7 Chang-rae Lee's New York, *Native Speaker*

7.1 The Global City of New York

In the 1970s, the slogan 'the Big Apple' once again boosted the popularity of the global city of New York (Rosenthal 2011: 7), attracting world-wide flows of tourists and increasing to more than six million international visitors in 2000 (Gladstone et al 2003: 81). New York lends itself to several exceptional images, such as the 'quintessential immigrant city' (Foner 2000: 5),[40] 'the capital of the capital' (Bell et al 2011: 269), 'a multicultural mercantile city' (Abu-Lughod 1999: 23), or 'the city of ambition' (Bell et al 2011: 249). The American metropolis is continuously evolving into something new because change is the city's only steady characteristic (Lach 2000: 8); the city always recovers despite the severity of its moral, social, or economic crises (Bell et al 2011: 250). Due to this 'pragmatic pluralism' of not having a single logic, New York is considered 'the unfinished city' (Bender 2002: xii).

New York is a political, financial, and economic nodal point, a center "of global corporate power" (Clark 1996: 148). The metropolis of about eight million (Halle 2003: 24) is *the* 'prototypical' global city (Beauregard 2003) and one of Sassen's three leading examples when coining the term 'global city' (1991: 4). New York is in the top tier of global cities (Brenner et al 2006: 3) with regard to numerous rankings. In a comprehensive study of world city research, New York is one of the four cities cited 16 out of 16 times (Taylor 2004: 40f.).

Often conceived as the unofficial capital of the American nation by foreigners, New York "casts its 'world city shadow' over all other US cities" (Taylor 2004: 160; Beaverstock et al 2000). The metropolis has long influenced the entire country and its values and continues to be of major significance for America.

40 For more information about immigration and cultural diversity in the United States, see Marzio, Peter C. (ed.). *A Nation of Nations*. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

Illustrating the intrinsic relationship of the country's image and the global city's perception, New York represents "the nation's sometimes glorious, sometimes horrifying other and at the same time is part of its self-imagination" (Rosenthal 2011: 28). The following elaborates how the most un-American metropolis continues to shape its country's image but has also developed into "a center of difference" (Bender 2002: 182).

As early as in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the city of New York and its culture were based on two pillars: interest and diversity (Bender 2002: 193), with trade and financial transactions across cultural, political, and religious boundaries being considered as the key to monetary success. From a global perspective, New York has come to be recognized as a "city of difference par excellence" (Sennett 1990: 128; Miles 2007: 58). New York has always been "a multicultural mercantile city" (Abu-Lughod 1999: 23). Its quality as the North American gateway for immigrants from around the world supported its early development as a financial node and global city. New York thus became the major starting point for American consumerism, commercialization, and global Westernization.

New York is often contrasted with Los Angeles, the second largest American city, because both are so-called 'core primary cities' in the world city hierarchy (Friedmann 1986). As America's "leading immigrant destinations" (Waldinger 1996: 1078), both cities operate as important nodes in the global network of migration and transmigration. New York, however, fulfilled the criteria of a global city as early as the 1870s (Abu-Lughod 1999: 40), already being the classical heaven for immigrants to America.

The past and present immigrant experience differs greatly in New York and Los Angeles (Waldinger 1996: 1079). Although immigration to Los Angeles accelerated in the twentieth century, New York still represents "the most visible site of the struggle over American identity" (Corley 2004: 67). Due to the city's history, economy, and politics, an immigrant's integration accelerated in New York (Waldinger 1996: 1083). In return, the steady flow of immigrants, their capital and their labor have helped the city of New York to become the financial center it is today (Bell et al 2011: 259). Thus, in addition to economics and infrastructure, ethnic diversity constitutes the global city's key characteristic. Nevertheless, in both cities, immigrants are still discriminated against in terms of income distribution (Friedmann 1986: 76).

The city of New York was originally referred to as 'New Amsterdam' when a Dutch company settled at the harbor in 1624 (Abu-Lughod 1999: 23). The harbor's proximity to Europe has influenced the city's growth in size and its infrastructural importance for national and transatlantic commerce. New York's port

and the construction of canal systems accelerated national and international trade. By the nineteenth century, New York had become a central nodal point for information and transport, representing a regional and global command center (Taylor 2004: 90f.) with a major impact on America and influence well beyond the national. As early as in 1643, eighteen languages were spoken in New York (then referred to as 'New Amsterdam') (Abu-Lughod 1999). This diverse background of the city's residents served as the basis for a new form of politics and society in New York, "one that embraced difference, diversity, and conflict – as well as the dollar" (Bender 2002: 192).

New York fulfilled the economic criteria of a global city much earlier than its North American counterparts Los Angeles and Toronto. As early as 1820, the so-called "city of ambition" (Bell et al 2011: 249) was a national center for finance, stock exchanges, insurance, and real estate. This growth in the economic sector, often referred to as 'FIRE,' is symptomatic for major cities in a globalizing age (Abu-Lughod 1999: 37). New York's specialization on finance was accelerated by its central position in the triangular-trade slave market (Bell et al 2011: 267) and further enforced by the country's domination in politics and economics following World War II (Rodriguez et al 2006: 39). Although the city was severely shaken by the Great Depression in 1929 and the Wall Street crash in 2008, from which it is still recuperating, New York's economic supremacy has lasted for more than two centuries (Bell et al 2011: 269).

New York is a leading transnational financial center of global impact (Clark 1996: 159). It is not only the American financial hub but remains to be the world financial center for global transactions and exchange. The "hyper global city" has strong ties to and influence on the regional, national, and international economy (Olds et al 2004). In terms of bank network connectivity, for example, New York is ranked second behind London (Taylor 2004: 99). In "the business city that never sleeps" (Short 1999: 49; Parker 2004: 126), Wall Street and the New York Stock Exchange have become icons for world-wide financial transactions and globe-encompassing capitalism. In 1971, the World Trade Center was opened and became one of the most popular buildings in New York, invigorating the financial district (Bell et al 2011: 265) and the city's image as the financial capital of the world.

New York functions as a 'global command center' of mega influence (Taylor et al 2002; Taylor 2004: 90) and, along with London, the American metropolis is the global city with the highest global network connectivity (Taylor 2004: 73; Taylor et al 2002), linked to various world cities of different tier. Together with London and Amsterdam, New York is described as a 'hegemonic city' (Lee and Pelizzon 1991; Taylor 2004: 14), demonstrating the global city's importance for

America and for the global network of world cites. This effect is of particular importance for financial control centers that usually outlast their country's hegemony (Taylor 2004: 14).

New York is also referred to as a 'specialist service city' with regard to banking, finance, and law (Taylor 2004: 83). The city is the strength of America's manufacturing where "a sizeable component of global production and consumption is controlled" (Clark 1996: 141). Whereas Los Angeles was ranked eighth and Toronto fifteenth with regard to control and command in 1984, New York is considered the center for it with almost 60 of the 500 largest transnational companies' headquarters (Clark 1996: 148; Smith et al 1987). Thus, it is more globally than regionally oriented (Taylor 2004: 154).

Better infrastructure has led to the steady growth of the city's population, and, as in most North American cities, immigrant groups generally favor the city center as their destination (Abu-Lughod 1999: 302). In 1800, although Manhattan had only 57,500 residents, it was still one of the largest cities in the U.S. at that time (Bronger 2004: 74). Between 1820 and 1870, New York's ethnic population grew due to migration to urban areas (Abu-Lughod 1999: 40). The opening of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883provided the first non-ferry based connection from Manhattan to Staten Island (Bronger 2004: 114) and facilitated the larger area's growth in infrastructure and population. Today, New York city's subway system is one of the world's most dense with more than 400 stops and more than 200 miles of tracks (Bronger 2004: 114), connecting the core city with the central areas since 1904.

Then and now, the city's competences, services, and labor options are focused on the five boroughs (Halle 2003: 1) with the greater metropolitan area featuring a population of almost 20 million. In 1898, the so-called 'Greater City of New York' was formed with the amalgamation of the five boroughs Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, Staten Island, and the Bronx, doubling the population, expanding its size significantly, and creating an integrated municipal government (Bell et al 2011: 253). Manhattan is still regarded as New York's core city, and since the agglomeration, the boroughs Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and the Bronx have been considered the city's core area (Bronger 2004: 67). The global city's main attractions, such as the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, Times Square, Fifth Avenue, and Central Park, are all situated in Manhattan.

The city's infrastructural and economic development is often associated with the Manhattan street grid, which was introduced in 1811 to facilitate organic growth. Land was leveled and streets and avenues were planned and built in a rectangular manner (Bell et al 2011: 265). This structure was visionary at its

time (Bender 2002: xv) and aimed at making money in real estate when subdivided land lots were leased to poor immigrants (Monahan 2002: 164). The grid structure helped New York, in stark contrast to Los Angeles, to be "one of the most pedestrian-friendly" American cities (Bell et al 2011: 266), shaping how New York City dwellers experience an 'intersecting' life on the streets.

American immigration policies changed over time to accommodate immigrants and the economy, beginning with traditional *boat people* arriving at Ellis Island to modern air-fare passengers landing at JFK (Foner 2000) or LAX. Immigrants arriving before and after 1965 are "overwhelmingly city-bound" with about 40 percent living either in the greater areas of New York or Los Angeles in 1980 (Waldinger 1996: 1078). Ellis Island, a government facility built near Liberty Island, remained the single destination for new arrivers from 1892 to 1954 (Koman 1999: 31), operating as "an immigrant-processing center" (Foner 2000: 1) in which 12 million immigrants were 'managed.' Consequently, more than 100 million Americans had their ancestors passing through Ellis Island (Koman 1999: 31), and today, roughly 50 percent of all immigrants continue to "pass through New York's portals" (Abu-Lughod 1999: 19). Since 1990, Ellis Island, now a national immigration museum (Koman 1999: 31), has attracted millions of visitors annually (Foner 2000: 2). Ellis Island remains the most prominent symbol of the 'American passage' (Cannato 2010) and American immigration experience.[41]

Two major waves of immigrants mainly affected the immigrant heaven New York. The first wave spans from 1880 to 1920, while the second peak concentrates on the period starting in the mid-1960s (Foner 2000: 6). Most immigrants arriving in the mid-nineteenth century, before the first peak, were of German and Irish descent (Foner 2000: 10). The first peak was mainly influenced by Russian Jews and Italians, who still make up a significant part of New York's population. Most immigrants following this peak in the first wave were of Eastern European, Mediterranean, and Chinese descent (Bell et al 2011: 258). The first wave was stopped by the *Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924*, which limited immigration numbers from Eastern and Southern Europe.

Following the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, which put an end to the former *country-of-origin quotas* (Foner 2000: 23f.), new immigrant groups started to pass through and settle in New York, including Asians, Caribbean, and Latin Americans (Sabagh et al 2003: 101f.). A regulatory shift from ethnic quotas towards an immigrant's skills took place, favoring western and northern Europeans (Foner

41 For more information on Ellis Island as the gate to America, see Thomas M. Pitkin's *Keepers of the Gate: A History of Ellis Island* (1975).

2000: 23f.). In contrast to Los Angeles, New York received many immigrants from outside Europe before 1965 (Waldinger 1996: 1079). The 1986 *Immigration and Control Act* (IRCA) or *Simpson-Mazzoli Act* reformed immigration laws by granting amnesty to illegal immigrants who had resided in America since 1982.[42] With the Immigration Act of 1990, immigration policies became more liberal, inviting immigrants "from underrepresented countries" (Foner 2000: 13f). Thus, by the new millennium, new arrivers were primarily immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and the West Indies (Foner 2000: 1). Thirty-two percent were Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites, while African Americans accounted for 16 percent and Asians for 12 percent (Sabagh et al 2003: 104).

According to the 1990 census, the three largest immigrant groups living in New York were born in the Dominican Republic, China, and Jamaica, featuring the largest Chinese American community (Foner 2000: 11ff.). Between 1980 and 1990, the five major immigrant groups to New York consisted of over 145,000 Dominicans, about 75,000 Chinese and Jamaicans, about 67,000 Colombians, and around 58,500 Koreans (Abu-Lughod 1999: 302). In the twenty years before 1992, the majority of Caribbean immigrants to America settled in New York and the surrounding areas, including "half of the Haitians, Trinidadians, and Jamaicans and close to three-fourths of the Dominicans and Guyanese" (Foner 2000: 12).

Describing the so-called 'newest New Yorkers' of the 1990s, who, in comparison to immigrants from previous eras are even more different in cultural, educational, or economic terms, the term 'diversity' emerges as a metropolitan, national, and international catchphrase (Foner 2000: 35). About 30 percent of New Yorkers speak a language other than English at home (Sabagh et al 2003: 103) and in 1990, 28.4 percent of New York City's residents were foreign-born, with percentages of 25.8 in Manhattan, 22.8 in The Bronx, 29.2 in Brooklyn, 36.2 in Queens, and 11.8 in Staten Island (Abu-Lughod 1999: 303). In 1996, however, with almost 50 percent and 31 percent, respectively (Anisef et al 2003: 3), both Toronto and Los Angeles featured a higher rate of foreign-born population than the "quintessential immigrant city" (Foner 2000: 5). Nevertheless, New York continued to be America's "most culturally various city" (O'Connell 1995: xv), considered "a city of difference par excellence" (Sennett 1990: 128; Miles 2007:

42 Approximately three million undocumented immigrants were affected by this immigration policy. For more information, see Susan Gonzalez Baker's *The 'Amnesty' Aftermath: Current Policy Issues Stemming from the Legalization Programs of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act* (1997).

58), outnumbering most American cities in terms of the range of immigrant diversity (Foner 2000: 5).

Similar to Toronto's rapid development from an 'anglicized city' to a city of immense diversity, proportions of whites and non-whites changed quickly in New York, from 94 percent whites in 1940 to 52 percent in 1990, with 59 percent in Manhattan, 47 percent in Brooklyn, 36 percent in The Bronx, 58 percent in Queens, and 85 percent in Staten Island (Abu-Lughod 1999: 297). Thus, by the 1990s, "the new New Yorkers from abroad" made up 28 percent (Waldinger 1996: 1079) of the population, which was still lower than in Los Angeles. This rapid development is partly explained by the effect of 'chain migration' (Foner 2000: 19) in which earlier immigration influences later immigration of the same ethnic group. Cultural nodal points and ethnic clusters are formed, supporting family members or members of the same ethnicity in terms of housing, job opportunities, import and export, or monetary funding.

New York is considered not only as the financial capital but also as the world cultural capital (Bell et al 2011: 260). In 1998, mayor Rudolph Giuliani depicted New York in his second inaugural address as "the capital of the world" in terms of finance and business as well as culture and arts (2002; Bell et al 2011: 249f.). The dominance in arts and culture can be derived from the global city's outstanding diversity and its enduring status as the significant North American immigrant destination. Along with Los Angeles, New York is a center "for the production and dissemination of information, news, entertainment and other cultural artifacts" (Friedmann 1986: 73). Although Los Angeles remains the American or even global center for media and entertainment, New York is still considered the node for the proliferation of American culture and the headquarter of its publishing industry (Abu-Lughod 1999: 290).

In terms of culture, New York is of national and global significance, symbolizing "the hybridity of American identity through its cultural centrality within the American national consciousness" (Corley 2004: 68). In 1886, the New York Statue of Liberty, the city's tallest structure of the time, became the nation's symbol for liberty, peace, and justice for all (Bell et al 2011: 258). New York's Ellis Island has long served as the symbol of the nation's cultural history and plurality, now attracting numerous national and international tourists. The city's historical pragmatism of marketing plurality furthered this impression and thus, New York's large African American population, for example, contributed immensely to the cultural development of music and dance.

New York's art and literary scene continues to shape public opinion, continuously incorporating the city's contradictory images into its literary representation. Walt Whitman, Randolph Bourne, and William Livingston are three of the

most important writers and historical public figures defining New York's culture, politics, and society (Bender 2002). Apart from post 9/11-literature, three major recurring themes can be identified as shaping New York literature: The city's quality as the financial center of the world, existentialism and avant-garde as well as themes of the American dream.

The city's success as the 'world's capital of capital' results in "a rich literature on the urban ills of life" (Bell et al 2011: 250), including the paradox between capitalism and ethics or morale. Examples include Herman Melville's Manhattan-based short story "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street" (1853), John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), and Don DeLillo's novels *White Noise* (1985) or *Cosmopolis* (2003).

While Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* (1920) portrays New York's upper class and themes of morality at the end of the nineteenth century, the city's contemporary literature is dominated by writers such as Paul Auster and his wife Siri Hustvedt. Themes of existentialism, self-searching, identity crisis as well as of physical or psychological sickness are the recurring subjects of this avant-garde-like fiction writing. Whereas Auster's *Moon Palace* (1989), for example, focuses on "the uncanny aspects of the city, the mystery of its interconnectedness," illustrating how the city's history shapes that of the whole country (Lehan 1998: 281), his *City of Glass* (1985), part of *The New York Trilogy*, functions a as "anti-detective fiction," as the novel questions authorship when the author is thought to be a detective (Sorapure 1995: 72f.).

The third recurring theme has always inspired New York's literature because its "literary image has embodied the American Dream like no other city" (Rosenthal 2011: 27). Well before Los Angeles and Hollywood became the 'American dream factory,' New York and Ellis Island were its predecessors. To immigrants, New York became a 'land of promise' and the ideal "place to realize one's potential" (Bell et al 2011: 261). New York's ethnic fiction mirrors this aspect but also reflects on the city as a place of prejudice and resistance. Toni Morrison's historical novel *Jazz* (1992), for example depicts Harlem in the 1920s and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) portrays the African American experience in New York "as the promised land of freedom" (Wirth-Nesher 1996: 17f.). One of New York's greatest writers is the nineteenth century poet Walt Whitman, whose work continues to play a major part in New York's process of "metropolitan self-definition" (Bender 2002: xii). With poetry such as *Leaves of Grass* (1855), Walt Whitman succeeded in translating New York's cosmopolitanism, diversity, and difference into literature.

With the World Trade Center twin towers collapsing after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, New York's image as the economic capital of the world was severely

shaken. Following the atrocity of the terrorist attacks, New York became the symbol of a unified American mourning. Although the terror attacks, paralyzing American society as well as American writers and readership, took place more than a decade ago, New York's contemporary literature is, even now, influenced by the tragic events that traumatized the ambitious world city and the entire American nation. Post-9/11 literature includes international bestsellers such as Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005) and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007). Both novels portray the dramatic events in the city and cope with the images of New York that went out to the world, processing the atrocity and loss while narrating the immense sense of community.

Following the attacks, a paradigm shift took place in which different themes in New York and American fiction writing became more important to the publishing industry. As a result, New York's ethnic literature was not the center of attention anymore, although the city strengthened its feeling of community, reducing 'racial tensions' (Homberger 2008: xvi; Bell et al 2011: 276). Even Mayor Giuliani has changed: "Mayor Giuliani, formerly viewed as a combative, moralistic, and deeply partisan figure, transformed himself into a resolute and compassionate leader who was spontaneously applauded when he walked down the street" (Bell et al 2011: 276).

Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995) was written and published six years before 9/11 when Mayor Giuliani was still another character. In the 1990s, minority politics played a major role in New York. The city gained about two million immigrant residents within 15 years (Abu-Lughod 1999: 303) and high numbers of illegal immigrants moved to and through the city. According to estimates by the INS, 90 percent of the state's illegal immigrants had no visas in 1996 (Foner 2000: 17). Giuliani was determined to fight illegal immigration, which had a serious impact on minority politics as the city "has become more polarized by ethnicity, race, and class" (Abu-Lughod 1999: 296). At that time, America was dominated by strong interracial conflicts, such as the 1992 Los Angeles Riots. Moreover, the 1991 Crown Heights riots between Jews and African Americans in Brooklyn heavily influenced New York's political development, such as the 1993 mayoral elections (Halle et al 2003a: 344) when Giuliani beat the former and first African American Mayor Dinkins.

Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995) takes place in this difficult era of extreme interethnic conflicts and fierce unrests in America of the 1990s. With and beyond the Korean American experience, the novel's linguistically-crafted depiction of the global city of New York shows the possibilities and limitations of an integrated minority ethos. Using the combined case of the ethnic spy Henry Park and John Kwang's running for mayor, the novel tests how a Korean immigrant's integra-

tion into society can be stretched to embody the entire "polyglot city of New York" (Chu 2000: 2).

This literary strategy of a 'panethnic movement' (Ty et al 2009) represents a growing trend towards an 'interethnic imagination' in Asian American fiction (Rody 2009). With the creation of an exclusive minority ethos that is the combination of an African American vernacular and the extension of Korean family values, Lee's novel functions as a literary consolidation of the different, often rioting ethnicities by showing that a sense of community across ethnic lines can be possible in political, cultural, and, most importantly, linguistic terms. The following sections describe and analyze how the global city of New York is imagined as 'a city of wor(l)ds.'

7.2 NEW YORK IMAGINED: A CITY OF WOR(L)DS

Whereas Brand's literary Toronto is conceived as different coexisting and overlapping worlds within the city with a focus on concepts of place and space, the literary city of New York and its cultural diversity is repeatedly described as a "polyloquial cosmopolis" (Moraru 2009: 86). Although poetics of place and narrative play an important role in *Native Speaker* (1995), the poetics of code-switching is the novel's dominating strategy in visualizing, exploring, and translating urban immigrant life and in the integration of the different ethnic groups into society. The immigrant experience in New York in general and Henry's struggle in the city in particular are repeatedly depicted in linguistic terms. Thus, in Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995), New York becomes 'a city of words' (*NAS* 319) or, better, 'a city of wor(l)ds,' pinpointing the literary imagination of the global city's urban space and ethnic complexity.

Chang-rae Lee was born in Seoul in 1965, moved to the U.S. three years later (Kellman 2003: 89) to grow up and reside in New York. Lee received a Bachelor of Arts in English from Yale University and graduated with a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Oregon. After working one year as a Wall Street analyst, he decided to specialize in Creative Writing. Lee wrote the manuscript of his debut novel *Native Speaker* as part of his master's degree (Lee 2004: 215). Lee was only 29 at the time of the novel's publication, recognized as one of *The New Yorker*'s '20 best American writers under the age of 40.' The novel won a number of prizes, including the '1995 Discover Award' (Kich 2000). Lee is currently a professor at Princeton University.

Lee writes poetry and publishes autobiographical and non-fictional texts. His relationship to his mother at the moment of her death is depicted in *The Faintest*

Echo of Our Language (1993), describing how one's identity is interwoven with language and the act of speaking. This experience helped the author in becoming a skillful writer (Lee 2004: 216). The memoir-like novel *A Gesture Life* (1999) features narrator-protagonist Doc (Franklin) Hata, an elderly Korean American and Second World War veteran who grew up in Japan, as well as so-called Korean 'comfort women,' who have been forced to sell their bodies to the Japanese enemy. Writing beyond the author's ethnic constraints, the novel *Aloft* (2004) focuses on an Italian American in suburban New York. His multiperspectival, historical-fiction style novel *The Surrendered* (2010) on different Korean War experiences was a finalist in 'The 2011 Pulitzer Prize.'

Native Speaker (1995) was marketed as immigrant fiction (Huang 2010: 1). The publishing strategy was of utmost importance for the publisher Riverhead because the spread of the specific 'ideology of multiculturalism' "required the commodification of minority subjects as aesthetic exemplars" (Corley 2004: 70), addressing both the self-perception and an outsider's perception (Rotheram-Borus 1990) of the often biased 'ethnic label.' The author's multicultural ethnicity was strategically used and commodified for the respective literary market (Chang 2010: 142) because how an author and the reader belong to a certain ethnic group facilitates a book's marketing as ethnic literature (Chu 2000). This limited notion of culture as separate entities and pigeonholing as ethnic silos, is problematic. Lee thus discards being classified as a sole Asian American author (Chang 2010: 66), being concerned about the fact "that a novelist who chooses to focus on his ethnicity or region is too readily categorized as 'ethnic' or 'regional'" (Kich 2000: 175f.). The novel nevertheless attracted a broad, 'universal' readership, was recognized widely across America, and was translated into numerous languages, particularly successful in Italian and French (Kellman 2003: 94).

When writing *Native Speaker*, Lee was inspired by his own life growing up as a Korean American and by different literary techniques, such as Whitman's voice, offering 'a novelistic glossolalia' that "speaks to us in tongues" (Moraru 2009: 68). Using the method of an 'ethnographic autobiography' (Song 2005: 169f.; Chang 2010: 66), Lee was trying to analyze an immigrant's assimilation in a structured way (Lee 2004: 217) because Lee himself knew the simultaneous and contradictory feel of exile and citizenship (Garner 1999). At the same time, Lee underlined the importance of language because the "sense of the world, the reader's sense, comes from the language" (Quan 2004).

In the novel, the immigrant experience or outsider position is cleverly expressed through language, exploring linguistic fluency and nativity, authenticity and voice, accents and vernacular, or silence and body language. This language

consciousness translates into the novel's specific 'rhythm and sound' (Kellman 2003: 92). The author's writing skills and 'the lyrical prose' astonished many readers (Rhee 2011: 157) because, as Lee explains himself, the global city novel about New York is first and foremost "a story of language and how language forms" (Quan 2004).

Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995) focuses on the thirty-something Korean American Henry Park, who faces a personal, marital, and professional crisis in New York of the 1990s. Although the main protagonist is American by birth and sounds like a native speaker, he is struggling to be recognized as a well-integrated American citizen. In a parallel story line, the Korean American, skillful speaker, and mayoral candidate John Kwang's rise and fall in New York's society is described. The two story lines are connected by Henry's controversial profession as an ethnic spy in Dennis Hoagland's *Glimmer & Company* that supports the harsh measures on 'unwelcomed' immigrants. Henry is asked to befriend and betray Kwang, who is secretly observed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).[43]

With the depiction of Henry and Kwang, the novel manages to show the opportunities and drawbacks of an immigrant experience in New York as well as a possible interethnic imagination through language and in politics. Henry is married to the speech therapist Lelia Boswell, who is introduced as his opposite, "a fiery New England Caucasian woman" (Yoo 2005: 57). When their young son Mitt tragically suffocates and dies and Lelia discovers that Henry works as a spy, the couple splits up. Departing on a self-searching trip to the Mediterranean, Lelia leaves a fragmented note of her husband's character traits behind. Reading Lelia's description "*false speaker of language*" (*NAS* 5; emphasis original) triggers Henry's personal and professional identity crisis because he has been desperately trying to integrate into American society by sounding like a native speaker.

The novel is analyzed here in five sections, addressing issues of polyglotism, the interdependence of language and identity, the significance of the title, the narrative and the genre, the metaphor of the immigrant as a spy, the concepts of visibility, invisibility, and hypervisibility, streetscape and voice, and the interethnic upheaval and collaboration in the paradigmatic immigrant city. The next

43 As a consequence of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the now-called 'Legacy INS' was split up into three components in 2003: The 'United States Citizenship and Immigration Services,' the 'United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement,' and the 'United States Customs and Border Protection.' The three sections now belong to the then newly created 'Department of Homeland Security.'

section explores how the steady flow of immigrants to New York influences the growing cultural diversity of the global city. In the novel, the phrase "the strangest chorale" (*NAS* 319) articulates New York's urban space and the closely intertwined ethnic diversity.

7.2.1 The Strangest Chorale

> This is a city of words.
> We live here. In the street the shouting is in a language we hardly know. The strangest chorale. We pass by the throngs of mongers, carefully nodding and heeding the signs. Everyone sounds angry and theatrical. Completely out of time. They want to buy something, or hawk what you have, or else shove off. The constant cry is that you belong here, or you make yourself belong, or you must go.
> (*NAS* 319)

Different types of narrating the city are conveyed with the help of figurative language. Chang-rae Lee's New York is presented as a 'verbal cityscape' (Wirth Nesher 1996) because the multi-ethnic metropolis, its urban space, political sentiment, and social commentary are imagined and voiced in linguistic terms. Similar to chronotopic and olfactory perceptions of the city's topography in Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), New York's literary urban space and cultural diversity are mapped as "a city of words" (*NAS* 319). The North American haven for immigrants is easily associated with a 'city of words' because it has been characterized by ethnic and linguistic diversity since its founding (Corley 2004: 67). As the quote shows, verbal skill is employed to generate the city's geography and as a social commentary technique in which auditive vocabulary, such as 'shouting,' 'language,' 'chorale,' 'sounds,' and 'cry,' predominates.

In the three-stage transformation of personal pronouns depicted in the quote, the atmosphere, the political circumstances and the urban setting of the novel are illustrated. At the same time, an immigrant's experience and the three major groups involved in the process are introduced: Immigrants in general ('we'), American society ('they') as well as the individual immigrant ('you'). The paragraph begins with an inclusive 'we' as in 'we live here,' referring to all immigrants as non-native speakers. The pronoun 'we' stresses the common features of an immigrant's fate in America, disregarding ethnic boundaries. The diversity of

immigrants is expressed by their foreign-sounding multivoicedness as 'the strangest chorale.' When 'carefully nodding and heeding the signs,' immigrants are described as reacting with silence and obedience, reinforcing the stereotype of Asian Americans as the silent and obedient 'model minority' (Wong 1998). Then, a transition from an inclusive 'we' to an exclusive 'they' is made, the latter representing American society as such. The disruption between the two contrasting groups is expressed in terms of emotion ('anger') and temporality ('out of time'), hinting at the challenge of integrating immigrants into society.

In the above-mentioned quote, New York's multiethnic society is compared to a market, thereby referring to famous American myths, such as pursuing the 'American dream' by rising 'from rags to riches' (Jillson 2004), which still attracts immigrants from around the world. New York is thereby narrated as a 'commodified city,' in which "the urbanite is constructed by the consumer's drive to acquire goods resulting in self-display as a commodity" (Wirth-Nesher 1996). Finally, the exclusive 'you' as in 'you make yourself belong' emphasizes every individual immigrant's duty to integrate.

The novel recurrently imagines New York in linguistic terms as a space of diversity and multivocality, highlighting the importance of language. When listening to boys practicing English, Henry muses about the city's resemblance: "Then language. Ancient Rome was the first true Babel. New York City must be the second. (…) to enter this resplendent place, the new ones must learn the primary Latin. Quell the old tongue, loosen the lips. Listen, the hawk and cry of the American city" (*NAS* 220). In this quote, the importance of learning and mastering the English language is stressed because the ability to adapt one's tongue symbolizes the key to integration and success. Moreover, the comparison with ancient Rome and Babel stresses the national and global impact of the city of New York. This reference, however, also associates American hegemony with the history of Roman imperialism and dominance.

The imagined ethnic diversity of the global city New York is explained and portrayed with prose-like descriptions without drawing on voicing vernacular in a written form. Instead, poetic transcriptions of language use, accents, and slang are employed in a vivid yet diplomatic fashion to convey the auditive experience of the city. Henry, for example, recalls his father in terms of his unique speech as "the crash and bang and stop of his language, always hurtling by" (*NAS* 313). This technique echoes Whitman's voice,[44] articulating the imagined global city's 'polyglossic' cosmopolitanism (Moraru 2009: 84).

44 For more information on Whitman's voice and the poetics of narrative in the novel, see section 7.2.4 on 'The Immigrant City.'

Moreover, 'telling' instead of 'showing' is the novel's preferred literary technique. Instead of mocking linguistic divergence, the different immigrant tongues and their sometimes imperfect American English grammar or pronunciation are described poetically with John Kwang as the most important example.[45] Only a vague description of Kwang's linguistic qualities is presented (*NAS* 139). The lacking illustration of a spoken or written Asian American dialect forces the reader to imagine this novelty, filling in the conceptual gap of an American minority vernacular that reminds one of the African American but has not existed before. Thus, while Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For* (2005) and Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* (1997) show different, sometimes clichéd narrative voices to portray the global city's linguistic and cultural diversity, this feature is of minor importance in Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995).

In the novel, ethnic conflicts are articulated with extraordinary sensual experience regarding a particular language or dialect. When Henry recounts how his father spoke to a female customer in his grocery, the conversation is transcribed as a provocative fight with "the strong music of his English, then her black English; her colorful, almost elevated, mocking of him, and his grim explosions. They fight like lovers, scarred, knowing. The song circular and vicious" (*NAS* 173). This example shows how language not only forms a dialogue but also manages to visualize the interethnic tensions at the time. It is the novel's achievement that the ethnic conflict is portrayed in linguistics terms when "the clash between the two cultures begins to affect even the language spoken" (Eoyang 2003: 26). Thus, this "most awful and sad opera" (*NAS* 173) becomes representative of the all-pervasive conflict of Korean and African Americans per se and the interethnic uproar of the 1990s as depicted in the novel.

So-called 'metamultilinguism' (Sturm-Trigonakis 2007: 133f.), directions for the reader in which language a particular event takes place, are provided repeatedly in the novel, and Kwang's vernacular is the most prominent example. In an argument towards the end of the novel, for example, Henry and Kwang, both Korean Americans, switch from spoken English to Korean. This change is printed in English, but illustrated in italics in the novel (*NAS* 280). This paratextual device is a strategy to highlight the poetics of code-switching. And, by translating the Korean language into English, Lee also includes the non-Korean readership.

Another form of paratextuality is the use of metafictional comments that tend to transgress literary conventions. These explicit or implicit comments directly

45 For more information on Kwang's vernacular, see section 7.2.5 on 'Interethnic Imagination.'

or indirectly address the reader, such as the use of italics to mark translations in "I put out my hand, *'Yuh-gi ahn-juh'. Come here and sit*'" (*NAS* 249; italics original). In addition to the translation, explanations and contextualization are sometimes provided. No Korean letter symbols, written from top to bottom, are included in the novel. Instead, Korean is presented in phonetics written from left to right, again assuming and serving a non-Korean audience. Moreover, words or simple phrases, possibly familiar to non-Korean natives, such as greetings, are articulated with 'mimetic cliché' (Eoyang 2003: 24), a linguistic tool for translating cultural diversity into language.

In light of the perfect and prose-like language and the ease of translation and code-switching, the significance of the novel's title, 'Native Speaker,' raises questions. The next section discusses how and when a speaker is determined a native speaker or a 'false speaker of language' (*NAS* 5), thereby examining the interdependence of language and integration into society.

7.2.2 False Speaker of Language

The novel's 'polysemic title' (Corley 2004: 78) serves as a paratextual device, functioning as the author's direction for the reader (Genette 1993: 11). This "visual presentation of the text" (Fludernik 2009: 23) accentuates how language, nativity, and voice play a major role in the ethnic global city novel. Lee himself explains that "everyone in the book has a certain relationship to language" (Quan 2004). Thus, the novel's title *Native Speaker* is representative of the significance of language and belonging, linguistic fluency and social integration because language is not only a means of communication (Chambers 1994: 22) but foremost a method of creating, defining, and reassuring cultural belonging.

Linguistic fluency is often the first and foremost indicator when measuring an immigrant's degree of cultural adaptation. In the novel, the focal point is the 'binary opposition' (Derrida 1973) of being a 'native speaker' versus a 'false speaker of language' and its impact on an immigrant's experience because the idea of being a 'native speaker' automatically brings up the possibility of 'false identity' (Chen 2005b: 171). For immigrants in America, speaking their native tongue constitutes the greatest difficulty when assimilating (Kich 2000: 176). Thus, the combination of the novel's title and the reference to a "*false speaker of language*" (*NAS* 5; emphasis original) stresses the influential interdependence of language determining one's identity and vice versa.

The novel begins with a Korean American protagonist who is left by his wife. The recurring themes of ethnic literatures are combined with the discourse of "loneliness, isolation, fragmentation, alienation" of the narrated modern me-

tropolis (Wirth-Nesher 1996: 17). Lelia triggers Henry's identity crisis when leaving a list before departing for a self-searching trip, calling her husband a "*false speaker of language*" (*NAS* 5; emphasis original). This 'indictment-love poem' (Moraru 2009: 71) serves as a literary device, correlating with Whitman-esque-like 'cataloguing' and a juxtaposition of terms:

You are surreptitious
B+ student of life
first thing hummer of Wagner and Strauss
illegal alien
emotional alien
genre bug
Yellow Peril: neo-American
great in bed
overrated
poppa's boy
sentimentalist
anti-romantic
____ analyst (you fill in)
stranger
follower
traitor
spy
(*NAS* 5)

The incorporation of this intertextual device and employment of Whitman's narrative style introduces and reworks the great American poet's vision, recontextualizing similar challenges more than a hundred years later. Walt Whitman expresses his ideas through his poetry, conveying the equality of all human beings while highlighting diversity at the same time. Whitman reinforces themes of universal empathy and democracy through a nonhierarchical assembly of items. The ethnic global city novel modifies Whitman's vision to an America that is 'postethnic' and 'postnative' (Moraru 2009: 72). By transferring the poet's renowned technique of 'cataloguing' to a contemporary ethnic global city novel, the author turns himself into a 'global' Whitman, emphasizing urban diversity and equality in a globalizing age.

The catalogue of labels presented above is crucial for the novel's plot and resolution, the introduction of the main protagonist, and his character development. It also describes and dominates his relationship with his wife and triggers

Henry's quest for identity. Through his spying, for example, Henry becomes a 'traitor,' estranged from his Korean-American community. After his son Mitt died, Henry conceals his sorrow, becoming an 'emotional alien' to his wife. As taught by his Korean father, Henry prefers silence and absolute control over his facial muscles instead of voicing his innermost feelings. This cultural exceptionalism of being "tight-lipped and expressionless" (Yoo 2005: 57) fuels his integrity as a spy but makes him a 'stranger' to his wife. Henry constantly tries to conceal his cultural markers, although Lelia is obviously attracted by them.

The incompatibility of the ethnically-diverse couple is violently expressed in their son's tragic death. Henry always hoped for his son to have "a *singular* sense of his world, a life *univocal*" (*NAS* 249; emphasis added), explaining that "this is assimilist sentiment, part of my own ugly and half-blind romance with the land" (*NAS* 249). Although Mitt is American by birth and thought to be a native speaker, his 'univocality' is significantly silenced, suffocated beneath his upper-class white friends who formed a 'dog pile' above him. This circumstance symbolizes the social-political challenges and difficulties for intercultural children. Some critics even agree with Cowart's claim that Mitt's death means "that hybridity carries its own doom like a virus" (Cowart 2006: 125).

Lelia plays a major role in Henry's identity formation process because the couple is introduced in a 'self-and-other' manner. This notion of 'othering' encourages hierarchical dichotomies by being reminiscent of postcolonial discourse and concepts such as 'the other,' 'hybridity,' or' ambivalence' (Bhabha 1994). Underlying binaries, such as black versus white, are often inherent in discourses on cultural diversity. Although still commonly neglected, white is also an 'ethnic' (skin) color (Hill 1997), and Lelia's American identity is repeatedly expressed with this color-coded awareness. Henry describes his wife as 'very white,' 'opalescent,' 'unbelievably pale,' almost transparent, or as white as you can be (*NAS* 8). Even her name 'Lelia' translates into 'white lily,' indicating the character's Anglican background.

This technique of contrasting the couple highlights Henry's immigrant role and thus outsider status in society. Henry is attracted by Lelia's whiteness, an appearance he cannot acquire. Whereas his "American wife" (*NAS* 7), "the lengthy Anglican goddess" (*NAS* 14), represents the 'old' immigrant and therefore 'traditional' American, Henry is introduced as 'exotic' and 'neo-American' (*NAS* 5). To enforce this effect, Henry's descriptions of his wife at the beginning of the novel resemble that of a 'white Supremacist,' a colonizer, or conqueror, being obsessed with maps (*NAS* 3) and "overrunning the land" (*NAS* 3). Lelia is even presented as provocative, almost sounding like a racist, when telling Henry

about her work in "whole secret neighborhoods brown and yellow" (*NAS* 10). This drastic framing of Lelia by Henry is eased in the course of the novel.

The couple's 'binary opposition' is further stressed with regard to speaking abilities. Henry is attracted by Lelia's perfect execution of language, a quality he desperately longs for. She is introduced as a speech therapist who assists "children [to] manipulate their tongues and their lips and their exhaling breath, guiding them through the difficult language" (*NAS* 2), thereby highlighting the difficulty of English as a foreign language. The speech therapist not only teaches 'nonnative speakers' (*NAS* 2) language skills but also how to adapt to the 'proper' American way of life. Thus, Lelia is depicted as "the most careful performer of American identity" (Corley 2004: 77).

The construction of native speakers occurs because one social group is in the position of power (Singh 1998: 25), and in the novel, Lelia represents this power. Henry is immediately identified as a "native speaker in training" (Kim 2005: 218) by his wife, the 'standard-bearer' (*NAS* 11) of American English. She claims that he is trying too hard, listening to himself speak, and his body language is giving away that the language is not produced naturally. Nativity, however, is a grammatical as well as a social construction (Singh 1998: 22). Similarly, the concept of a 'native speaker' is a grammatical (Paikeday 1985) or political construct, representing linguistic purity or standards. This standardization, however, involves a process of othering. By pronouncing a standard, speakers are split in 'insiders' versus 'outsiders,' resulting in a naturally prejudiced 'we-they distinction' (Singh 1998: 16).[46]

Henry's struggle to be an accepted native speaker can be compared to the colonized's persistent urge to become like the colonizer to escape the othering process. In postcolonial theory, 'mimicry' (Naipaul 1967) refers to a masquerade or *camouflage*, in which the colonized unconsciously tries to become like the colonizer. When describing Henry's attempt to copy the sound of his wife's voice (*NAS* 12), for example, the expression 'to mimic,' is used. Henry, an exceptionally sufficient speaker but socially-designated false speaker of language, strives to assimilate by adapting his pronunciation. He tries to speak 'clean' English with no accent because he learned from his Korean father that speaking proper English is the key to success. Henry even practices in front of the mirror to bring his pronunciation to perfection, paralleling Lacan's *mirror stage* (1978), often referred to in postcolonial theory, in which the child manages to perceive a 'self' and 'other' when it identifies its own mirror image.

46 Linguists would opt for the more diplomatic term 'ideal speaker-hearer' (Singh 1998: 15).

To Henry, being recognized as a native speaker represents full integration as an American citizen with equal rights. In his case, however, nativity remains merely a 'masquerade' (Kim 2005: 218) because Henry's degree of political integration is not only judged by his proficiency in American English but also by his looks. Although Henry achieves linguistic sameness, the Korean American cannot change his 'physiognomic appearance' (Moraru 2009: 79). When he realizes that it is impossible to attain the desired identity completely and that he will always remain "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 1994: 86), a severe identity crisis is initiated.

Henry's struggle with language *and* identity becomes emblematic for the American immigrant experience per se. Linguistic fluency is used as a tool for reflecting on identity politics and the American model of integration beyond mere ethnic-specific constraints. The character's Korean background thus functions as an exemplary experience of an immigrant's struggle to integrate while being labeled as a 'false speaker of language.' In the following section on 'Amiable Man,' the novel's negotiation of genre and identity is explored. Therein, the conventions of a spy, for example, are simultaneously enforced and rewritten from a narrative and cultural perspective.

7.2.3 Amiable Man

The 'poetics of narrative' seeks to comprehend narrative components by examining "how particular narratives achieve their effects" (Culler 2000: 83). In Lee's *Native Speaker*, the immigrant novel, detective story, and spy thriller are reworked in a 'cross-genre' fashion (Huang 2010: 2) to demonstrate how globality and diversity manifest themselves in the novel's structure and form. By rewriting Ralph Ellison's notion of African American 'invisibility' to Asian American 'amiability,' an immigrant's struggle for integration is examined by analyzing how narratological categories mirror particular forms of diversity and integration of the literary global city in a globalizing age.

The novel's non-linear narration that varies in narrative time and tense is as fragmented as the protagonist's postmodern identity. The novel's 23 unnumbered chapters are told in a non-linear fashion, interrupted by brief stories, flashbacks, foreshadowing, memories, and prose-like sequences. The narrated time period ranges from Henry's childhood to when he quits his job as an 'ethnic spy' and is finally reunited with his wife. Similar to the achronological account, a change in the narrative tense is conducted. In the course of the novel, the narrator protagonist shifts to present tense when "he notices the timelessness of his spying" (Ludwig 2007: 233). This variation in narrative tense highlights the pro-

tagonist's moment of revelation and change in perception. Similarly, the narrative perspective changes from an unreliable 'narrating I,' providing "a distorted picture of (fictional) reality" (Fludernik 2009: 27) and thereby mirroring the loss of credibility, to a reflected, third-person narration focusing on the intertwined experiences of Henry and Kwang.

New York's globality, complexity, and diversity are expressed in the novel's manifold narrative structures, shuttling "back and forth between multiple plots" (Song 2005: 170). While the storyline changes "from unity to dissolution in the Kwang subplot" (Corley 2004: 72), the main plot moves from dissolution to unity when Henry is left by his wife to when he is a speech monster in Lelia's English class. The mirrored fate, or opposite, yet symmetrical and interdependent rise and fall of Henry and Kwang, depicts the spectrum of Korean American experiences (Lee 2002: 292), acting as exemplary immigrant experiences in New York.

Narrative conventions are reworked to accommodate the image and imagination of New York's cultural diversity. The creative mixture of genres, in particular the spy thriller and the immigrant novel, is one of the core achievements because "the text refuses the clarity of division and categorical distinction" (Chen 2005b: 181). This 'cross-genre' writing (Huang 2010: 2) creates a 'transtextual space' (Sturm-Trigonakis 2007: 156) in which different forms of texts but also different ideologies coexist. Thus, an interethnic imagination is created and the rewriting of both, the immigrant novel as well as the spy thriller genre, aims at raising awareness of social-political, literary, and cultural framing processes.

With its allusion to politics and the inclusion of the spy story theme (Lee 2004: 215), the novel differs from previous Asian immigrant literature. The characteristic immigrant novel is written like a *Bildungsroman*, focusing on a 'coming-of-age' process, the physical or psychological development in stages accompanied by a moment of clarification. In contrast, this 'anti-Bildungsroman' (Corley 2004: 62) presents a protagonist who is not an adolescent. This 'political bildungsroman' (Song 2005: 185) is one of the first Asian American novels to focus not on the domestic but on the political, the most important realm beyond the domestic. Thus, the novel also becomes a 'meta-novel' that explains, narrates, and rewrites "the process of Asian American authorship" (Chang 2010: 142). Moreover, the typical completion of the story with a happy interracial marriage is not featured (Corley 2004: 76) as the novel begins with the interracial couple breaking up. The Bildungsroman-like awareness-raising process, however, is featured in the end when both Henry and Lelia eventually acknowledge and

accept different voices, languages, accents, dialects, and thus, cultural interstices.[47]

The genre of the 'detective story' is interwoven into the novel's narrative poetics to increase reader involvement by identifying with the investigator and confusing the roles of the writer and the detective. New York detective fiction, such as Paul Auster's *City of Glass* (1990 [1985]), illustrates the "continuity between the activities of writing and investigating" (Sorapure 1995: 72). The same phenomenon is rewritten in the novel when Henry, like a detective, investigates and writes reports about ethnic fellows. As a quote of *City of Glass* (1985) explains, "the detective is one who looks, who listens, who moves through this morass of objects and events in search of the thought, the idea that will pull all these things together and make sense of them. In effect, the writer and the detective are interchangeable" (Auster 1990: 9 [1985]). Whereas a character called 'Paul Auster' becomes the detective by accident, Lelia's nickname is pronounced like the author's last name ('Lee'). Moreover, a metafictional comment about Henry writing a crime novel about John Kwang in New York, the "city of novelists" (*NAS* 83), correlates with Ralph Ellison's reference to the writing process of *Invisible Man* (1952).

Irony and parody are effective tools for questioning genre distinctions because the unconventional 'spy novel' features an 'anti-hero' and reworks the clichés of the 'classic' spy thriller genre, showing both parallels and variations of conventional spy stories (Xiaojing 2005: 23). The 'archetypical' spy is associated with a smart white male political agent who fights in secret missions for his country's continued wellbeing. Being familiar with every means of deception, from linguistic fluency, state-of-the-art technology to killing, a country trusts and relies on secret agents. Whereas Ian Fleming's British MI6 agent James Bond is portrayed as a smart woman magnet who speaks several languages, masters his gun, and saves the world from evil, Henry and his fellow 'ethnic spies' are not well-trained and "knew nothing of weaponry, torture, psychological warfare, extortion, electronics" (*NAS* 15). The 'antiheroic protagonist' Henry (Chen 2005a: 253) is spooked by guns (*NAS* 15) and does not even master the English language properly in the eyes of the American standard-bearer.

Incorporating this act of spying in different forms enables the novel to assess and question genre distinctions (Chen 2005b: 153). Henry's description of the job at Glimmer & Company functions as a telling example: "We pledge allegiance to no government. We weren't ourselves political creatures. We weren't

47 For more information on the significance of the novel's ending, see section 6.2.5 on the 'Interethnic Imagination.'

patriots. Even less, heroes" (*NAS* 15). This parody of the common conception of secret agents (Chen 2005b: 158) aims at highlighting the difficult socio-political position and integration of Asian Americans. The author himself explains his strategy as the following: "I purposely tried to work outside the genre conventions in exploring an immigrant / outsider consciousness" (Lee 2004: 217). This simile of comparing an immigrant to a spy works on a metaphoric as well as on narrative level. By showing the similarities and differences of a conventional spy and the public conception of Asian Americans, American immigration policy and cultural politics are examined. The novel thus rewrites not only the spy thriller genre, but also the convention of the Asian American immigrant and immigrants per se.

The resonance of Lee's narrative strategy to portray Asian Americans as spies is biased because some critics are disappointed in Henry's role and how readers are forced into imagining Korean Americans as 'traitors' (Yoo 2005: 59). The Chinese American writer Maxine Hong Kingston faced similar criticism when comparing Chinese Americans to ghosts in her novel *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1976), resulting in strong criticism and boycotts.

Compatible to ethnic spies employed by Hoagland's Glimmer & Company who are asked to spy on 'their own kind,' ethnic writers usually write about their ethnicity. This publication strategy aims at the optimal reader's consumption on the ethnically labeled book market, forcing writers "to turn into 'business people,' cashing in on their ethnicities" (Rhee 2011: 160). Thus, when writing a story about an 'ethnic spy,' the author can also easily turn into an 'ethnic spy.' Most critics, however, claim that Lee's spy novel is a success (Chang 2010: 147) because "by simply casting the Asian American as a spy, Lee has put a door in the wall between the genres of immigrant fiction and spy fiction" (Huang 2010: 2). In this self-reflexive form of writing, the writer makes categorization processes transparent. This narrative strategy may serve as a role model for further minorities and their literary discussions of an individual's identity in interaction with American society.

As most ethnic communities in America, Asian Americans are subject to specific, homogenizing group categorizations. Individuals from different Asian destinations gain their shared experience when immigrating to America (Lim et al 2006: 4). Due to this labeling process, recognition of the variety of Asian cultures is ignored and intra-Asian individuality is neglected. The collective definition 'Asian Americans,' however, was helpful in the 1960s and 1970s to form a political coalition (Ty et al 2004: 1) similar to that of African Americans fighting segregation. In literary studies and on the literary market, these labeling process-

es (Chae 2008: 32) have been applied to counteract the American panic resulting from various issues such as labor force competition or another military attack like Pearl Harbor (Wu 1982: 1).

In the novel, the expression 'Yellow Peril' is addressed and reworked ironically to reveal the term's artificiality. The politically-incorrect phrase refers to the color logic accompanying the white-and-black divide. The term dates back to the nineteenth and twentieth century, linked to 'the Asian threat,' a strong fear of East Asians or so-called 'Orientals' at that time. Whereas the expression 'Yellow peril' was first associated only with Chinese immigrants and boosted by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, it soon became associated with further Asian cultures, such as the Japanese after the attack on Pearl Harbor. This strong anti-Chinese sentiment lead to the formation of segregated Chinatowns, such as in San Francisco (Wu 1982: 2f.). Henry finds relief on "the streets of the city" (*NAS* 12f.) and eventually identifies with the list of character traits that his wife left behind, including the 'Yellow Peril'. In a run-down bar in East New York, he provocatively asks some grunge guests to call him *'The Yerrow Pelir'* (*NAS* 13; italics original), thereby mocking how an Asian would stereotypically pronounce the term by deliberately switching the consonants 'l' and 'r.' To emphasize the artificiality of the label, the guests of the bar toast Henry with a drink named the same, a significantly colorful mixture of white wine and yellow-looking Galliano.

Following the Watts Riots in the mid-1960s, being the 'model minority' emerged as a binary in particular in comparison to African Americans, which is also addressed and questioned in the novel. The term's first appearance in print referred to Asian Americans as 'America's greatest success story' and the 'superminority' (Wu 2002: 41; Rhee 2011: 159). From that point on, Asian Americans were stigmatized as the 'model minority,' often feeling obliged to internalize and fulfill this vision (Huang 2006: 246). The press encouraged this image by publishing articles on the ethnic group's "achievement, financial success, and low crime rate of this 'trophy population' relative to the statistics of blacks and other purportedly failing communities" (Wu 2002: 41; Rhee 2011: 159). This cliché is addressed in the novel when Kwang explains to Henry: "This is the challenge for us Asians in America. How do you say no to what seems like a compliment? From the very start we don't wish to be rude or inconsiderate. So we stay silent in our guises" (*NAS* 180).

Moreover, the novel manages to show similarities between different ethnic pigeonholing processes. Most importantly, Asian American 'amiability' is compared to Ralph Ellison's famous notion of African American 'invisibility,' thereby showing parallels of suffering and facilitating understanding. Ellison's *Invisi-*

ble Man (1952)[48] is considered "a masterpiece of African American literature" (Kim 2003: 231). It is partly staged in New York in the 1950s and deals with an African American who "is visible as a feature of the landscape but invisible as a subject" (Wirth-Nesher 1996: 105). Ellison's work is considered "*the* American story of invisibility, observance, and 'critical voyeurism'" (Moraru 2009: 79; emphasis original). This concept of 'racial invisibility' portrayed in African American fiction (Chen 2005a: 259) serves as a paradigm of the ethnic global city novel's literary and cultural criticism.

The global city novel is a 'reimagination' (Kim 2003: 231) of Ralph Ellison's analysis and criticism of invisibility, yet portraying "another kind of invisible man: the Asian immigrant in America" (Hong 1995: 236, Chen 2005a: 259):

> And yet you may know me. I am an *amiable man*, I can be most personable, if not charming, and whatever I possess in this life is more or less the result of a talent I have for making you feel good about yourself when you are with me. In this sense I am not a seducer. I am *hardly seen*. I won't speak untruths to you (...) Then I fuel the fire of your most secret vanity. (*NAS* 6; emphasis added)

An 'interethnic coalition' is formed by comparing Asian American suffering to Ellison's renowned example, highlighting the parallels of societal pressures when integrating. Although the two literary pieces are almost five decades apart, both, Henry's "I am an amiable man" (*NAS* 6) and Ellison's "I am an invisible man," refer to ethnic clichés inherent in American society, illustrating an immigrant's struggle in New York. Being 'amiable' is one of the Asian American narratives that are enacted repeatedly in literary and cultural studies (Chen 2005b: xvi), translating into the myth of being always kind, friendly, and commonly regarded as America's silent 'model minority.' Ellison focuses on the similar pigeonholing of African Americans as 'invisible' when others refuse to see or acknowledge them. The novel's recurring theme of the transethnic problem of being a 'visible minority' and 'invisible' at the same time creates a common immigrant history that is of significance for Asian Americans, African Ameri-

48 Ralph Ellison begins his novel *Invisible Man* with the following, similar-sounding lines: "I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids – and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me" (Ellison 1952: Prologue).

cans, and other 'visible' minorities. This interethnic comparison signifies a literary reconciliation of Korean Americans and African Americans at a time that is fueled by severe conflicts between the two major minority groups.

The novel repeatedly examines how labeling processes impact an immigrant's role in society. In Ellison's work, invisibility, presupposing an act of not being seen, is two-fold: an individual's personal feeling of invisibility and the effect of being invisible to others. Likewise, multiple perspectives of invisibility are introduced in the global city novel, where "the invisibility of the spy coincides with the in/visibility of race" (Chen 2005a: 255). This strategy is used to illustrate the similarities of the spy's border-position and the marginalized position of the immigrant. Similar to Ellison's character, Henry "suffers from the refusal of others to see him" (Chen 2005a: 249).

This invisibility, however, is partly 'self-imposed' (Moraru 2009: 87) because Henry has "always known that moment of disappearance" and believed that he could go unseen and anywhere he wished (*NAS* 188). When growing up, Henry recognized his invisibility in his father's grocery store: "They didn't look at me. I was a *comely shadow* who didn't threaten them" (*NAS* 49; italics added). This "history of self-effacement" (Chen 2005b: 162) and being "the obedient, soft-spoken son" (*NAS* 188) facilitate Henry's profession as a spy. Thus, invisibility can be useful because Henry's ability to be 'hardly seen' (*NAS* 6) as part of "the invisible Asian Other in American society" (Chen 2005a: 255) enables him to become invisible.

Henry's continuous state of ambivalence, fragmentation, and multiple identities results in "the dissolution of self-coherence" (Chen 2005a: 250) when his constant acts of impersonation destroy his authenticity, resulting in a loss of license. Henry states that "I had always thought that I could be anyone, perhaps several anyones at once" (*NAS* 118). When Henry investigates Dr. Emile Luzan as a mock patient, the psychiatrist examines his split personality. Luzan's name and profession strongly resonate with the renowned psychoanalytic Jacques Lacan, who explained the concept of 'otherness' by arguing that self-consciousness precedes identification of 'the other.' The 'analysand' (Culler 2000: 128) plays a major role in psychoanalysis and, similarly, Luzan is of major significance for Henry's character development. When Luzan asks Henry "Who, my young friend, have you been all your life?" (*NAS* 191), the psychiatrist diagnoses Henry becoming "inconsistently schizophrenic" (*NAS* 22) because, due to his profession as a spy, Henry cannot distinguish between different roles anymore.

In the end, Henry questions whether invisibility is what he longed for (*NAS* 188). The process of making oneself invisible can be compared to post-colonial 'mimicry' because, as a spy at Glimmer & Company, he believed he had found

his "truest place in culture" (*NAS* 18). Mimicry, a function of hybridity, is used as a strategy including masking, deformation, and inversion (Bhabha 1994: 120), supported by stereotypes, jokes, and clichés. Henry had been trained for this 'masquerade' when his father asked him to speak English to his customers. Thus, whereas Ellison's visibility translates into performing "the white man's version of the black self" (Wirth-Nesher 1996: 204), Lee's invisibility translates into performing the white man's version of the Asian self. When Henry eventually realizes that his pretended integration is only effective through betrayal and it is impossible to assimilate through spying, he acknowledges his 'in-betweenness' or being "less than one and double" (Bhabha 1994: 166). The novel then functions as a 'therapeutic narrative' (Kim 2003: 235) when Henry manages to cope with his son's death, his wife leaving him, and his performance of role play.

Henry's profession symbolizes the attempt to assimilate by betraying his own ethnicity (Chen 2005a: 249f.). His act of spying on "co-ethnic targets" (Chang 2010: 142) thus "metaphorically adds a new level to our understanding of what immigrants do for their adopted country" (Dwyer 1999: 74). How the imagined global city of New York functions as *the* immigrant city representative of American society as a whole is examined in the next section.

7.2.4 The Immigrant City

> Still I love it here. I love these streets lined with big American sedans and livery cars and vans. I love the early morning storefronts opening up one by one, shopkeepers talking as they crank their awnings down. I love how the Spanish disco thumps out from windows, and how the people propped halfway out still jiggle and dance in the sill and frame. I follow the strolling Saturday families of brightly wrapped Hindus and then the black-clad Hasidim, and step into all the old churches that were once German and then Korean and are now Vietnamese. And I love the brief Queens sunlight at the end of the day, the warm lamp always reaching through the westward tops of that magnificent city.
> (*NAS* 321)

Describing a scene in Flushing, Queens, this quote functions as a "rhapsodic tribute to the multicultural city of New York" (Rody 2009:81), inspired by the famous New Yorker Walt Whitman, a true "celebrator of the City" (Raleigh 1968: 313). In the novel, the urban space of New York is poetically imagined "as a quintessentially immigrant city" (Waldinger 1996: 349). The city's spatial and cultural heterogeneity is repeatedly portrayed in linguistic terms, described as the interdependence of ethnic diversity and urban complexity with 'cognitive mapping' (Herman 2002: 282). Renowned incidents of American ethnic turmoil are interwoven into the imagined global city of New York, highlighting the city's significance as a site of identity struggle. And, as the long-lasting, exclusive destination for American immigrants, the global city and its diversity are depicted as emblematic for American society as a whole.

Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995) is of major significance for urban, ethnic, and literary studies because it is "one of the first Korean American fictions" to employ and engage in 'the urban multiculture' (Rody 2009: 70). Ethnic diversity is communicated through the global city's 'chronotope' (Bakhtin 1981: 84) and "the heterogeneous urban crowd" (Rody 2009: 81) is conveyed through careful visual and acoustic sensuality. The quote at the beginning of this section, for example, translates into color and sound how the appearance of the city and its public space changes with the arrival of new immigrants. The quote's German church that turned into a Korean one and is now Vietnamese, for example, illustrates how the meaning of places is altered by new cultural influences. Similar to Brand's *What We All Long For* (2005), the phenomenon of gentrification is depicted by showing how different immigrant groups change the global city's appearance.

The novel borrows several elements of Whitman's celebrated literary technique, thereby creating a similar sense of ethnic pluralism and democracy. Considered a 'poetic genius,' Whitman has exerted an immense impact on the development of American poetry (Pickering 1977: 48). Whitman's particular fascination with the city of New York is expressed in the section *Mannahatta* in his *Leaves of Grass* (1855), among others, carefully cataloguing the defining elements of the city, such as islands, streets, high-rise buildings, houses, and arriving immigrants (Moraru 2009: 85). In the novel, similar to Whitman's description of day and night (Whelan 1992: 25), for example, the city's complexity is observed as a diversity of street activities from 'early morning' to 'the end of the day' (*NAS* 321).

The intertextual and intervocal references to Whitman's themes of universalism emphasize that cultural diversity constitutes a vital part of New York's urban character and identity. As an "archdemocrat and humanitarian reformer"

(Pickering 1977: 46), Whitman recognized America's 'plural body politic' (Moraru 2009: 85). Encompassing the multiple perspectives of the young and old, female and male, or anonymous and popular (Whelan 1992: 25), his renowned 'I-narration' became "the representative figure of humanity" (Corley 2004: 73). The repetitive employment of Whitman's multi-perspectival 'I' in the section's main quote resembles a similar intimate connection with the city. While Whitman's 'I' alternates "between I-as-witness and I-as-Other" (Whelan 1992: 25), both, the emotional expression 'I love' and the spatial dynamic 'I follow' correspond to this technique. With this narrative strategy, "Whitman's heritage of representative Americanness" is modified and expanded to take the immigrant experience into account (Corley 2004: 74). With the novel's poetic description of the different colors, clothes, and customs in the above-mentioned quote, the coexistence of a variety of religions and cultures is introduced in a democratic, egalitarian manner.

The imagined New York is depicted as an important cultural node in the global network, shifting the focus to the global city as a distinguished cultural 'contact zone' (Pratt 1992) in a globe-encompassing network of flows. The anaphora 'I love' as well as the quote concluding with "that magnificent city" (*NAS* 321) serve as a Whitmanian declaration of love for New York, thereby turning the novel's author into a similar "man of the city" (Corley 2004: 73). In the novel, Queens instead of Whitman's Manhattan becomes the prominent example of the city's cultural diversity because in 1990, 36.2 percent of Queens's residents are foreign-born in contrast to Manhattan's 25.8 percent (Abu-Lughod 1999: 303). The steady flow of immigrants since Whitman's poem changed the city and turned Queens into an important meeting ground for immigrants in general and Korean Americans in particular.

In the novel, 'cognitive mapping' (Herman 2002: 282) is used to describe a character's movement in space, thereby implying a character's relationship to space and the people living and shaping a particular place. Henry and Lelia, for example, are constantly on the move when experiencing the city: "It seems to us right now that if we stop moving, we die. We take the subway to parts of the city we've never been to and walk the neighborhoods for hours" (*NAS* 262). Similar to the portrayal of the subway as a cultural contact zone in *What We All Long For* (2005), the subway is a door to different worlds in *Native Speaker* (1995). Taking the subway and processing conveys improvement and development. This forced movement ("if we stop moving, we die" (*NAS* 262)) involves a compulsory 'time-space compression' (Harvey 1989) in which motion verbs are a basic element for the mapping of dynamic spaces. This technique translates a charac-

ter's dynamic movement in urban space into globalization and its effects, such as shifting geographies and accelerated cross-cultural flows.

How the novel's characters move in the city space also reveals their relationship to the diverse immigrant groups. Instead of conquering the city, Henry and Lelia cherish its diversity as a miniature 'World.' The couple experiences the city by wandering through the streets, treasuring "what the people have brought with them or are bringing in now, to sell to the natives: Honduran back scratchers, Polish mothballs, Flip Flops from every nation in the Pacific Rim" (*NAS* 262). The significance of New York as the paradigmatic American immigrant city is emphasized by the depiction of miniature Statues of Liberty. As emblematic symbols of the American dream, "each of these national and international icons maintains a dual life as representative instances of material and political connections between New York and a global urban community" (Corley 2004: 68). Thus, similar to Toronto's Kensington Market in Brand's *What We All Long For* (2005), grassroots culture on the streets turns the particular urban space into a global marketplace. Moreover, Henry's father greeting visitors from Korea who are "hopeful of good commerce here in America" (*NAS* 56) at the airport, the 'non-place' (Augé 2008) per se, shows that the literary New York functions as a global hub for world-wide business, migration and transmigration.

Ethnic clusters are incorporated in the global city novel to illustrate how ethnic groups, such as Korean Americans and Hispanics, share the same public space or how others, as in the case of Korean and African Americans, are avoiding joint public encounters. When Henry and his family played soccer in Westchester, significantly, "somehow, there were rarely white people in the park, never groups of their families" (*NAS* 46). The fact that "once, they even played some black men" (*NAS* 46) illustrates how rare interactions between the two ethnic groups are. This comment foretells the severe ethnic conflict between Korean and African Americans that is depicted later in the novel.

The idea of 'upward mobility,' a significant element of the American dream, attracting immigrants of different ethnic background, is employed in the novel to analyze the socio-spatial possibilities of Korean and African Americans. Immigrants, often considered 'ethnic entrepreneurs,' are claimed to be "entrepreneurs *because* they are ethnic" (Chang 2010: 23; emphasis original). Korean-run, small, family businesses function as a prominent example because they offer the possibility to simultaneously protect the Korean culture while fulfilling the American dream (Park 2005: 294). Korean grocery stores are thus a means of economic independence and symbols of improving social status and political integration. Ethnic upward mobility, however, constitutes a form of segregation because Korean American ethnicity functions as a 'commodity' for 'class privi-

lege' (Chang 2010: 136), resulting in a projection of hatred by less privileged ethnicities. Therefore, Henry's father owning different vegetable stores in the Bronx exemplifies how Koreans, as the 'model minority,' are expected to be shopkeepers in poor African American neighborhoods.

This pressure of assimilating is displayed ironically when Henry muses about his family's socio-political integration as Korean grocers: "We believed in anything American, in impressing Americans, in making money, polishing apples in the dead of night, perfectly pressed pants, perfect credit, being perfect, shooting black people, watching our stores and offices burn down to the ground" (*NAS* 48). The quote's introductory 'inclusive we' illustrates how Koreans are expected to integrate as the designated model minority. As a result, Asian Americans internalizing racism towards African Americans becomes an integral part of the assimilation process. This internalization explains why poor African American customers feel discriminated and displaced by Koreans.

The restaging of the literary clash of Korean and African Americans in New York is no coincidence because both ethnic groups are intertwined with the city's history. In 2000, African and Korean Americans each made up 12 percent of New York's foreign-born (Sabagh et al 2003: 107f.). The Korean War boosted Korean immigration to New York, and in the 1990 census, Korean-born residents of New York are ranked the seventh largest immigrant group arriving after 1964 (Foner 2000: 11). America's second-largest Korean community is thus now based in New York (Park 2005: 282).

The mutual brutality of African and Korean Americans was the expression of an ethnic class triangular, resulting from the 'sandwich position' of Korean Americans who are 'intermediaries' with regard to ethnic class, being "disadvantaged under whites, but advantaged over blacks" and "scapegoats of black-white tensions" (Chang 2010: 162). Thus, hatred and stereotypes are projected onto the two ethnic groups by each other. Cultural stigmatization and the "fracturing of class spheres" was one of the causes of the Los Angeles 1992 riots (Chang 2010: 140). The reason for this fracturing is the 'culturalization' of Koreans as small business owners who run their shops in predominantly African American neighborhoods. This very effect is claimed by many historians to have caused the L.A. Riots.

The Los Angeles riots are recaptured in the novel to explain the clash between Korean and African Americans. During the five-day, so-called Rodney King riot in Los Angeles in April 1992, 700 businesses were damaged, 9,500 individuals were arrested, 2,383 injured, and 45 killed (Halle et al 2003a: 342). The boycott of Korean grocery stores resulted in violence, arson, and several deaths. Known characters appear in the novel with similar names and stories

(*NAS* 180f.). The novel's depiction of Saranda Harlans echoes Latasha Harlins of the L.A. Riots, a fifteen-year-old African American girl shot and killed by a Korean-store-owner Edward Song Lee. This event caused the riots in the novel and is considered one of the incidents that caused the L.A. riots. The method of describing the atmosphere in brief sentences, as in "they had multiple boycotts to cover. Vandalism. Street-filling crowds of chanting blacks. Heavily armed Koreans. Fires in the night" (*NAS* 179), further highlights the drama of the events.

The competitive clash of the two minorities is further encouraged by Mayor De Roos, Mayor Giuliani's literary character. De Roos' best ally is the African American police commissioner Roy Chillingsworth who, as his name gives away, "had a reputation for being tough on drug dealers and gangs and illegal immigration" (*NAS* 168). He naturally allies with his community, thereby fueling anti-Korean sentiment. Thus, De Roos and the police campaign against Kwang, who represents Asian Americans and Latinos. Consequently, Korean grocers are boycotted by "a mostly black crowd, watched over by a handful of police, looted and arsoned" (*NAS* 167).

In a literary 'time-space compression' (Harvey 1989), the novel fictionalizes the 1992 L.A. Riots and several further historical incidents involving different ethnicities in American urban areas from the 1960s to the mid-1990s. In literature, heterogeneous spaces are put together to change the meaning of existing spaces (Hallet et al 2009: 14). Historical and current events at the time of the novel's creation are interwoven to highlight the city's significance as a site of identity struggle and to mirror the atmosphere of New York City in the 1990s, better known as 'Giuliani time.' This period became "the legacy of immigrant and racial minority scapegoating" (Corley 2004: 75) because Giuliani strictly campaigned against illegal immigration. The immigrant tragedy of the 'Golden Venture' is retold in the novel (*NAS* 229). Hundreds of illegal Chinese immigrants were shipwrecked and several died close to the New York City coast while trying to fulfill their 'American dream,' showing how they risked their lives for prosperity. The survivors, however, were imprisoned and sent back to China.

Similar to Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), an instrument of social commentary at its time (Gelfant 1970), the global city novel implicitly and explicitly criticizes the political rhetoric of New York in the 1990s, when the city's minorities, and African and Korean Americans in particular, did not share a common sense of civic identity. In 1994, one year before the novel's publication, Giuliani became Mayor of New York. Hoagland, Henry's boss at Glimmer & Company, keeps the mayor's picture in his office, thereby highlighting the significance of 'Giuliani time' (Corley 2004: 67).

Dennis Hoagland's multiethnic spy agency Glimmer & Company functions as a simile of U.S. cultural politics. The company was founded in the 1970s, a time of "immense racial unrest and cultural nationalism" (Rhee 2011: 160) when the new immigrant wave reached its peak. Hoagland, called "the cultural dispatcher" (*NAS* 18), compares his agency with the CIA. He teaches his ethnic spies to 'assimilate' by adapting to their surroundings in an act of camouflage: "Just stay in the background. Be unapparent and flat. Speak enough so they can hear your voice and come to trust it, but no more" (*NAS* 40). This explanation echoes stereotypical notions of the 'model minority' or the 'good immigrant,' who is asked to integrate by matching particular ideals of ethnic group categorizations.

The work as a spy at Glimmer & Company is an allegory to "what immigrants do for their adopted country" (Dwyer 1999: 74). Henry and his coworkers Jack Kalantzakos and Pete Ichibata call each other "business people" who are "determined by some calculus of power and money. Political force" (*NAS* 15). Thus, a role is cast for Henry and his colleagues who betray their own to be successful. Henry's assignment within his cultural group equals the creation and enforcement of ethnic clusters in American politics. When Henry quits his job later in the novel, he thereby revolts against his assigned role in society and rejects an immigrant's wholesale assimilation.

It is the novel's literary strategy to reconcile Asian and African Americans in a time of particular interethnic difficulty. Kwang argues that the aggression between the two ethnic groups is a natural consequence, "a race war everyone can live with. Blacks and Koreans somehow seem meant for trouble in America. It was long coming" (*NAS* 168). The novel explains how the projection of self-hatred caused by internalized racism leads to this scenario. How Kwang tries to achieve political representation of all immigrants in New York and Henry is "working (unwittingly) against it" (Lee 2004: 348) are elaborated in the following section on the 'Interethnic Imagination.'

7.2.5 Interethnic Imagination

> They were of all kinds, these streaming and working and dealing, these various platoons of Koreans, Indians, Vietnamese, Haitians, Columbians, Nigerians, these brown and yellow whatevers, whoevers, countless unheard nobodies (…).
> John Kwang's people.
> (*NAS* 77)

An 'interethnic imagination' (Rody 2009) is the visionary understanding and cooperation beyond interethnic constraints that manages to show, as in the case of Lee's *Native Speaker*, how "an Asian American novel can represent and serve all the people, without losing its sense of history and identity" (Rody 2009: 85). With the novel's creation of a 'political vernacular' and a 'literary vernacular' (Kim 2003: 253), a coalition of different ethnic groups in New York seems possible on a linguistic and political level. Analogous to Brand's *What We All Long For* (2005), Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995) presents a form of 'panethnic movement' (Ty et al 2009) by concentrating "on how Asian Americans are positioned not only in relation to a white majority but also to other immigrant groups and African Americans" (Kim 2003: 233). Whereas Toronto is imagined as a multiperspectival portrayal of ethnically diverse friends and their different, yet often similar, experiences in the city, New York is imagined from an Asian American perspective that simultaneously portrays the city's diverse cultures and the immigrants' sometimes antagonizing, yet often common experiences.

The vision of 'multiethnic coalition-building' (Song 2005: 185) is personified by John Kwang, who is depicted as "a great ethnic American civic ideal" (Rody 2009: 66). The charismatic politician is unifying ethnic groups not only through language, but also as a father figure, extending the Korean family value and financial support. His initials bear a resemblance to the former American president John F. Kennedy (Ludwig 2007: 227), and he has an equally charismatic appearance, looking "impressive on television. Handsome, irreproachable. Silver around the edges. A little unbeatable" (*NAS* 21). The scene when Kwang is shot is reminiscent of JFK's assassination (Ludwig 2007: 228). Similarly, Kwang is the "underdog champion" of the political race (*NAS* 130), having a "truly American vision" (Dwyer 1999: 76) because he is not only seizing the opportunity for himself but for the whole immigrant community. This employment of a "narrative of a political ascendancy" is uncommon in Asian American litera-

ture or immigrant novels, which usually focus on the domestic sphere (Huang 2006: 243). The novel thus becomes a modern form of urban ethnic literature, incorporating politics of the growing ethnically diverse American population (Kim 2003: 233).

The politician relies on his 'multilingual capacities' (Huang 2006: 252) and on his ability to unite people of different background by articulating their similar past and shared present. As illustrated in the section's quote, Kwang succeeds in giving 'unheard nobodies' a common minority vernacular. Therefore, the different immigrant groups identify themselves as "John Kwang's people" (*NAS* 77). The community leader can adapt his speech to include all voices of New York City, "unafraid to speak the language like a Puritan, and like a Chinaman, and like every boat person in between" (*NAS* 283). Kwang greets "his citizens in Spanish, Hindi, Mandarin, Thai, Portuguese" (*NAS* 251). He is aware of the cultural differences of 'his citizens' and respects them by speaking their language. By raising his voice for immigrants of different ethnic background, "Kwang gives voice to a much-neglected segment of New York's populace" in which "the invisible is made visible as well as the fragmented made coherent" (Huang 2006: 250f.). As "the living voice of the city" (*NAS* 304), Kwang represents "groups whose voicelessness is as much the result of verbal diffidence from within as an imposed silence from without" (Huang 2006: 251). Kwang thus linguistically and spatially becomes a vital part of the city because "he is the language now" and "the buildings and streets are written with him" (*NAS* 157).

With the extension of the Korean family value, Kwang manages to address an audience that goes beyond ethnic boundaries. The respected leader is "willing to speak and act outside the tight sphere of family" (*NAS* 129), thereby creating an integrated community model, including the whole district of Queens. As the above-mentioned quote illustrates, Kwang's people are catalogued in a Whitmanian democratic fashion. Kwang thereby promotes 'ethnic fellowship' (Kim 2003: 238) for everyone ('all of us') because it is his dream to unite "all kinds of people" (*NAS* 164), regardless of social standing. Despite not having many white (*NAS* 133) or African American followers, the politician was not only supported by Koreans and Chinese but also "did exceedingly well with the newer immigrants, the Southeast Asians and Indians, the Central Americans, and blacks from the Caribbean and West Indies. Some Eastern Europeans" (*NAS* 132f.). Therefore, his staff greets the voters in many different languages, repeatedly convincing them that "*Kwang is like you. You will be an American*" (*NAS* 133; emphasis original).

Kwang's key to success is the combination of "superior oratorical talent" (Huang 2006: 249) and extraordinary spatial mobility. He "wanders the streets,

listens to the city's idiolectal hustle and bustle, and in turn becomes part of this 'marginal English' (*NAS* 270)" (Moraru 2009: 86). He creates intimacy with his down-to-earth open-door policy of the neighborhood council (*NAS* 164). To reach his goal, Kwang conducts "street-level urban politics" (*NAS* 164), walking from door to door, thereby extending his spatial impact, knowing and drawing on the shifting ethnic composition of the city because in Flushing, the ethnically-diverse district of Queens, "the landscape is changing. Soon there will be more brown and yellow than black and white" (*NAS* 183).

The imagined urban space mirrors identity politics, in particular when portraying Kwang, who is often pictured as walking the streets. His staff "went straight out to the streets" (*NAS* 80). Thus, Henry, called "young Harry of the City" by Hoagland (*NAS* 35, emphasis original), is "scouting the neighborhoods" (*NAS* 91) for interview hot spots or photo options, such as the Manhattan skyline (*NAS* 81). This assignment functions as another allegory to Henry's profession as a spy because his mapping of the city to make space accessible for Kwang translates into inspecting, investigating, or surveying, going beyond a mere description of the city. When speaking to and for different minorities of the city, Kwang transcends specific designated space. He transgresses ethnic borders by speaking to Hispanics in Washington Heights and meeting African American church leaders in Brooklyn (*NAS* 78). Thus, in contrast to Henry's father, Kwang does not accept his socially (pre)determined ethnic space but is ambitious and not afraid to expand his business or political campaign beyond the reach of Korean American influence in New York (*NAS* 170).

Kwang's most ambitious mission is the reconciliation of Korean and African Americans in a period of strong anti-immigrant sentiment because "his sympathy for either side was a bias for one" (*NAS* 179). With his "rhetoric of unity in diversity" (Huang 2006: 254), Kwang stresses the similarities and interdependence of the two ethnic groups. When speaking to African Americans, he explains that the common "sadness and the pain and injustice, will always be stronger than our differences" (*NAS* 142). This form of 'group maintenance' (Song 2005: 178) is incorporated into his speeches, functioning as "a mediatory stance" (Huang 2006: 252). Kwang also shows parallels in African and Korean American suffering and their shared history as slaves (*NAS* 142). He also reminds Koreans that the social and political standing of the two groups is interconnected: "Know that the blacks who spend money in your store and help put food on your table and send your children to college" (*NAS* 142). He thus stresses the common difficulties of immigrants, creating empathy and a group identity.

Although no African American main protagonists are featured, the novel nevertheless frequently incorporates important elements of the culture. Besides

the reference to Ellison's notion of African American invisibility,[49] the New York politician is presented as an Asian version of the natural leader and great orator Martin Luther King. Historically, Asian Americans do not have popular charismatic leaders. Kwang is "manufactured to fill this void" (Kim 2003: 238), thus becoming "a figure previously unseen in the Asian American literary imagination" (Huang 2006: 245) as well as a figure previously rarely seen in the American political sphere. Moreover, although "African-Americans didn't seem to trust him" (*NAS* 133), Kwang identifies with the 1960s black power movement. In his political speeches, he makes clear that African Americans have been more prejudiced in America than any other ethnic group.

In his political campaign, Kwang constantly tries to negotiate between African and Korean Americans, diplomatically trying to not upset either group in the ethnic class triangular. When Kwang is asked to speak at events of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), he realizes that it is a thin line between supporting immigrants and supporting African Americans: "If I mention the first thing about special enterprise zones or more openness towards immigrants I'm suddenly off limits. Or worse, I'm whitey's boy" (*NAS* 181) because, as Henry comments, "it's still a black-and-white world" (*NAS* 181), thereby criticizing "the dead-end of black-and-white configurations" (Ludwig 2007: 231). He also explains that the projection of racist prejudice and self-hate cause the violence and inter-ethnic racism (Cowart 2006: 119). This self-hatred is partly enforced by American society and its inherent racism because the feeling of inferiority is a result "of what we loathe and fear in ourselves" (*NAS* 141).

Kwang claiming more economic, linguistic, political, and public space than Asian Americans commonly do and his high level of social inclusion as a mayoral candidate who "speaks the language of cultural consent fluently" (Huang 2006: 254) pose a threat to Mayor De Roos and those who fear the powerful impact of an interethnic collaboration. Kwang is portrayed in the press as "someone who could bring a fresh face to confront the city's ills, a politician who could better understand the needs of the rapidly changing populace" (*NAS* 179). De Roos, on the contrary, is a person who does not care about certain parts of the city and thus about certain ethnic groups (*NAS* 140).

Kwang's public standing and influence decrease immediately when the INS reveals that the *ggeh* is supporting illegal immigrants of different nationalities. The INS, which has been secretly employing Henry and further Glimmer &

49 For more information on the novel's intertextual reference to Ellison's *Invisible Man*, see section 7.2.3 on 'Amiable Man.'

Company ethnic agents to investigate Kwang, reveals that the multi-ethnic financial support system *ggeh* is connected to the smuggling of illegal immigrants to New York. The "Korean money club" (*NAS* 260) supports incoming immigrants with money and a business network. To be part of this successful but unofficial financial network, newcomers donate money "for the right of knowing a someone in the city for you who are yet nobody" (*NAS* 258). Kwang expands this originally Korean support "to a supra-ethnic level" (Ludwig 2007: 229), representing an interethnic collaboration on a financial basis. Soon, the media compares the *ggeh* to the Mafia (Rhee 2011: 164). At the same time, a car accident exposes Kwang's controversial relationship with an illegal immigrant minor.

Due to his mistakes, Kwang is socially excluded, resulting in his loss of trust as a politician and community leader. He is stigmatized as 'Smuggler Kwang,' who supports illegal immigrants 'sneaking into the country' to steal jobs, by an angry mob marching on the streets of "angry white people and brown people and black people, and now even some yellow" (*NAS* 307f.). This scene illustrates the strong internalized racism of mainly white and African Americans towards immigrants, new arrivers, and illegal immigrants in particular, who are blamed for the unemployment rate among Americans.

The minority ethos of an interethnic imagination was possible in Lee's novel for a limited period of time. With Kwang's fall, the ideal vision of the interethnic imagination in the American metropolis failed. It is revealed that Kwang is "just another ethnic pol" (NAS 303) whose linguistic fluency and speaking skills cannot erase his foreignness (Corley 2004: 71). Kwang fails because he aims at representing (illegal) immigrants, the 'unrepresentable' (Lee 2004: 342) in American society. The tabloid supports Mayor De Roos, casting Kwang as a 'personae non grata' (Huang 2010: 141). As a response to Kwang's fall, De Roos, probably the client of Glimmer & Company and thus a vital part of the conspiracy against Kwang, significantly argues that "everyone in this town has to follow the rules" (*NAS* 281).

Angry, drinking youth, mainly comprised of white males protesting against Kwang and carrying sings with "AMERICA FOR AMERICANS" (*NAS* 308; emphasis original), emphasize that Kwang will always remain a Korean immigrant in the public eye, thereby favoring "the old notion of a white, Eurocentric America" (Huang 2006: 261). As a crowd often represents a city (Lehan 1998: 8), the violent mob who asks Kwang to leave is a metonym for New York's socio-cultural politics at the time. That a small group of immigrants is nevertheless waiting for Kwang signifies a glimpse of hope. His economic and political success shows that 'American classlessness' is possible, breaking through "culturalized glass ceilings" (Chang 2010: 171).

When Kwang fails, his linguistic, economic, and political influence instantly decreases while his literal 'space of influence' is reduced to his immediate surroundings. Kwang loses his aura, charisma, and voice when "perhaps for the first time in his public life he mumbles, his voice cracks, and even an accent sneaks through" (*NAS* 274). While his voice, once "strong and clear" (*NAS* 304), becomes weaker, his Korean accent returns and becomes stronger (*NAS* 277), revealing his immigrant background. He loses his confidence and his movement in space differs drastically. The man, who is now described as looking "old and weary" (*NAS* 273), appears to be "standing still" (*NAS* 273). He now looks and "responds like a man stopped on the streets" (*NAS* 273). Thus, from a dynamic man representative of a whole neighborhood, Kwang's spatial influence is reduced to an ordinary 'man on the streets,' translating into a standstill in social politics.

Due to John Kwang's failure and the resulting continuation of anti-immigrant racial politics in Giuliani time, the imagined global city of New York is portrayed as a rather static cityscape. Kwang's vision of an interethnic representation fails because "there is no room for such a figure in the story of American politics" (Huang 2010: 142). Kwang's rise and fall as an ethnic politician thus serves as a strategy to show that neither the city of New York nor American society are willing to accept his representation (Rhee 2011: 165).

By the end of the novel, however, a change of perspective has taken place, not in the wider public sphere but in a smaller setting. Henry has changed after befriending Kwang, questioning his designated role as an Asian American in society. Some critics nevertheless claim that Henry seems to be highly dependent on America's white middle-class ideal and has not changed in the end, but only whitened himself (Engles 1997), thereby illustrating that his "desire for solidity, belonging, and a 'true' identity remains (…) unfulfilled" (Chen 2005b: 183). Kwang's friendship essentially contributes to Henry's recovery process because as his relationship to Kwang impacts his effectiveness as a spy, Henry begins to question his position in society, calling it "my ugly immigrant's truth" (*NAS* 319f). He realizes that he has been instrumentalized, having exploited his own ethnicity (*NAS* 319f). Due to his past, however, Henry cannot stop playing roles. Thus, after the couple's reconciliation, Lelia makes use of his talent in a positive way by employing him as a 'Speech Monster' (*NAS* 323) in her ESL class, thereby serving "as a bridge between both worlds" (Yoo 2005: 58). Henry calling himself a 'Speech Monster' ironically refers to socially-determined 'imperfection.'

Moreover, in the course of the novel, the narrator-protagonist deconstructs the stereotypical view of Henry's wife, rewriting her colonizer role. Although

she belongs to the middle-class, Lelia is open-minded and tolerant. Lelia is the one who accepts not only otherness, but also in-betweenness as well as cultural individuality, such as intra-Asian individuality. By the end of the novel, Lelia accepts linguistic variances when pronouncing the kid's foreign names in her English class carefully: "She calls out each one as best as she can, taking care of every last pitch and accent (…) calling all the difficult names of who *we* are" (*NAS* 324, emphasis added). The 'inclusive we' signifies Henry's acknowledgement of "the heterogeneous 'family' to which he knows he also belongs, that of the global, multiethnic city" (Rody 2009: 80f.). He is siding with immigrants now instead of spying on them, thereby accepting difference.

The novel's ending therefore manages to offer on a linguistic level what Kwang fails to realize on the political level: An interethnic imagination with various languages and identities. Lelia's acknowledgement of "a dozen lovely and native languages" (*NAS* 324) changes the constituencies of nativity, language, and identity. Now, Lelia, the designated standard bearer, allows further Englishes to (co)exist and underlines their political integration by calling the children 'citizens.' The novel thus stresses the fact "that the U.S. nation is dependent on acknowledging the heterogeneity of U.S. citizens both in political and literary terms" (Lim et al 2006: 18). Henry and his wife recognize the fact that "versions and voices have transformed New York into a polyloquial cosmopolis – the Babel of globalization" (Moraru 2009: 86). These *multiple* versions of 'col*loquial*' speech describe New York becoming a place of many different native languages in which each person's language – with or without accents – is acknowledged as a native language. This resembles a plea for individuality and authenticity, arguing against 'monocultural' conceptions and wholesale assimilation.

7.3 INTERIM CONCLUSION

In Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995), the global city of New York, its urban complexity and its ethnic diversity are chiefly imagined in linguistic terms. Thus, in addition to the poetics of narrative and place, the poetics of code-switching represents the novel's crucial strategy. Therefore, New York becomes 'a city of words' (*NAS* 319) and is presented as a 'verbal cityscape' (Wirth Nesher 1996).

In the novel, ethnic diversity is portrayed with prose-like descriptions without drawing on voicing vernacular in a written form because 'showing' instead of 'telling' is the preferred technique when depicting the linguistic distinctiveness of the diverse immigrant groups. The polysemic title illustrates how lan-

guage and conventions have the power to both marginalize and integrate, pinpointing the interrelated discussion of linguistic fluency, nativity, and social integration because the idea of being a 'native speaker' automatically brings up the possibility of a 'false speaker of language' and thus 'false identity' (Chen 2005b: 171).

To demonstrate how globality and diversity manifest themselves in the novel's structure and form, the immigrant novel, detective story, and spy thriller are reworked in a 'cross-genre' fashion (Huang 2010: 2). By rewriting Ralph Ellison's notion of African American 'invisibility' to Asian American 'amiability,' an immigrant's struggle for integration is examined, analyzing how narratological categories mirror particular forms of diversity and social integration processes in a globalizing age. Moreover, several elements of Walt Whitman's literary technique are reworked, thereby creating a similar sense of ethnic pluralism and democracy. With the application of this narrative strategy, a collaboration of the different minorities is formed on a literary level. Incorporating the act of spying as well as irony and parody enables the novel to rewrite genre distinctions and question ethnic framing. The protagonist's spying thus powerfully serves as a metaphor for an immigrant's political integration.

The global city of New York functions as *the* immigrant city representative of American society as a whole. Events of the 1992 L.A. riots and several further historical incidents involving different ethnicities in American urban areas from the 1960s to the mid-1990s are included to illustrate Korean and African American suffering as well as challenges of interethnic understanding as such. The global city novel thus criticizes the political rhetoric of 'Giuliani Time' and anti-(illegal) immigrant sentiment. It is the novel's literary strategy to reconcile Asian and African Americans in this time of particular interethnic difficulty.

John Kwang, the Korean American mayoral candidate with immense linguistic skills, poses a threat to established politicians and the INS. He has the ability to unite the various voices of New York, trying to consolidate the interests of many ethnic groups while focusing on their similar history and the common opportunities and challenges of immigrants in America. His linguistic, political, and social sphere literally encompasses much more space than that of other Asian Americans in the city. He eventually fails due to own mistakes and investigations by Henry and other spies at Glimmer & Co. Although Kwang's ambitions were doomed to fail, Henry has changed by the end of the novel, now questioning his designated role as an Asian American in society. By working as a 'Speech Monster' (*NAS* 323) in Lelia's ESL class, Henry finally accepts his 'linguistic imperfectness,' thereby moving towards the recognition of multiple linguistic and thus cultural affiliations.

Both, Henry's role play and Kwang's rise and fall illustrate the possibilities and limitations of a New York immigrant in the 1990s, exploring the socio-political forms of an ethnicity's integration into American society. Literature thus becomes a creative laboratory for experimenting with different forms of minority representation and integration in a global city. Although the Asian American politician and polyethnic leader fails, his interethnic imagination of the global city of New York "is truer to the city than the protests of the (presumably) white Americans who want to claim it and America exclusively as their own" (Corley 2004: 68). The novel's engagement with 'the urban multiculture' (Rody 2009: 70) thus goes beyond mere Korean American studies: it is of significance for urban, ethnic, and literary studies as such. An Asian American politician representing a minority ethnos in the global city of New York in the 1990s nevertheless remains "a utopian dimension, a vision of hope" (Ludwig 2007: 239).