purposes — emotionally and psychologically speaking. The initial insurmountable disconnection between Domingo and Tham Thanh Lan suggests the futility of resorting to culturally mediated, gendered narratives to break down the emotional barriers resulting from the pain and trauma of violence: "Domingo began thinking of stories to tell her. About the time a pack of Jamaican Negresses had chased his Abuelo Lorenzo along the Bay of Santiago, determined to try his virginity powder. ... But Domingo wasn't sure any of this would make sense to her" (158). As words seem doomed to fail, Domingo turns to the corporeal: he pulls up his shirt, shows Tham Thanh Lan where "the shrapnel had torn him up and the Army doctor had stitched him back together," and asks her to touch his scar (158). The narration of this seemingly mundane intimate contact is set in motion by traces of violence — Domingo's scar — and followed by the discovery of her scars from numerous incidents of sexual violence, leading to the sudden discovery of

other traces of bloody brutality, the most atrocious being a general's penetration of her with a dagger. The merging of these traumatic memories through physical contact dissolves the barriers between them, through which Domingo suddenly finds "home" in Vietnam after years of drifting: he feels, for the first time since leaving Cuba, that he "had no wish but to remain exactly where he was" (161). Here, "where he was" refers not only literally to Tham Thanh Lan's room, but also figuratively to his emotional state that transcends material and geographical boundaries. Lying next to her, African drumming comes to Domingo, conjuring up fantastic images about Cuba to which he becomes a part of: "In his dream, he'd swum with the fishes in their frigid sinkholes, round and round in the lightlessness until he grew fins on his belly and back" (162). However, Domingo's sense of home that he finds with Tham Thanh Lan is at best transient if not illusory, especially compared with Chen Pan's relationship with Lucrecia. Even before the baby is born, Domingo's narrative becomes increasingly punctuated by unspoken anxiety about settlement and fatherhood and the fear that he "was forgetting something important, something that could change everything" (213). The depiction of his psychological journey leading to his ultimate departure points to his heterogeneous pasts which cannot be stored and found in only one place: he seeks refuge in books from the library about the United States, remote from his life in Saigon and he struggles to hold on to his fading memoirs about Chen Pan and Pipo for comfort. The last memory that Domingo dwells on in this story — the moment that Pipo buys a hat to replace the one that is confiscated for "harboring tropical fleas" upon their arrival at the Miami airport — captures both the profound significance and the fleeting nature of these memories: "For a moment, remember this, Domingo felt exalted, at peace, as if he could rest an eternity. He cried out with gratitude. ... But when he opened his eyes, his father rose out of sight, high and slow, like a home-seeking ghost. Domingo imagined a flock of geese accompanying him, graceful and sonorous, their stout wings stirring the breeze. ... And in the pale air behind him, Papi's Panama hat floated like a peaceful omen" (215). These memories of migration, of being emotionally connected to "home" despite physical displacement, ultimately lead to Domingo's decision to keep moving: "He needed to go away, to leave her [Tham Thanh Lan] like another country" (217). Like Pipo, Domingo becomes a "home-seeking ghost" guided by Cuba's African heritage, symbolized by his prayer to Ochún rather than to the Buddha before his departure (219).

Paired with Domingo's stories to represent the past and the future of the Chen family, Chen Fang's stories both thematize and contest racialized women's voicelessness and immobility, especially given the emotional resonances between her stories and Chen Pan's despite the structural opposition of their subject positions based on gender and mobility. Chen Fang's stories — appearing last in order in the first section — are the only stories told in the first-person voice; hers is also the only story that is juxtaposed with Chen Pan's in the last section that concludes the novel. Despite the fact that her stories take place second in order among the three on the linear historical timeline, they represent a composite of Chen Pan's and Domingo's stories. Chen Pan's narrative is driven by a desire for prosperity away from home; her narrative is driven also by a longing for being away from home (instead of one for return, as in Domingo's case) albeit in her case it is not wealth but freedom from hetero-patriarchal domestic confinement. The end of Chen Fang's story — her expulsion from her husband's family and her imprisonment during the Cultural Revolution — mirrors Chen Pan's sense of loss and despair, but their longings manifest opposite relations to China, their "home." For Chen Fang, China is an unbearable place plagued with gender, sexual, and political oppressions and on the contrary Cuba represents infinite possibilities of freedom, where her male ancestors have proven their masculinity — the quality she possesses but is not allowed to fully develop and put to use. By contrast, for Chen Pan, Cuba is a home in disintegration, whereas China is becoming a renewed emotional home to which he can never return. The heterogeneous echoes among the novel's three main life trajectories destabilize the patrilineal logic of inheritance while highlighting the differences, disjunctures, and dissonances among various stories that ostensibly exhibit similar patterns and share similar content at first sight.

The notion of patrilineal inheritance is also further complicated through the novel's emphasis on heterogeneous traces of family heritage that traffic through obscure routes in contrast to the common notion of "blood family" based on biological definitions of identity and membership that legitimize racism. In addition to the more familiar medium of family heritage — stories of ancestors that have

been passed down from the past, *Monkey Hunting* foregrounds creative expressions — music and poetry in particular — through which tenuous, fading, or even unknown connections among family members can be traced, maintained, and created. The most explicit example is Chen Pan's appreciation for poetry — inherited from his father — on which he relies to sustain his spirit at moments of despair. The case of Chen Fang, however, is more complex. For her, bolero — an important form of oral history that combines musical traditions from Europe, Hispaniola, and Africa — serves a dual purpose: first, to mark her foreign connection to Dauphine and her hybrid heritage despite her confinement in China and her seeming "authentic" Chineseness, especially compared with Domingo; second, to signal her unknown connection to her father, Lorenzo, despite the fact that she has never seen him. When she is imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution, Chen Fang recites a Cuban bolero — taught to her by her French lover, Dauphine, at an intimate moment — that expresses memories of love and loss (232). While the song explicitly signifies Chen Fang's sorrow for lost love, it also suggests her lost connection with Lorenzo that accidentally finds its way back into her life through her involvement with the missionary school that connects her to Dauphine. The lyrics evoke not only her life with Dauphine but also her childhood memories of Lorenzo, who believes she is boy and sends her money from Cuba for her education. The bolero, in other words, signifies both of Chen Fang's foreign connections that, albeit resulting in her imprisonment, provide emotional comfort and hope for a different future.

These various mediated memories — culled from multiple cultural traditions — make possible the fluid and at times tenuous connections among the members of the multi-racial, multi-cultural, and multi-generational Chen family across three continents, who may not necessarily share any phenotypical semblance. In this case, "family" is defined not exclusively by tangible signs of hereditary sameness based on "blood," but by collective cultural memories that keep their ties alive. The resonances and dissonances among the three main characters' stories further suggest that what connects the family members — whether the connections are intelligible or not — is not necessarily something intrinsically biological, but rather shared cultural traditions and imperial legacies that create the conditions for their possible connections. Similarly, the characters' traveling through the "flesh" — which stores both public and private memories — unsettles the common understanding of the material body as the single basis for one's unquestionable racial identity, suggesting instead that the body is always already historically constituted by heterogeneous public and private memories that shape one's identity, subjectivity, and relationship to other people and institutions of power. In this sense, *Monkey Hunting* re-narrates stories of immigration, diaspora, and displacement as emergent connections of global migrations thus actively writing against compartmentalized literary traditions and official history by reimagining the heterogeneous, multi-directional links among disparate life stories, subject formations, and collective histories with respect to colonial power relations.

In conclusion, García's *Monkey Hunting* can be read as a metaphor for the emerging genealogy of the Global South, the connected histories of which are otherwise rendered invisible by the colonial archives of Euro-American modernity, including Euro-American individual(istic) narratives of travel, exploration, and (im)migration. Situated within and against patriarchal family narratives, the juxtaposition of Chen Fang's longing for Cuba and Chen Pan's disillusion in the last section appears to undercut the possibility of "another world beyond" through irony: the possibility of Chen Fang's emancipation may seem already foreclosed by the despair of Chen Pan, whose footsteps she wishes to follow. Alternatively, this juxtaposition can be read as a response to Domingo's questions as he contemplates on Chen Pan's life: "Were people meant to travel such distances? Mix with others so different from themselves?" (209). Symbolizing the possibility of hope even in utmost destitute and despair, the juxtaposition of Chen Fang's and Chen Pan's stories in the concluding section keeps the impulses of the narrative in unresolved tension. *Monkey Hunting* thus gestures toward the persistent spirit that never ceases to strive for emancipation through tirelessly navigating global relations of intimacies among differently gendered, racialized, colonized, and otherwise minoritized subjects — the spirit García is determined to bring to life.

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