

Calculated Cacophonies: The Queer Asian American Family and the Nonmusical Musical in Chay Yew's *Wonderland*

While playwright Chay Yew has garnered praise for his more than a half dozen plays, few scholars have completed any sustained critical engagements of his large body of work.^[1] Yew's productions commonly address queer Asian American experiences and associated themes, including the struggle to survive amid hostile familial ties and exclusionary social contexts. My article explores such issues through an extended analysis of *Wonderland*, a dramatic production involving four roles. Three of the roles—a Man, a Woman, and a Son—comprise an Asian American nuclear family. The fourth figure, a Young Man, primarily comments on scenes in which he does not take part. At the conclusion, however, it becomes clear that the Young Man plays another role: the Son as an adult. *Wonderland* roughly tracks the life trajectories of the three primary figures, allowing Yew to stage the challenges related to achieving success, fulfillment, and belonging, especially within the minority family.

Wonderland's 1999 La Jolla Playhouse premiere was notable since two of its cast members, Alec Mapa (Son) and Sab Shimono (Man), are queer-identifying Asian American actors, and accordingly reveals an important alignment between performance and social identity.^[2] Given the relative invisibility of queer Asian American actors in general and the restrictions still attached to this historical period (i.e., pre-same-sex marriage laws), the actors' participation in this production encourages the audience and scholars alike to consider the roles beyond the prescribed heteronormative boundaries of the nuclear family. This critical practice, informed by queer and racial perspectives, is perhaps most apt for reading the role of the Man, who as the reproductively fertile father nevertheless engages in some non-normative social dynamics and practices at various points in the play.

How an Asian American role is brought to life in a performance space always undergirds my analyses, especially with respect to the racialized and queer body as part of a larger family unit.^[3] Each role bears the burden of expanding the audience's vision to include the queer Asian American as part of a domestic social construct that better integrates non-normative sexualities as part of its core foundation. My article shows how *Wonderland* diagnoses this problem through its thematic depictions and offers an intriguing intervention through its deployment of form—what Yew describes as a “nonmusical musical.” I investigate the “nonmusical musical” as a quintessentially queer racial performance form that employs what I term as *calculated cacophonies*, which elucidates how *Wonderland* uses dialogic, sonic, and thematic relationalities to undercut the portrayed destruction of the Asian American family. The presence of calculated cacophonies allows *Wonderland* to spotlight some guarded optimism: there may be a sustained possibility for the queer Asian American son to find a place in the heteronuclear family.

I begin my analysis by situating the play within broader historical, cultural, literary, and dramaturgical discourses, which the play's post-1965 time period emphasizes directly. Prior to the Immigration Act of 1965, restrictive immigration, property, and marriage laws severely impacted the expansion of Asian American families. The obstacles they faced are apparent in numerous cultural productions set before 1965. Bachelors loom large, romantic relationships are often transitory,^[4] and the possibility of marrying within one's ethnic group remains challenging given the gender imbalances perpetrated by selective entry policies that favored men for their labor. In many plays and fictions, the Asian American family itself is under constant threat of dissolution.^[5] We need not look too much further than Louis Chu's *Eat a Bowl of Tea*^[6] to see the precariousness of the family even in the post-World War II period and in the latter

stages of legislatively supported Asian American exclusion. Fortunately, that book's protagonist, Ben Loy, recovers from impotency to impregnate his wife, Mei Oi, and therefore solidify a new Chinatown future, full of generative families who will fruitfully multiply.

In cultural productions set in the post-1965 period, the emergence of this social formation is more assured. The heteronormatively grounded "reproductive future"[7] is finally offered as a more sustainable possibility as evidenced by the proliferation of nuclear families, however functionally or dysfunctionally rendered, and accordingly depicted in a wide range of dramas and novels.[8] These many works admittedly do show clear fractures in the Asian American nuclear family and generate instabilities concerning the future of ethnoracially specific kinship formations. But what distinguishes these dramas and fictional narratives from the ones set in earlier periods is precisely the fact of the law: Asian American families can theoretically come into existence without the barriers formed by immigration policy or citizenship dilemmas. Practically, however, these works reveal that the formation of the contemporary Asian American heteronuclear family remains fragile.

The family formations we see in the post-1965 productions are also made tenuous by other social dynamics. In literary critic erin Khuê Ninh's estimation, depictions involving the Asian American family often involve daughters who are burdened with impossible expectations; they are supposed to bring honor to the family, marry the proper partner, and achieve a high professional status. So strict are these regimes that Asian American daughters will even engage in self-destructive acts to gain personal agency.[9] While Ninh concentrates specifically on the predicament of Asian American daughters in this exploitative economy undergirding the nuclear family, her conceptualization of filial debt applies to other cultural productions and their representations of intergenerational social formations. The battleground appears on the mind and body of the Asian American child who must be properly monitored, controlled, and perhaps even programmed to guarantee future economic and familial success.

But Ninh's argument presumes the heterosexuality of the daughters. The implicit question that her research and argument bring up is: Is the Asian American child who does not procreate inherently disobedient? The answer is almost certainly yes, meaning that queer sexuality becomes diametrically opposed to Asian American family.[10]

Queer Asian America, the Nonmusical Musical, and Calculated Cacophonies

Wonderland vividly demonstrates the ways in which queer sexuality cannot be fully acknowledged in the Asian American family in the post-1965 period.[11] On the thematic level, *Wonderland* disrupts the developmental narrative of the heteronormative, nuclear Asian American family, which relies on its children's strict obedience. In an exchange with her son at the play's inception, the mother tells him, "Coming to this country / A big sacrifice / Don't forget / You must be survivor / Must be what again?"; the mother supplies the only apparent correct answer: "Must be success." [12] The family's reputation partially lies in this generational extension, as the Son makes good on his mother's apparent sacrifice related to her uprooting and migration from Singapore. While the play follows the expected narrative by endowing the Son's future with a burden of the heterosexual reproductive future, it undercuts the myth of the ever-sacrificial parental generation, while attending to the need for reconfiguring familial formations and expectations, especially in light of the queer Asian American's expulsion from the home. In the context of post-1965 Asian American literature, Min Hyung Song argues, "If queers are reproductive future's negation, . . . then a select group of children of Asian immigrants are its objects of

revelation.”^[13] To be sure, the Son in *Wonderland* exists in the position of “veneration,” but his position becomes precarious once his queer sexuality is revealed.

Additionally, *Wonderland* operates on the contextual level as part of a wave of theatrical productions focused on the Asian American family that surfaced in light of the success of East West Players, Pan Asian Repertory, and other pioneering companies that first arose in the period following the Civil Rights Movement. I earlier cited a dozen or so productions involving familial social dynamics that are set in the post-1965 moment; most were staged around or after 1990 and spotlight the far more expansive array of theater companies supporting Asian American productions. As Esther Kim Lee notes,^[14] the proliferation of Asian American theater in this period came with more experimental and thematically unique productions.^[15] Dramas concerning the Asian American family correspondingly boast inventive staging methods and dynamic aesthetic approaches, departing from the more realist conventions that characterized earlier productions.^[16] Yew’s *Wonderland* operates in this same fashion, especially toward its conclusion, a surrealistic tonality that I consider in more detail later.

Finally, on the formal level, *Wonderland*’s staging and production gesture to the necessity of an innovative aesthetic approach to depict the queer Asian American family. At first glance, *Wonderland* might be described as a chamber play, which Heath Diehl notes “is a minimalist form in both dramaturgy and performance.”^[17] Though *Wonderland* has been produced with some use of sets, including a view of the Pacific Ocean and a “wood-paneled stage,”^[18] the play is meant to highlight the performances of the four actors. The sets themselves remain fixed, while a coordinated use of lighting helps mobilize a particularly dreamlike quality through the use of “aqua tones.”^[19] Diehl’s reading of another of Yew’s works, *Porcelain*, advances that its form, the chamber play, is essential to enhance a particular thematic issue being staged: “the current impossibility of representing gay Asian identities and the need for alternative identity formations within Asian America.”^[20] The sparseness of the stage, the longer silences in that particular production all emphasize the isolation and sense of futility experienced by *Porcelain*’s central character.

Wonderland accrues another level of formal complexity due to Yew’s description of the drama as a “nonmusical musical” in which the “monologues and dialogues” become “arias” and “duets.”^[21] Though *Wonderland* uses no music, the play’s stage directions encourage actors to consider their lines rhythmically. Yew’s cascading script and creative use of indents spur the actors to engage their lines with musical inflection.

For the most part, the invocation of nonmusical arias and duets in *Wonderland* reflects the ways that spoken words (and their potential musical intonations) contain some of the chaos inherent in *Wonderland*’s content through a kind of mellifluous speech patterning. But in three distinct places Yew subverts the general sonorousness attached to the speaking roles. I designate these moments as *calculated cacophonies* because they (1) involve overlapping dialogue and argumentative language to emphasize the catastrophic *deconstruction* of the Asian American family, but at the same time (2) exhibit word and phrase repetitions, dialogic relationalities, and subtextual thematic connections to *cohere* the characters. These interlocking sequences, I contend, remind us that though the Asian American family becomes violently fractured, there exists a latent desire to find unity among its exploding parts. In this sense, the play’s nonmusical musical form employs an aesthetic construct to help accentuate one central theme: the desire to make a place for queer identity within the structure of the Asian American heteronuclear family.

Therefore, one may ask what is it about the nonmusical musical that makes it the appropriate form for a performance focused on the potential but eventual impossibility of the queer Asian American family? To answer this question, I turn to the scholars engaged in both race and queerness as they arise in the musical form. Stacy Wolf, D. A. Miller, and John M. Clum respectively reveal the need to engage musicals by unveiling subtexts and subtle social arrangements that constitute queer desire as they emerge in performance-based cultural productions.[22] At the same time, such scholarship is limited because it focuses on sexuality as the element that requires a kind of spectatorial un-closeting. Asian American studies and performance scholars help expand how we read performance, especially musicals, for their veiled meanings and significations.[23] For instance, Celine P. Shimizu has reconsidered *Miss Saigon* through the resistant acts performed by Asian American actresses who are cast as the bar girl-prostitutes.[24] Though the musical has been vilified for stereotyping Asian women as hypersexual, Shimizu's analysis reveals the subtle ways that actresses command their roles to articulate a space of performative agency.[25] While Shimizu focuses on the intents of actresses in those roles, her approach can be expanded to consider the ways we must engage what cannot always be directly seen. I am influenced by these critical interventions in the ways that Yew's nonmusical musical catalyzes calculated cacophonies to emphasize a different form of spectatorial un-closeting: the desire to create a stable place for the queer child in the heteronuclear Asian American family. But if there can be no actual home for the queer child in this traditional social construct, then we can at least turn to formal and thematic hybridities to engender other relational possibilities for such fugitive belongings. I thus turn to some key scenes that hallmark how calculated cacophonies function in the nonmusical musical.

Babble / Babel

The first scene of calculated cacophony occurs at the conclusion of part 1. The Man, an architect, has reached the pinnacle of his career after constructing a megamall called *Wonderland*. At the end of part 1, however, we learn that the mall has collapsed due to shoddy construction. In this scene, Young Man, Woman, and Son all "surround Man" and "batter him with an endless barrage of questions" (366). This scene seems to break the realist conventions of the play to a certain extent because the Young Man and the Son appear on stage together at the same time and place. But it is more logical to read this moment as a rendering of accusatory discourses levied at the Man from different entities, not only from the direction of his Asian American family but also legal and occupational institutions. Phrases such as "charges of negligence" and "a fatal miscalculation" (366) suggest that the Young Man, Woman, and Son also embody the legal rhetoric that emerges in the wake of such a catastrophic architectural failure. At the same time, the Man's family questions his integrity. The Young Man asks him whether he is a "murderer"; the Son asks whether the construction of the mall with cheaper materials was "a bad judgment call"; and the Woman repeatedly asks questions that are clipped off (366). We might call this scene a nonmusical climax moment for the drama, as it jumpstarts the second part of *Wonderland*: the Man and his family must grapple with the fallout of this event. This scene is the first of three in which overlapping dialogue is specifically emphasized in both the actual staging and textual directions.

This moment obviously deviates from the more harmonious scenes that predominate in *Wonderland*. The nonmusical musical incorporates calculated cacophony here to critique the Man's single-minded focus on the *Wonderland* mall as the categorical architectural symbol of his status as the ideal multidimensional family man: the good corporate son who builds an expansive consumer paradise, the filial Chinese American biological child who achieves, and the successful heterosexual husband and hardworking father. This moment is critical to stage as a calculated cacophony because it undercuts a common feature

of musicals that involve group numbers meant to celebrate the success or the recognition of a central romantic relationship and compulsory heterosexuality.[26] In *Wonderland*, the Man's varied familial investments, which are sublimated into the construction of the megamall, are shown to be illusions not only through the play's narrative details but also through the use of form, as nonmusical arias and duets give way to this calculated cacophony in which voices overlap and yell over each other. The Young Man, Man, Son, and Woman cannot seem to find a common social formation to endorse in the final scene of part 1.

Another level of structure to this initial scene of calculated cacophony bears scrutiny. All four actors appear on stage together, with three seemingly accusing the fourth, the Man, of negligence as an architect. All four roles are given lines with an important refrain, "you know," which appears in an interrogative context. Even as the staging and the spoken words suggest outright hostility among the characters, the repetition of this phrase "you know" provides some dialogic unity: there is a desire for a unity based on some shared understanding. At the same time, the staged chaos of this scene makes communication sometimes unintelligible. Though the script gives the characters specific words to say, the actual production involves several minutes in which a multipronged babbling predominates among the actors. This moment of calculated cacophony brings into great relief a longer discourse coded into the early sections of part 1 related to the Wonderland mall, its relationship to spectacle, religion, and the Man's reenvisioning of his place in a corporate family. Consequently, I move to a brief consideration of the ways that the mall's collapse and the babbling family coheres through these interrelated themes and discourses.

The drama is set at a time of heightened consumerism in Los Angeles, a space that urban studies scholars such as Edward Soja, Fredric Jameson, and Mike Davis effectively read as the quintessential postmodern city.[27] Los Angeles is perhaps the perfect location for this play, as it is associated with simulacrum, a place in which image exists above substance. The architect is hired to build a number of strip malls, which stands in direct contrast to his aesthetic aspirations to "birth / tomorrow's concert halls / cathedrals museums skyscrapers monuments" and that such buildings would be "bold / gargantuan / towering over cities and peoples / reaching / touching the heavens" (290). His company describes these strip malls as "the new city centers / The future town squares of America / where people can come together / commune socialize fraternize" (288) and adds that "These malls will dot all over America / and no matter where you are from / where you are / when you come to a mall / you'll feel right at home" (288). The utopian description of these locations rewrites the consumer center as the home, somehow engendering a multicultural milieu, able to embrace and include individuals from varied backgrounds, races, ages, genders, and sexualities and construct this new mall-based family. In a certain sense, then, the drama depicts the Southern California strip malls as "commodified landscapes designed to satisfy fantasies of urban living." [28] The "fantasies of urban living," of course, are limited in their realizations, especially since American families with higher disposable incomes and class status would be more likely to find metaphorical homes in the mall.[29]

The architect buys into this line of mall-based consumerism and lets it reflect in his work. And, at first, his diligence is rewarded. Upgrading from strip malls to enclosed shopping centers, he is commissioned to build *Wonderland*, the sort of megamall that becomes a common site throughout Southern California in the latter half of the twentieth century.[30] This structure embodies the pinnacle of the consumer's paradise.[31] Even more than the strip mall, the shopping mall enables the sense of a family-oriented environment, replete with clean hallways, visual diversions, and communal eating spaces. In addition, the

architect believes Wonderland is the conglomeration of all his hard work and will allow him to finally pursue building his own aesthetic creations. He muses, “Surely / after this / this Wonderland / the company will give me / their favorite son / on a silver platter / more responsibilities / more projects / more buildings / of stature / of rank / that join rank / rival those of / Gehry Wright and Pei” (324). Most central is that he compares the company to a family in which he is “their favorite son.” By reconstructing the corporate world as his home, the architect promotes the idea that his compromise to do as his “parents” tell him will grant him the possibility to follow his actual dream.

In some sense, Wonderland emerges as a kind of reproductive product of the Man. After having completed the Wonderland megamall, he calls it “My creation / My latter-day Tower of Babel / touching / kissing the heavens” (324). The architect’s self-congratulatory proclamation recodes the mall as something he has given birth to, giving himself godlike powers that can, at least metaphorically, transform buildings into humanlike entities, replete with the capacity to lock lips with the heavens. Unfortunately, the analogy strikes as portentous since the Tower of Babel, according to the Bible, was the very structure that engendered the linguistic pluralities that divided people. His desire to create is simultaneously too prideful, a twisted version of corporate construction and reproduction based on the flawed language of capitalist consumption.

Now we can return to the climactic scene of part 1’s conclusion, as a calculated cacophony that bears out the babble that follows the Tower of Babel’s emergence. The play sources Asian American familial division in the focus and emphasis on capitalist constructs of community, which prevail over and above competing social forms. Certainly innovative in its configuration, the capitalist family nevertheless promotes superficial attachments and structures, especially as noted by the Man’s own building practices, which emphasize ornamentation and façade over integrity and foundation: “I chose / I imported / more expensive materials / Italian marble teak wood titanium / I skimmed / compromised on the rest” (396). Nonsensical speech becomes the appropriate formal and contextual mode of communication by which to root this scene in which all four actors appear at the same time on the stage with “overlapping” voices and dialogue.

You Couldn’t Be / You Couldn’t Be!

The second scene of calculated cacophony occurs not long after the Son comes out to his parents as queer. The dialogue appears in the script as two columns, a format that encourages the actors to speak over each other, as in the first calculated cacophony scene. This two-character scene portrays a conflict being waged between an Asian American mother and her queer Asian American son:

Son	“You couldn’t be”	Woman	You couldn’t be!
“No”		No!	
“Can’t”		Can’t!	
I hear		Not possible!	
every word		No son of mine! (388)	

This pivotal dialogue clarifies the Son's expulsion from the Asian American home, as he becomes a casualty of his own truth-telling by divulging his queer sexuality. But this scene is further notable because it emphasizes familial discord rather than the harmonious unions found in the latter stages of traditional musicals.^[32] Note that the first three words are basically the same: the Son parroting back what his mother is yelling. As with the first scene of calculated cacophony, the word repetition unites the characters' roles through oral discourse, even while the spoken words connote disharmony. In other words, the calculated cacophony shows a measure of sonic structure and alignment that ties these two characters together even amid their apparent antipathy for each other. In this sense, their inability to communicate even as they speak the same words reveals both the impossibility of and longing for a queerly informed Asian American family. We cannot call this scene a traditional duet by any means, yet nevertheless an oral subtext binds mother and son as a necessary pairing.

On the thematic level, *Wonderland* makes an important intervention here in its portrayal of the queer Asian American who cannot coexist within the framework of the nuclear family. The play's depiction of the Son's repudiation by his mother follows the established work of numerous scholars. As Ski Hunter notes, "If children make disclosures, parents may regard this as an act of treason against the family and culture."^[33] After all, "traditional expectations for an Asian man, especially an eldest son, are to get married and have children, especially sons, to carry on the family name. Asian American gays and lesbians face tremendous parental pressure to fulfill their traditional roles."^[34] And the price of being perceived as treasonous to the "traditional role" can be very high, encouraging some to remain in the closet for fear that they will be "disowned, or have their identity negated / denied."^[35] *Wonderland* perfectly showcases the ways that coming out of the closet is a communicative act fraught with psychological and material peril.

As with the first scene of calculated cacophony, the overlapping dialogue makes it likely that some audience members will misunderstand the characters' words. This aural confusion, though, is necessary given the situational context. At the same time, the full scene continually references the failure of dialogue and what is spoken versus what is understood. The mother asks: "What will people say? / What will neighbors / say? / . . . Ay, you [Son] deaf or what? / Ay, you listening or / not?" The Son responds: "I hear / every word / yelling / saying / Every word / Sentence phrase" (388). Recall that in the first scene of calculated cacophony, language becomes a kind of babble, not necessarily conducive to a meaningful conversation. In a similar manner, this second scene shows us two figures who cannot understand the other, despite their lives being more alike than they comprehend or are willing to admit.

To fully flesh out this line of reasoning, I move to short readings of other moments in *Wonderland* that bring into relief how this particular scene accrues deeper meaning and how the two figures appear as imperfect reflections of each other. I then go on to argue that this scene of calculated cacophony calls out to other portions of *Wonderland* to situate how these two figures must be considered as part of a queer Asian American genealogy.

As a young woman living in Singapore, the mother meets her future husband, the Man, through her work as a bargirl. The Man relates his first impressions: "And / there she is / A woman of twenty-two / Wrapped tight / in a delicate silk *cheong sam* / Sipping a bright red umbrella drink / gin sling / Sitting / at the Long Bar" (284). Not surprisingly, she strikes up a conversation with the Man that night, and soon after they have sexual intercourse. While no evidence within the play ever suggests directly that she or any of the other "sarong party girls" are prostitutes, references abound that they use sexual allure to

achieve their own goals. The Woman, for instance, admits to the audience that she lied about her first pregnancy to persuade the Man to marry her, a ruse that works. Based on this falsehood, the architect decides that the right thing to do is to marry her and return with her to the United States. Tellingly, the Woman distances herself from the other bargirls who expressly target who they perceive is the dim-witted “white man,” duping him into believing that their engaged performances indicate their devotion and love; their true goal, of course, is to get the valued “Green Card” (311). In contrast, the Woman believes she truly loves the Asian American architect and morally justifies deception rather than couching it within a framework of citizenship gain. That the Woman is unable to directly admit what she has done, instead calling it “motivation,” further demonstrates the screens that she places over her language, a way in which the audience then is invited to look into her divulgements for subtextual significations.

Her tirade, then, concerning what neighbors might say strikes as particularly hollow given her tactics in pursuing marriage with an American transnational. I read against the content and context of the scene to reconsider the mother and son through the lens of their unity on stage, as a kind of fractured duet. The pair shares the stage with overlapping dialogue that is spoken in relative temporal unison, even if the words are not exactly the same. Additionally, the script equally emphasizes their pairing through its bifurcated structure and appearance on the page. But this connection, primarily rendered through form and overlapping dialogue spoken in rhythm—that is, this calculated cacophony—is not simply a clichéd desire for rapprochement between mother and son, but a deeper understanding of the importance of their shared, but not necessarily twinned experiences, each having a complicated connection to his or her sexuality.

This second scene of calculated cacophony accordingly accrues another level of meaning because of the Son’s mocking of his mother’s accent. While he purports to listen to every word his mother says, he also states that “she speaks an endless / soundtrack of broken English / Embarrasses the fuck outta me” (388). As language fractures and communication breaks down, the nonmusical musical emphasizes these calculated cacophonies further through the problem of acculturation after transnational movement. After initially arriving in the United States, the mother’s status as a foreigner directly impacts her dreams to work as a Macy’s salesperson, as she is turned away due to her accent. The Son’s derisiveness over his mother’s English language faculties hallmarks an internalized form of racial shame, which he uses as a weapon to strike back at the mother who disowns him.

In a telling twist, however, the Son metaphorically becomes the mother he has denigrated when he attempts to establish an acting career. In the Son’s final extended monologue, given during a Hollywood audition, he is asked to improvise two film scenes in which he plays a racialized Asian subject. In the first, he must “Speak broken English / Deliver Thai food” (426). The customer asks him to wait inside while he retrieves payment for the food. Spying dirty magazines on the coffee table, the delivery boy becomes aroused. When the customer returns, he reveals he is Vietnam War veteran and thinks that the delivery boy is “Cambodian Vietnamese something,” later admitting that “[Asians] all look alike” (426). Later, the delivery boy is asked whether he has “ever watched *The Killing Fields*” (426); he responds in the affirmative by saying “yes / It was exactly like my life” (426). After that point, the veteran becomes sexually interested in the delivery boy, and they begin to touch each other. The power differential is made apparent on multiple levels as the delivery boy waits to receive cash and willingly submits to the veteran’s erotic advances, even after being reduced to a prototypical racial phenotype.

This audition requires the Son to be a foreign subject whose English is far from proficient. This role is

largely more indicative of the plight faced by actors, who are hampered by a Hollywood casting system that perpetrates the image of the Asian who speaks only broken English. In an ethnographic study of Asian American actors, Joann Lee notes that many of her interviewees believe that “Asian specific roles are fine,” but the chance to do much “beyond that” is extraordinarily limited.[36] Asian American actors are too often cast as “villains, gangsters and immigrants or filler roles such as professionals, or side kick to the leading role.”[37] *Wonderland* emphasizes the problems brought up by Lee, as the Son takes on roles that are racially insensitive and far from the lead roles he might have dreamed of as a youth. Given that the Son is probably not more than a twenty-something at the time of the audition, we know the period is sometime in the 1980s, a cultural moment in which the Asian American registered in martial arts films such as *The Karate Kid*. [38] Also during this period, dozens of major Hollywood films were set in the Vietnam War era. Though perhaps offering Asian American actors more work, these films largely cast the Vietnamese figures in unspeaking civilian roles. Knowing that this audition is one of few chances for him to break into the industry, the Son tactically chooses to remain invested in the casting process, even when it involves sexually and racially reductive roles. Further still, the conclusion of the audition scene suggests the possibility that the entire process may have been a variation of the proverbial casting couch, as it is implied that the Son and the director are engaging in drug use together.

The Son’s original reference to the “soundtrack” that accompanies his mother’s accented English is ultimately a prophetic and apt word choice as the son’s and mother’s connection in this scene accrues more meaning as the nonmusical musical continues onward. In its most basic definition, the soundtrack functions as a key accompaniment to a visual cultural production. The soundtrack is typically structured to operate with synchronicity, aligning with particular dialogue, visual, and other such cues in a performance. The Son’s use of “soundtrack” to describe “broken English” seems at first strange given his derisive attitude, but underlying this use of the word is perhaps an unconscious desire to remain connected to his mother, however foreign she may be. Though they cannot find a time and place to be together in that stage and at that moment, their pairing emphasizes their lives as imperfect mirrors of each other. On the one hand, the mother cannot embrace the Son for his queerness, even though she, too, is attached to what might be categorized as a deviant sexuality through her tactical entry into the United States. On the other, the Son cannot embrace his mother for her lack of English fluency, even though he, too, is attached to what might be categorized as linguistic foreign-ness when he seeks a career in Hollywood.

Conditional Probabilities

If the first two scenes of calculated cacophony render language as a site of miscommunication but provide formal and dialogic relationalities as a temporary salve over such chaos, then the final one offers a very different directive. The third scene of calculated cacophony appears toward the end of *Wonderland*, not long before the Man kills himself. At this point, the Man is touring on a sort of lecture circuit in which he speaks about architectural issues. He is forced to lecture because he cannot find other work:

Young Man	Given	Man	The function of
the dire			most buildings is
financial straits			to protect people

he is swimming in

from the weather (429)

This scene is intriguing because it presents the bifurcated structure of the “You couldn’t be!” scene between mother and son, but diverges in one key way: the Young Man’s lines are presented in the more musical cascading format while the Man’s are not. The Man’s lines connote the monotonous circumstances under which he must lecture to “make ends meet” (429). Here, calculated cacophony appears in the guise of the staging context: only one figure is aware of the other. The Young Man appears as a kind of omniscient narrator, giving us the circumstances behind why the Man must lecture at all. But the cascading lines suggest a desire for direct musical engagement: that is, a duet (or even a playful dialogue) might be possible, but the Man, for some reason, cannot understand the impact of his words beyond their most literal meanings. In particular, he explains how “[t]he structural / components / of a building / assure that the / elements required / to fulfill / its function / to stand up” are somehow met (429). These words resonate for the Man only because he failed to uphold the “function of most buildings” in his construction of the megamall, but the larger import of the Man’s lecture is far more relational: as an architect he is tasked to protect people through structural integrity, but, as a father, he seems to have abandoned a similar duty entirely. At the precise moment he is giving the lecture, the Man’s son is turning tricks in Hollywood to survive. If the Man is forced to employ his architectural skills to make lectures about how he failed to keep him and his wife solvent, then so too is his Son pushed to instrumentalize his sexuality to endure outside of the Asian American home space. As with the second scene of calculated cacophony, the father and the son accrue another level of connection through the shared but not necessarily twinned experiences concerning spectacle, deviancy, and limited occupational options. The father is put on display on a lecture circuit to spotlight what not to do when constructing large buildings. Fittingly, the Young Man calls the father’s work something that stems from his “new found celebrity” (429).

Almost concurrent with the father’s appearance at universities, the Son struggles to live independently. He takes a job as a stripper, becomes a prostitute living on the profits of his regulars, and later attempts to break into the Hollywood acting industry. The Son often has to perform, especially in sexually suggestive ways, to finance his life. These sequences involving the Son’s trials outside the home all occur just before the third scene of calculated cacophony and hence inform the way in which the Young Man and the Man cannot connect with each other, even as they appear on stage together speaking lines at the same time. Because the Young Man is who the Son eventually becomes, his presence is meant to reinforce how the Son and the Man face similar dilemmas in the period following the mall’s collapse. At the same time, the Man cannot see beyond his own myopic perspective and cannot engage the Young Man in a meaningful pairing, disrupting the possibility of a harmonious duet.

As in the previously described scene between the Son and mother, the Young Man and the Man are not functioning in unison. Yet this scene also appears structured through a subtextual relationality. The Young Man’s language is rooted in the discourse of conditional probabilities. According to Alan Hájek, “In general, conditional probability is probability *given* some body of evidence or information, probability *relativised* to a specified set of outcomes, where typically this set does not exhaust all possible outcomes.”^[39] This definition clarifies another elliptical connection between the Young Man and Man, as the Young Man changes the conditions of a probable outcome. In this case, the Young Man provides specific conditions, the outcome of which is the Man’s appearance on the lecture circuit. The use of the conditional probability in this context is intriguing because it can only emerge as the relationship between two elements. This scene accrues a level of unity on the basis of this conditional probability: though these

characters are not seen engaging in a musical duet, they nevertheless find an associative connection through the vocabulary of statistics. As with the previous scene, this kind of subtextual link appears again as the method by which calculated cacophony operates. This scene brings to mind whether or not there may have been a different outcome: did the father necessarily have to lecture in order to make ends meet? This question seems relevant in this context precisely because of the marital instability that arises in the wake of the mall's collapse and the Son's expulsion from the family home. Additionally, the Young Man adopts language from a quantitative discipline, gesturing in part to the very occupational path of his father. The use of language denoting conditional probabilities would have been familiar to the father given the necessity of eliminating risk factors in building constructions. In this sense, again, there is a desire to find a connection, even if the two do not appear on stage as a concordant duo.

The Memory Play and the Im/possible Queer Asian American Family

The shadow that continually shrouds these frustrated nonmusical duets and group numbers appears in the guise of the fractured family unit, which requires some sort of greater unifying thread. The three scenes spotlighting what I call calculated cacophonies signal the queer child's yearning to be accepted by his Asian American parents. If circumstances make the queer Asian American son's embrace by his parents impossible, then the nonmusical musical operates with subtextual dialogic links that provide some measure of order amid these discordant dynamics. Further still, these scenes and their various levels of thematic and formal relationalities reveal how the child's so-called queerness is not so alien from the ways that his parents have instrumentalized their bodies and their skills to achieve and to survive.

The final scene of the nonmusical musical leads us to the image of the "golden carpet" to contest a conclusion otherwise completely devoid of promise. This moment is not one of calculated cacophony, as the actors do not confront or oppose each other. But a problem equally as obvious as that encountered in the three earlier scenes—that is, the inability to communicate—does emerge in this final scene's collection of characters on stage. The Young Man arrives to find his mother looking out over the ocean. The Young Man tells the Woman: "Dad used to say / He'd look out and wait" (453) for an image of the setting sun that looked like a "golden carpet" (453). At first the Woman does not see this image, but then the Man appears, who by this time has killed himself, and then later the Son appears, who by this time has grown up (and whose "role" is now given over to the Young Man). Only when the Young Man, Son, and Man all appear together can the Woman see the image.

This final sequence of the nonmusical musical we might reconsider in light of the earlier scenes of calculated cacophony precisely because all four characters can see the same image, but cannot actually exist in the same time and space. The "golden carpet" functions as an appropriate symbol given its suggestive connotations of homely welcome and of the path that would lead the queer son back to his family. Here, we can say that *Wonderland* takes some inspiration from the memory play. Epitomized by *The Glass Menagerie*,^[40] the memory play typically uses more surrealistic and subjective staging that includes projections, stylized music, and subtle lighting to generate a production focused on "moods, a study in futility and frustration constructed on incidents rather than on a consecutive plotline, using as material the trivial happenings that can throw such huge shadows in the lives of decent yet desperate people."^[41] Yew's *Wonderland* draws on these stylizations, formal and staging conceits, and nonlinear plotlines, but diverges from the traditional genre conventions precisely because a memory play is typically situated from the perspective of *one* character or his subjective recounting of the past.^[42] Instead, *Wonderland* quite squarely depicts the disintegration of dreams for multiple characters,

eschewing a surrealistic filter for the majority of the play while accentuating the dissolution of the Asian American heteronuclear family. Further still, the meta-theatricality inherent in the memory play is not suggested in *Wonderland* until the concluding arc.^[43]

If *Wonderland* can be marked as a memory play at all, then this labeling is most apt in the final pages when the Son and Young Man merge on stage. Here, realism is partly eschewed as the division between time periods collapses.^[44] And memory is itself the very topic of this moment, as the past comes crashing into the present, reminding the audience that the Son and Young Man still harbor that same intimate view of the ocean, though each must reflect on it with a different parent. To consider *Wonderland* as a memory play at this juncture is crucial precisely because it provides a necessary countermeasure to one thematic related to the traditional musical's finale, which operates in the mode of "celebrating romantic love and American courtship ties."^[45] The memory play, with its emphasis on the importance of what has already occurred, undercuts any future-oriented ethos suggested by the successful completion of a courtship narrative with its proverbial "happily ever after" conceit.

Wonderland encourages us to look back to enable a different thematic to take center stage, one related to social formation. In this sense, the memory play begins to align more seamlessly with a different feature of the musical finale: a concluding group number that functions to "celebrate community."^[46] Anne Beggs argues that "the finales [in *West Side Story* and *Les Misérables*] . . . engage with the spirits of the dead . . . , musically reiterating their messages of hope and love."^[47] We can apply Beggs's reading to *Wonderland*'s final scene, as the four actors come together as a family, united through their ability to see the "golden carpet." Even the dead Man comes back to life to provide "messages of hope and love." A memory is resurrected, and a family is thus reconstructed.

Second, the power of this finale is also made apparent in its racializing impulses. We can turn to Lei Ouyang Bryant to consider how the musical form operates with respect to themes of race and associated social differences, as they appear in a finale. Bryant analyzes *The Walleye Kid: The Musical*, which involves "the story of a young Korean American adoptee named Annie and her experiences"^[48] in her rural white Minnesotan home. Bryant argues that the musical, adapted from Philip Gotanda's play of the same name, "requires a resolution where we return to the trigger incident when Annie is teased by her peers, and have the kids come back to apologize to Annie so that the company can come together as a cohesive community."^[49] As Bryant notes, the musical's concluding group number functions to show how the Korean American adoptee can find a place among her primarily white peers, transforming the racial homogeneity that might have been predominant in a school's culture. This reading applies equally well to *Wonderland* because it complicates the notion of community, as the queer Asian American family remains on stage, although without a larger group surrounding it. The isolation of the queer Asian American family suggests its radical disarticulation from structural support systems that might help to sustain a fledgling and fragile social formation.

Not surprisingly, then, the surrealistic nature of this scene—the Man's magical resurrection, the Son's temporally anachronistic presence—undercuts its actuality and tangible materialization. Here, the actual staging of Yew's production is most salient, especially as the use of lighting helps generate the luminescence that colors the pathway to the horizon point, resulting in a "moody" and "deceptive" atmosphere.^[50] As reviewer Pat Launer notes, "The ocean is almost a palpable presence in Rachel Hauck's dramatic set design."^[51] The word "almost" is the key, as the queer Asian American family unit cannot unify their perspectives on one "golden carpet" unless somehow magically reunited. In this sense,

I extrapolate from the work of Stacy Wolf, who has argued in relation to the musical *Wicked* that its conclusion “unifies the community, but with irony and a critical slant.”^[52] Wolf’s intervention clarifies how we might reread the promise of *Wonderland*’s group collective as one tempered by its ultimate impossibility. Wolf’s reading, of course, is couched in relation to the queer undertones that go unresolved: “*Wicked*’s queer ‘marriage’ is private, spoken only between the women and impossible to be revealed publicly. The principals must permanently separate because the community refuses to tolerate their union.”^[53]

Not unlike *Wicked*, then, the only reunion possible in *Wonderland* is an unrealistic one, due to the heteronormative demands placed on racialized family formations. But at least in this moment, the cacophony that comprised earlier scenes is overshadowed by this chimerical convergence, a solidarity prescribing the need for a time and place that can promote the emergence of the queer Asian American family. *Wonderland*’s greatest dream is the desire to form a sustainable kinship system, one that exists alongside rather than beyond the heteronuclear Asian American home. *Wonderland* leaves us there with a gleaming “golden carpet,” coalescing features of the memory play and the nonmusical musical, to remind us that even with such a problematic conclusion, a queer Asian American family must still be made possible.

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^[1] Chay Yew’s plays have been published in two omnibus editions: *Porcelain and A Language of Their Own: Two Plays* (New York: Grove, 1997) and *The Hyphenated American* (New York: Grove, 2002). My research has yielded just a small handful of critical studies on Yew, only one of which is partially based on *Wonderland*: Caroline De Wagter explores the play in relation to cultural memory in “Re-configuring Cultural Memory in Chay Yew’s *Wonderland* and M. J. Kang’s *Blessings*,” in *Signatures of the Past: Cultural Memory in Contemporary Anglophone North American Drama*, ed. Marc Maufort and Caroline de Wagter (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 273–90. Heath A. Diehl and Jordon Schildcrout respectively engage in critical analyses of *Porcelain*, which is another play that focuses on queer Asian diasporic themes; see Heath A. Diehl, “Beyond *The Silk Road*: Staging a Queer Asian America in Chay Yew’s *Porcelain*,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 37, no. 1 (2004): 149–67; and Jordan Schildcrout, *Murder Most Queer: The Homicidal Homosexual in the American Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press). Schildcrout, in particular, does note the influence of musical forms on his production, as one of the primary roles involves an individual with a fondness for Puccini.

^[2] Both actors have been out for some time. Mapa discussed his queer sexuality in his one-man

performance, "I Remember Mapa," in *O Solo Homo: The New Queer Performance*, ed. Holly Hughes and David Roman (New York: Grove, 1998), 199–228. One reference in which Shimono publicly addresses his queer sexuality occurred in 2010 in a post to Matthew's Place, a site run by the Matthew Shepard Foundation; see Sab Shimono, interview by Thomas Howard, *Voices* (blog), 6 April 2010, <http://www.matthewsplace.com/voice/sab-shimono/>.

[3] In this respect, my article honors the work of performance studies scholars such as Karen Shimakawa, Josephine Lee, and Esther Kim Lee, who have been attentive to the techniques of production, staging, and drama to their analyses and studies. See Karen Shimakawa, *National Abjection: The Asian American Body Onstage* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Josephine Lee, *Performing Asian America: Race and Ethnicity on the Contemporary Stage* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997); and Esther Kim Lee, *A History of Asian American Theater* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[4] For several prominent examples of these transitory relationships, see Genny Lim, *Bitter Cane*, in *The Politics of Life: Four Plays by Asian American Women*, ed. Velina Hasu Houston (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 163–204; Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973); and David Henry Hwang, *The Dance of the Railroad*, in *FOB and Other Plays* (New York: Plume, 1990), 51–86.

[5] Two examples that concern Japanese American families are Wakako Yamauchi, *And the Soul Shall Dance*, in *Songs My Mother Taught Me: Stories, Plays, and Memoir* (New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, 1994), 153–208; Wakako Yamauchi, *12-1-A*, in *The Politics of Life: Four Plays by Asian American Women*, ed. Velina Hasu Houston (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 45–100.

[6] Louis Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976).

[7] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 147.

[8] Ayad Akhtar, *The Who & the What* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2014); Wajahat Ali, *Domestic Crusaders* (San Francisco: McSweeney's, 2011); Jay Antani, *The Leaving of Things* (Seattle: Lake Union, 2014); Frank Chin, *Chickencoop Chinaman/The Year of the Dragon: Two Plays* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981); Julia Cho, *Durango*, in *Version 3.0: Contemporary Asian American Plays*, ed. Chay Yew (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2011), 327–92; Julia Cho, *99 Histories*, in *Seven Contemporary Plays from the Korean Diaspora in the Americas*, ed. Esther Kim Lee (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 21–84; Sung Rno, *Cleveland Raining*, in *But Still, Like Air, I'll Rise: New Asian American Plays*, ed. Velina Hasu Houston (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 227–70; Lloyd Suh, *American Hwangap*, in *Seven Contemporary Plays from the Korean Diaspora in the Americas*, ed. Esther Kim Lee (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 85–150; Sung J. Woo, *Everything Asian* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2009).

[9] erin Khuê Ninh, *Ingratitude: The Debt-Bound Daughter in Asian American Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 1–18.

[10] David Eng argues the ways in which the Asian American is historically rendered as a queer subject through laws that have regulated sexuality and the development of families; see *The Feeling of Kinship*:

Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); and *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 204–28.

[11] Some important publications do offer a number of important interventions, but are primarily rooted in social scientific analyses; see, e.g., Rosalind C. Chou, *Asian American Sexual Politics: The Construction of Race, Gender, and Sexuality*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015); and Gina Masequesmay and Sean Metzger, “Introduction: Embodying Asian/American Sexualities,” in *Embodying Asian/American Sexualities*, ed. Gina Masequesmay and Sean Metzger (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 1–21. In specific studies of queer Asian American cultural productions, the emphasis has tended to remain on film, cinema, and television; see, for instance, Nguyen Tan Hoang, *A View from the Bottom: Asian American Masculinity and Sexual Representation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

[12] Chay Yew, *Wonderland*, in *Hyphenated American*, 312. All subsequent references are indicated in parentheses. Unless noted, typesets and formatting are from the original.

[13] Min Hyung Song, *The Children of 1965: On Writing, and Not Writing, As an Asian American* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 168. Song’s reading is placed in the context of Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake* (New York: Houghton, 2003).

[14] Lee, *History*, 200–224.

[15] For another useful consideration of East West Players, see Yuko Kurahashi, *Asian American Culture on Stage: The History of the East West Players* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[16] Julia Cho’s *99 Histories* and Sung Rno’s *Cleveland Raining*, for instance, include stage directions that emphasize dream-states and the fluidity of memory.

[17] Diehl, “Beyond *The Silk Road*,” 151.

[18] Michael Phillips, “Haze Obscures the Landscape in a Troubled *Wonderland*,” *Los Angeles Times*, 6 October 1999, <http://articles.latimes.com/1999/oct/06/entertainment/ca-19230>.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Diehl, “Beyond *The Silk Road*,” 151.

[21] Yew, *Hyphenated American*, 281.

[22] Stacy Ellen Wolf, “‘We’ll Always Be Bosom Buddies’: Female Duets and the Queering of Broadway Musical Theater,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 3 (2006): 351–76; D. A. Miller, *Place for Us: Essay on the Broadway Musical* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); John M. Clum, *Something for the Boys: Musical Theater and Gay Culture* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1999). For other useful sources on queerness, performance, musicals, and associated genres, see Steven Cohan, *Incongruous Entertainment: Camp, Cultural Value, and the MGM Musical* (Durham, NC:

Duke University Press, 2005); and Judith Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens: Musical Technologies of Queer Identity from Homer to Hedwig* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[23] More recently, cultural critics have explored how popular musicals have been revised using purportedly race-blind casting considerations, which have included Asian American actors and performers; see, e.g., such as Angela C. Pao, "Green Glass and Emeralds: Citation, Performance, and the Dynamics of Ethnic Parody in *Thoroughly Modern Millie*," *MELUS* 36, no. 4 (2011): 35–60; and Donatella Galella, "Redefining America, Arena Stage, and Territory Folks in a Multiracial *Oklahoma!*," *Theatre Journal* 67, no. 2 (2015): 213–33.

[24] Celine P. Shimizu, *The Hypersexuality of Race: Performing Asian/American Women on Screen and Scene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

[25] *Ibid.*, 51.

[26] Wolf, "Bosom Buddies," 352.

[27] See Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989); Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage, 1992).

[28] Michael Dear and Steven Flusty, "The Iron Lotus: Los Angeles and Postmodern Urbanism," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 551 (May 1997): 155.

[29] Additionally, the Man must adhere to certain boundaries in the construction of these malls due to his status as what John Chase terms a "[C]onsumerist architect." John Chase, "The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture," *Journal of Architectural Education* 44, no. 4 (1991): 211.

[30] Timothy Davis, "The Miracle Mile Revisited: Recycling, Renovation, and Simulation along the Commercial Strip," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 7 (1997): 93–114, esp. 97.

[31] For some important studies on the American shopping mall (and variations such as the shopping center), see Jon Goss, "The 'Magic of the Mall': An Analysis of Form, Function, and Meaning in the Contemporary Retail Built Environment," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83, no. 1 (1993): 18–47 and Lizabeth Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (1996): 1050–81.

[32] For a compelling case for rereading popular musicals through the lens of queer spectatorship, see Wolf, "Bosom Buddies."

[33] Ski Hunter, *Coming Out and Disclosures: LGT Persons Across the Life Span* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 110.

[34] Nang Du, Hendry Ton, and Elizabeth J. Kramer, "New Immigrants," in *Praeger Handbook of Asian American Health*, ed. William Baragar Bateman, Noilyn Abesamis-Mendoza, and Henrietta Ho-Asjoe

(Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2009), 1:338.

[35] Cirleen DeBlaere and Melanie Brewster, "Diversity across the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Community," in *Creating School Environments to Support Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Students and Families: A Guide for Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth and Families*, ed. Emily S. Fisher and Karen Komosa-Hawkins (New York: Routledge, 2013), 77.

[36] Joann Lee, "Asian American Actors in Film, Television and Theater: An Ethnographic Case Study," *Race, Gender & Class* 8, no. 4 (2001): 182.

[37] The problem of racialized casting is further exacerbated by the simple lack of representational diversity in film, television, and elsewhere. Margaret Hillenbrand, "Of Myths and Men: *Better Luck Tomorrow* and the Mainstreaming of Asian America," *Cinema Journal* 47, no. 4 (2008): 50.

[38] *The Karate Kid*, dir. John G. Avildsen, perf. Ralph Macchio, Noriyuki "Pat" Morita, Elisabeth Shue (Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 1984).

[39] Alan Hájek, "Conditional Probability," in *Philosophy of Statistics*, ed. Prasanta S. Bandyopadhyay and Malcolm R. Forster (Amsterdam: North Holland, 2011), 7:99.

[40] Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie* (New York: New Directions), xix–xxi.

[41] Patrick O'Connor, "Theatre," *Furrow* 15, no. 3 (1964): 166.

[42] According to R. B. Parker, the memory play functions primarily through the subjective viewpoint of a narrator figure: "[W]e not only see exclusively what the narrator consciously wants us to see, but also see it only in the way he chooses that we should." R. B. Parker, "The Circle Closed: A Psychological Reading of *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Two Character Play*," *Modern Drama* 28, no. 4 (1985): 519.

[43] For a consideration of the memory play through the lens of meta-theatrical elements, see Philip Kolin, "*Something Cloudy, Something Clear*: Tennessee Williams's Postmodern Memory Play," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 12, no. 2 (1998): 35–55. Parker also considers the meta-theatrical character of the memory play by calling it a "box-within-box structure" (Parker, "The Circle Closed," 519).

[44] Diana Sandars and Rhonda V. Wilcox, "Not 'The Same Arrangement': Breaking Utopian Promises in the *Buffy* Musical," in *Music, Sound and Silence in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, ed. Paul Gregory Attinello, Janet K. Halfyard, and Vanessa Knights (New York: Routledge, 2010), 206. In this sense, *Wonderland* does gesture to the central thematic of aging in the memory play and how this process necessarily impacts how we look back on past events. Valerie Barnes Lipscomb, "Performing the Aging Self in Hugh Leonard's *Da* and Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*," *Comparative Drama* 47, no. 3 (2013): 286.

[45] Andrea Most, "'We Know We Belong to the Land': The Theatricality of Assimilation in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!*," *PMLA* 113, no. 1 (1998): 79. It must be noted that Sandars and Wilcox,

“Not ‘The Same Arrangement,’” provide this articulation of the musical in their context of *Buffy*.

[46] Andrea Most specifically makes this argument in the context of *Oklahoma!* Most, “We Know We Belong.”

[47] Anne Beggs, “‘For Urinetown is your town . . .’: The Fringes of Broadway,” *Theatre Journal* 62, no. 1 (2010): 46.

[48] Lei Ouyang Bryant, “Performing Race and Place in Asian America: Korean American Adoptees, Musical Theatre, and the Land of 10,000 Lakes,” *Asian Music* 40, no. 1 (2009): 4.

[49] *Ibid.*, 9.

[50] Pat Launer, “*Wonderland* at the La Jolla Playhouse,” KPBS, October 8, 1999, <http://www.patlauner.com/review/wonderland-at-the-la-jolla-playhouse>.

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] Stacy Ellen Wolf, “‘Defying Gravity’: Queer Conventions in the Musical *Wicked*,” *Theatre Journal* 60, no. 1 (2008): 17.

[53] *Ibid.*, 17–18.



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