Embodied Performances and Scholarly Bodies: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s Artistic Texts

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The body of scholarship on Korean American multimedia artist Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s work has largely focused on her multigeneric book *DICTEE* (1982). Recent publications have begun to examine Cha’s other artistic work, most notably her work in film and visual art. My essay shifts the focus to several works of Cha’s performance art that can be used to critique certain currents in Cha scholarship. While the resurgence of scholarly attention on *DICTEE* in the 1990s centered around Cha’s treatment of the political and artistic meanings of the Asian American female body, a reconsideration of her early performance art demonstrates its subordination of ideas of racial difference and Asian American identity and emphasis on universalizing poststructuralist narratives and (white) feminist concerns. Cha’s early art thus aligns more with the (white) feminist and poststructuralist movements in the Bay Area in the 1970s and less with the concurrent ethnic studies movements, the roots of which develop into the 1990s Asian American scholarly recuperation of *DICTEE*.

More information about Cha’s life and work can be found at

http://voices.cla.umn.edu/artistpages/chaTheresa.php.