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Diasporic Visions:
Transgenerational Haunting and the Figure of the *Yanggongju*
by
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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2005

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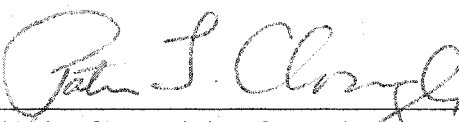
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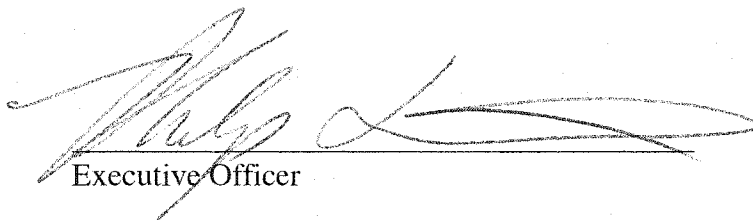
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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I am thankful to my committee: Patricia Clough, Hester Eisenstein, Michelle Fine, and Rosalind Petchesky for encouraging me and challenging me to work across disciplinary boundaries. I am especially grateful to Patricia for being the kind of thinker and mentor that I aspire to be. This work has also been the product of the collaborative projects I have been privileged to be a part of, most notably, “the book group” as well as the pieces I’ve co-authored and co-performed with my colleague Hosu Kim. I have been blessed with an intellectual community at CUNY that surpasses any that I have known or imagined. Special thanks go to my CUNY comrades who have spent time with me to think through ideas and offer feedback on earlier drafts of this work: Jeffrey Bussolini, Rafael de la Dehesa, Jean Halley, Ananya Mukherjea, Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, and Jonathan Wynn.

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Introduction An Uncertain Beginning¹

Yanggongju. Yankee whore. Western princess. GI bride. Yang-galbo.
Yang-ssaekshi. GI's plaything. UN lady. Bar girl. Entertainment hostess. Wianbu.
Formerly a Comfort Woman. Formerly called a Comfort Woman. Daughter of a
Comfort Woman. Camptown prostitute. Military bride.

The figure of the *yanggongju*, the Korean woman who works in sexual labor for the U.S. military is at once a hyper-visible object of loathing and desire for Koreans on the peninsula and a shadowy figure of shame and secrecy in the collective psyche of Korean diaspora. She is the westernized woman working in the bars around U.S. military camptowns who is officially condemned by both the Korean and U.S. governments, but unofficially praised for providing R&R to the American soldiers and dollars to the Korean economy. She is both the patriot who serves her country by keeping U.S. interests engaged, and the tragic victim of U.S. imperialism that fans the flames of anti-American politics. She is the woman who simultaneously provokes her compatriots' hatred because of her complicity with Korea's subordination, and inspires their envy of her being within arm's reach of the American dream. She is the dutiful daughter who works to support the very same family that shuns her, the serviceman's wife who becomes her family's hope for the future, the protective mother who hides her past from her children. She is a

¹ This title is a play off of the title of Kim Chi-Won's short story "A Certain Beginning," about a middle-aged Korean woman who divorces her husband, moves to the U.S., and explores her sexuality with a younger man. Like the story I will tell about the yanggongju, the thematic backdrops of "A Certain Beginning" are also the control of women's sexuality in Korea, a disillusionment about life in America, a desire to leave the past behind, and the temporality of traumatic repetition in which the protagonist repeats the words "Life begins all over after today" (149).

representation of over a million “real” Korean women who have worked in prostitution for the U.S. military since 1950, and still a figure built out of layers of collective trauma and fantasy.

“Discovering my Mother as the Other” (Creef 2000)

The first time I envisioned her as a yanggongju was before I had ever heard the word yanggongju. I did not know all that this word would come to mean, that a whole literature would be written about her, or that ten years later I would be writing a dissertation on this figure in Korean diasporic unconscious, or that the page would become a place for the figure to take shape from my own unconscious. The first time I envisioned my mother this way, the fears and fantasies about all that I had not known about my family history came to matter. It was, in fact, at the same time that the yanggongju began making her presence felt in the fiction and film of Korean diaspora and in anti-U.S. base movements in Korea, and so my history of engagement with this figure was born out of a larger historical moment in which the ghost began to matter most. In the early 1990s women in militarized sexual labor, both the “comfort women” who had been conscripted into sexual slavery for the Japanese and camptown sex workers who were being abused and sometimes murdered by American GIs, became subjects of grievance in the landscape of South Korean politics. What ensued from this moment was not only a proliferation of scholarly research, cultural production, and activism about both yanggongjus and comfort women, but also a drawing of boundaries between the two types of sexual laborers,

and a fracturing within anti-U.S. base movements in Korea around issues of militarized prostitution. It was also during this era that I first heard voices from my own family history speak against this distinction and in support of the continuities between the two systems. For the first time, in the early 1990s, I heard a vocalization of taboo words that spoke to the traumas of my diasporic history, and thus the yanggongju emerged from “the space between social and psychic history...” (Rose 1996, p. 5). This was perhaps the only moment of clarity I ever felt about what had happened in my family. But as I started listening to these voices, the story of what happened became increasingly loaded with information and at the same time more obscure. This contradictory tendency has been productive, however, in allowing multiple stories to come forth.

My mother identifies herself as being from the countryside of Kyung Sang, a southeastern province in the southern half of the Korean peninsula, yet most of her life was spent being displaced from her hometown by the forces of colonization, war, rural poverty, and migration to the U.S. The town of Chang Nyung in Kyung Sang province is where my family clan originated. Although I was born in Kyung Sang, in the southeastern port city of Pusan where my mother re-located as a young adult, I had never been to rural Kyung Sang until very recently. But memories of Kyung Sang province have thoroughly saturated my unconscious through the course of the research for this project. As I began reading reports about massacres of Korean civilians by the U.S. military during the Korean War, I came across a finding— that the highest incidence of massacres in what is now called South Korea took place in Kyung Sang province. In this part of the country in particular, there is a reported

phenomenon called *hon bul*, or “ghost flames,” in which flickering lights rise up from the ground usually at the site of a massacre. The folkloric explanation, generated since the Korean War, lies somewhere between science and the supernatural. In places where buried bodies are heavily concentrated, the remains have changed the chemical make-up of the earth causing the soil to ignite. Through ghost flames, the spirits of the dead release their grief and rage, their *han*, into the world.

I returned to Kyung Sang province in 2002 to listen to these ghosts. “It is thus that the place of the greatest density of silence—the place of concentration where death took place—paradoxically becomes, for those children of survivors, the only place which can provide an access to the *life* that existed before their birth.” (Felman and Laub 1992, 64-65). Besides being the part of the country where there are the most unclaimed bodies buried in the ground, there is another way in which the taking of lives is concentrated there. Kyung Sang province boasts “the dubious honor”² not only of the highest incidence of civilian massacres by the U.S. military during the Korean War but also the highest concentration of girls conscripted into sexual slavery for the Japanese military during the colonial period (Howard 1995). This place is haunted by the two most significant historical traumas of twentieth century Korea, both of which would become embodied and transmitted by the figure of the *yanggongju*. This is the place my mother locates as her origin.

² This is a phrase used repeatedly by Alice Amsden (1989) to describe the harsh conditions behind the many superlatives awarded to Korea during the “economic miracle.” In the 1980s, for example, Korea held “the dubious honor” of having the longest work week in the world of more than eighty hours per week.

“Fiction at the Heart of Documentation” (Trinh 1992)

The ghosts of my family history are thoroughly enmeshed in this work even when there is nothing in a particular chapter that appears to be autoethnographic. The questions, the sources of data, and the theories used to inform the research are all driven by my own position as a Korean diasporic subject writing about how Korean diaspora is haunted by the figure of the yanggongju. But I have made these choices within the context of a body of criticism in which claims of scientific objectivity are called into question (Barad 1998, Clough 1994, Creef 2000, Fine 2000, Haraway 1997, Knorr-Cetina 1997, Trinh 1992). Valerie Walkerdine (1990), for example, looks at the ways in which social science research is driven both by a fear of the other being observed and a perverse desire for power (a will to knowledge) on the part of the researcher, yet this psychic dynamic is disavowed in the name of science. The object of observation is always a “fantasied image of the other” (Walkerdine 1990, 186), which then gets narrativized into a regime of representation that is part of a fantasy of truth, and therefore always part fiction. This is not to say, however, that these critiques set up binaries between the “happened” and the “imagined,” (Radstone 2000) but rather they initiate a destabilization of the realist narrative in which “the indefinite mix-up of fact and fiction, fantasy and experience, is restored in what might be described as a ghosted or haunted realism” (Clough 1994, 114). This is a re-assembled narrative that demonstrates the extent to which the unconscious is a powerful form of media.

Walkerdine and other social scientists such as Jennifer Hunt (1989) have made explicit the “problem” of transference and counter-transference in qualitative social science research. Rather than treating the unconscious as a problem that has to be reconciled when doing research, I go directly to the unconscious as my object of study, while at the same time recognizing that all research and writing is informed by fantasy, even that which critiques the disavowal of the unconscious. Within and between the chapters of this text, therefore, I use short semi-fictional vignettes to give body to the uncertainty of transgenerational haunting and diasporic memory that bears the traces of erased histories. These vignettes are based on oral histories of Korean War survivors and Korean women who have married U.S. servicemen, interviews with Korean military sex workers and surviving comfort women, popular media accounts of current events, and fiction and film by diasporic Koreans about the yanggongju. Some of these vignettes are my readings of a social scientific narrative or of an “original” story spoken by an interviewee, while others are pieces of my creative work that is based on what I imagine to be my unspoken family history and the multiple variations of it. The distinctions between one source of information and another is not always clear in this text just as, in the fabric of cultural memory, these different narratives are woven so tightly that one cannot see the individual threads.

“To write is perhaps to bring this assemblage of the unconscious to the light of day...” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 84)

And so I begin writing this uncertain history, this assemblage of my unconscious and the unconscious to which I am bound. In chapter one, “Fleshing

out the Ghost,” I lay the theoretical groundwork for addressing issues of ambiguous personal and collective histories and the traumas produced in these spaces of not knowing. I discuss theories of trauma, particularly transgenerational haunting, in which unspoken and shameful family secrets take the form of ghosts that haunt Korean diaspora across bodies and generations. This is the theory I believe is most relevant to a history of militarized prostitution in Korea because of the silence surrounding the phenomenon. The yanggongju has been the primary force dispersing these secrets, about herself and the violent history she is born of, across diasporic unconscious. And so I begin to unfold a story about the yanggongju, and how she became a figure that would be very present yet obscured in Korean diasporic unconscious. There are multiple entry points into this story, but I offer three—the beginning of U.S. occupation of Korea in 1945, the Korean War from 1950-1953, and the “breaking silence” about the Korean comfort women in 1991—as ways to begin excavating a history of the yanggongju. Chapter one also deals with the methodological difficulties of studying that which is unseen and unspoken, and lays out different methodologies of the unconscious that express trauma through the use of non-linear temporalities, repetition, fantasy, and fiction. As much as this is a project about trauma, it is also an experiment in writing that attempts to traumatize the text itself.

Chapter two, “A Genealogy of Trauma: the Korean War” is an example of a traumatized text. It is an enactment of *hon bul*, of the ghost flames, through a writing experiment that begins to unearth concentrated traumatic memories that are sedimented in the land along with the blood and bones of the massacred. It weaves

together narratives of survivors of the Korean War to look at the ways in which transgenerational haunting creates a diaspora of memory that is material and affective, even if not fully articulated. This memory lives in the bodily matter of the survivors and in the earth from which ghost flames arise, and stretches across time and place joining disparate sites of militarized violence. The text moves disjointedly to mirror the massive displacement of refugees and to invoke a temporality in which the past is in the present, returning over and over to a traumatic moment—July 1950, which was when the most famous civilian massacre took place in Kyung Sang province near the village of Nogun-ri. The early part of the war was also the period of the most intensified killing and destruction of civilian life. Indeed, early on in the war, American soldiers had already been identified by Korean civilians as “maengsu” or “monsters” and so the chapter also unfolds the mounting anxieties at the time about U.S. soldiers’ capacity to kill and rape. It was in the summer of 1950 that Korean villagers began the practice of hiding their daughters, or alternately, offering them up to American GIs to pacify their desires. These stories are interrupted by quotes from war-time propaganda disseminated by the U.S., thereby demonstrating the tension between the official narrative of the U.S. in the Korean War and the unofficial narratives that survive in diasporic unconscious. Memories of civilian massacres perpetrated by the U.S. military reveal a hidden history and thus instigate a radical rupturing of the fantasy of the American dream and of friendly U.S.-Korea relations. The U.S.-authored fiction that the United States is the third world’s savior disintegrates against war survivors’ memories that conflate rescue and annihilation.

Even as “A Genealogy of Trauma” repeats the traumatic moment of July 1950, it also anxiously moves into the future. Anxiety is one of the temporalities of trauma, in which there is a sense that a trauma from the future is about to arrive. Just as a new trauma can trigger an older one, inducing a flashback, it can also flash forward, projecting itself into a future haunting. The traumatized memories of July 1950 resonate with the present geopolitical events in which abuses by the U.S. military are not so hidden, nor is its agenda for permanent war and global domination. At the same time, the memories of July 1950 recall the fact that the Korean peninsula has been in such a state of permanent war since 1950, although the war has been written into U.S. history as “the forgotten war.”³ As long as the division along the 38th parallel remains, Koreans on the peninsula cannot forget that they still live in a war zone, and this failure to resolve is amplified by the silences surrounding it in the U.S. The trauma of permanent war simultaneously calls up the past and the future in that the current status of North Korea as part of the “axis of evil” has provoked anxiety about who will be the next target, but it is also a reminder of the unhealed wounds inflicted by the division.

“A Genealogy of Trauma” does not attempt to tell the history of the Korean War, but rather to explore hidden histories of grief and continuities with contemporary geopolitics. As the first conflict of the cold war, Korea served as a testing ground for future wars. Vietnam was already in the works in 1950, and the

³ Most of the popular sources of information available in the U.S. about the Korean War come from Korean War veterans who have struggled to keep the memory of the war alive. Although the information provided by veterans associations acknowledge the tragic consequences of the war for Korean civilians, they maintain the position that the killings of civilians and executions of prisoners of war were committed primarily by the North Korean army.

technologies of warfare developed during the Korean War were later used in the Vietnam and Iraq wars. The Korean War was both a launching point for an intensification of U.S. military dominance in Asia and a continuation of what had already been initiated by the Japanese colonizers. In the post-WWII war crimes tribunals led by Western Allies, for example, the Japanese were exonerated for the testing of technologies of human torture and biological warfare on the bodies of forced Korean laborers, mostly comfort women. According to Sheldon Harris (1994), the condition for Japan's exoneration was to share these technologies with the U.S. military who later re-deployed them against Koreans during the Korean War. This is just one of many examples that demonstrates the way in which the U.S. is a neo-colonial power in Korea rather than a peacekeeper bestowing the gift of democracy.

Ultimately, this chapter establishes the war as the ground against which the yanggongju becomes enfigured, as a ghost composed of traumatic material. The war's obliteration of normal ways of life also created the economic necessity that would lead Korean civilians to the bases to look for employment, and thus the psychic and material conditions were set in place for the beginning of U.S. military prostitution as an institutional practice. Although it has been more than fifty years since the signing of the armistice agreement to bring a cease-fire to the Korean War, an armistice only brings a temporary end to conflict. Technically the war is not over since a peace treaty has yet to be signed. The failure to resolve the war serves as the geopolitical rationale for the continued U.S. troop presence in Korea, and therefore the continuation of military prostitution. Having arisen from these conditions, the yanggongju is a painful reminder of the last half-century's division, destruction and

subordination to the U.S., and so she carries the weight of this history. Because this history is part and parcel of the institution of prostitution for the U.S. military, national struggles around re-unification and the withdrawal of U.S. troops are often waged around and on the yanggongju body. I turn to these issues— the historical and political conditions of camptown prostitution and the way in which the body of the yanggongju became a site of contestation— in chapter three.

A war that has no end. A division that separated ten million families, more than one-third of the country, and then the repeated and frustrated attempts to put the two halves back together. An “exile fixed in the perpetual motion of search...” (Cha 1982, 81). These are the traumatic forces that have constituted the changing terrain of the yanggongju’s body since 1945. “Fractured Nationalisms: Tracing the Dis/Appearances of the Ghost” outlines a history of camptown prostitution in which the figure of the yanggongju gets constructed and re-constructed in service of competing forms of Korean nationalism. On one side is a Korean nationalism that has bought into the storyline about the U.S. as benevolent protector, that “wants to live that fiction, basking in the gaze of the Other who constitutes it” (Walkerdine 1990, 187). On the opposing side is an anti-U.S. nationalism that positions the yanggongju as the symbol of nation raped by the U.S. Both camps have manipulated the yanggongju for the purposes of their political agendas— as a body in service of national security, or a body in need of saving. In both cases she is a figure that is over-invested with fantasmatic longings for a unified and liberated homeland, and underneath this longing are the gaping wounds of the division as well as internal divisions about the road to reunification and peace. These desires are projected onto

her and she makes apparent the ways in which Korean national identity has been built upon a repeated fracturing of the nation. "...she would become, herself, demarcations..." (Cha 1982, 4). No longer relegated to the dark alleys of America towns or the back booths of GI clubs, the yanggongju is not only the ghosted figure that is the screen that allows other ghosts to be seen, but she is also the figure that takes center stage in the national and transnational scenes, as she moves in and out of visibility depending on the whims of political climate.

As the anti-U.S. base movement in Korea disseminated images of yanggongjus killed by the U.S. military as a method of gaining support from transnational communities, the dead yanggongju became a trope of diasporic memory. Images of dead yanggongjus are inscribed on the bodies of the living in a diaspora haunted by the necropolitical practices (Mbembe 2003) of routinely killing civilians during the Korean War and the continued letting die of camptown women. But in this particular distribution of haunting, there comes a radical break. As Korean sex workers marry American servicemen and exit Korea via migration to the U.S., she slides from hypervisibility back into the shadows again.

Between chapters three and four, there is an absence, a sense that some link has been broken. How do we get from the yanggongju as a body of nationalism to the narrative of assimilation in the U.S.? There is no smooth transition between these two stories because the yanggongju's migration to the U.S. constitutes a severing from her history as a "yankee whore." Chapter four, "Haunted Histories and the Fantasy of Honorary Whiteness," demonstrates this attempt at erasure, and its ultimate failure. The yanggongju's seeming absence in the U.S. is only a shift in the

frame of visibility from a mass mediated gaze towards the unconscious knowledge of transgenerational haunting. By the end of the chapter it becomes clear that the yankee whore that was the body of a fractured nation is entombed in the body of the GI bride. “Haunted Histories” explores the ways in which the yanggongju gets constructed as a statistical person in the sociological discourse of assimilation—the intermarried Asian, the approximately white. The abstractions that disappear her history leave traces of trauma that are passed down to children, and in the work of diasporic Koreans, particularly biracial Korean Americans who are presumed to be one step closer to whiteness, the yanggongju appears as a mark of ambiguous personal history and traumatized collective memory.

The history of Korean migration to the U.S. troubles the sociological fantasy of honorary whiteness in a way that sets Koreans apart from other Asian groups. By sociological standards, Koreans are coded as the most assimilated of all Asians, thereby reinforcing the label of “honorary white” for Asian Americans more generally. The yanggongju as GI bride and her kin make up about half of ethnic Koreans in the U.S., meaning that Koreans as an immigrant group arrived in the U.S. primarily through means of American military domination. Of course there are other groups such as the Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong whose paths to the U.S. have also been determined by similar military interventions, but these ethnic groups’ violent histories have not been covered over for the past fifty-plus years by an illusion of interracial romance and international cooperation. Those of us who are literally born out of the U.S.-Korea relationship are not the living proof of harmony across lines of difference as much as we are bodies bearing the marks of

militarization. We are simultaneously immigrants and U.S. citizens by birth whose identification papers signal our affiliations with the U.S. military. I was born in a hospital for U.S. military personnel stationed in Korea and on the “statistical record” accompanying my birth certificate, there is a category for “father’s rank in military” and another for “mother’s occupation.” I was born into an identity that was already militarized and a family fiction in which my mother’s occupation was “housewife.” Assimilation for those who are children of the violent and intimate relationship between the U.S. and Korea is a homogenizing project that is impossible because we inherit the traumas that are sent into diaspora by the yanggongju, and trauma is precisely that which is unassimilable.

In chapter five, “Diasporic Vision and Schizophrenic Multiplicity: Methods of Seeing Trauma,” I begin by raising a question about the psychic costs of assimilation and how the wish for America is an impossible wish whose fulfillment yields tragic consequences. Social work narratives about Korean military brides suggest that there is an unusually high rate of mental illness among these women who are considered to be assimilated by sociological standards. While acknowledging the problems associated with mental illness, I also turn to the notion of schizophrenia as a model of thinking that offers productive possibilities (Deleuze and Guattari 1977). Can we reconceive of hallucination not just as psychotic abnormality, but also as a different method of perception? Throughout this project, I struggle with the question of how one can see and hear a trauma that the subject of trauma herself cannot. While in chapter one I begin laying out methodologies that call forth the ghosts, I conclude

with a discussion of how trauma is not just subjected to methods but also produces new methods of seeing.

Applying Deleuze and Guattari's notion of distributed perception and John Johnston's idea of machinic vision, I theorize that through Korean diaspora a method of seeing and speaking trauma is composed of scattered images, affects, and voices. The purpose of what Johnston (1998) refers to as a "schizophrenic multiplicity of voices" and of what I call diasporic vision is not to tell a story, but rather, to capture the non-narrativizable. Both the traumatic images and affects of the yanggongju that circulate in diaspora and the hallucinatory voices that speak through the bodies of yanggongjus demonstrate the ways in which her trauma is a creative force that assembles new forms of perception. This assemblage implies a shift in writing form as well, from narrative to another kind of writing that registers the unassimilable of trauma. Throughout the chapters that follow, I attempt to make moves from narrative to register while at the same time engaging in conversation about official narratives and counter-narratives in which the yanggongju is present or absent. But she is, in fact, present even when she appears to not be there. The presence of what the eye cannot see or what the ear cannot hear calls forth new methods of perception. Diasporic vision and schizophrenic multiplicity are two such methods that shift the expression of trauma from narrative to register.

Rather than abandon one model for the other, I want to hold in tension questions of telling a story about trauma and speaking from a subject position on one hand, and a mode of memory that comes out of a diaspora of trauma that is de-individualized, on the other. While these two ways of thinking about trauma are

different, they are not oppositional. In fact, the self that speaks is also always an assemblage. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, "...the collective assemblage is always like a murmur from which I take my proper name, the constellation of voices, concordant or not, from which I draw my voice... To write is perhaps to bring this assemblage of the unconscious to the light of day, to select the whispering voices, to gather the tribes and secret idioms from which I extract something I call my self..." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 84).

Chapter One Fleshing out the Ghost

*the dead do not return but their lives' unfinished business is unconsciously handed down...
what comes back to haunt are the tombs of others...
the voices of one generation living in the unconscious of another...
like a ventriloquist...
like a stranger within...*

- Nicholas Rand and Nicolas Abraham, *The Shell and the Kernel*

The yanggongju, the Korean woman who is the sexual laborer for the U.S. military, is a figure that haunts the unconscious of Korean diaspora. She is inheritor and distributor of secrets about the traumatic events of twentieth-century Korean history. Haunted and haunting, she is herself the secret that is hidden. I want to tell you a story about this figure, although I am uncertain about where the story begins or if a logical beginning even exists. There is a certain chronology, some would say starting with the Korean War that took place from 1950 to 1953, but some would argue that her story starts in 1945 with the arrival of U.S. troops on the Korean peninsula, while others would say it begins earlier still with the conscription of comfort women for the Japanese military. There is a chronology that is useful to keep in mind, but the story I want to tell is about the ways in which the figure of the yanggongju gets its very life from the effects of trauma, and the temporality of trauma is never faithful to linear timelines.

1. entry points

One version of this story starts in December 1991 when three elderly Korean women “traveled from fifty years in the past to awaken the world from a collective amnesia about Imperial Japan’s massive enslavement of Asian women. They were former ‘comfort women’ who filed a landmark lawsuit against Japan...” (Choi 1997, v.) This was the first occasion on which these women’s experiences were openly recognized. The public nature of their speaking triggered others to come out as former comfort women, and the international media exposed these women’s stories further. What is more interesting than their speaking is the fact of their silence for the fifty years prior to December 1991. What appeared to be a trauma that was in the past returned to national consciousness after several generations. And although the small group of women who took legal action against the Japanese government managed to expose the atrocities of a hidden chapter of Korean history, they are only a tiny fraction of the women who were conscripted into sexual labor for the Japanese. The others remain silent. Many have died and probably believed that their secrets would be laid to rest with them. But what often happens to an unspeakable trauma is that it does not die out with the person who first experienced it. Rather, it takes on a life of its own materializing in the spaces where secrets are concealed. It takes on the form of a ghost that haunts the unconscious of another.

This phenomenon of trauma moving from one body to the next, is what Abraham and Torok term “transgenerational haunting” in which “the phantom inhabits the depths of the unconscious, dwells as the living-dead of knowledge of *someone else’s secret*” (1994,188). During those fifty years during which the Korean

comfort women tried to maintain silence about their sexual enslavement, their secrets were being transmitted to the next generations, some of whom would follow (or be lead into) the same path of sexual servitude. The comfort woman, or *wianbu*, is the yanggongju's ghost.

Another version of the story I want to tell begins in 1945. On September 8, 1945, U.S. troops began an occupation of Korea that would last officially until 1948, but troops have remained there ever since. This was a critical moment in Korean history just days after the end of a thirty-five year period of brutal colonization by Japan that also heralded the beginning of an era of U.S. military domination that continues to this day. It was a moment of being liberated to another type of subordination, but one that would later bring democracy. It was a psychic space between two wars, one of which would be forgotten. In the context of the making of the yanggongju, September 1945 marked the continuity between the system of sexual slavery set up for the Japanese Imperial army (the comfort stations) and the system of camptown prostitution set up for the U.S. military (*kijich'on*). It was a moment in which the traumas from the past encountered the traumas from the future. For the tens of thousands of Koreans who had been forced into laboring abroad for the Japanese, September 1945 was a moment of return to an alienated homeland that was already divided and soon to be devastated again.

The nature of trauma is atemporal in that it does not observe boundaries of time. The witnessing of a trauma often does not register until much later, so the effects of trauma reverberate for many years. A new trauma can trigger one from the

past so that it is often being lived in the present or at least threatens the integrity of the present in that the possibility of a past trauma returning is constant. The yanggongju bears the traces of this devastation as a haunted and haunting figure that transmits her trauma across boundaries of time and space. September 1945 and its aftermath, the Korean War and its aftermath are in the past but they are not over.

There are endless ways in which to enter this story, but I will tell you just one more beginning. On June 25, 1950 my father celebrated his 31st birthday. He was a man who valued thrift and hard work and had hopes of raising a family. Most of his life he spent in a rural community in the western United States. He began farming as soon as he was old enough to walk and by the age of 31, had opened a small butcher shop. He had rarely traveled outside his home state, so on this day, he was probably not thinking about the battles that were raging in a little Asian country no one in his town had ever heard of. Most Americans, if they knew where Korea was, thought it was part of Japan or China.⁴ My father had already served in the U.S. navy during World War II and had no aspirations of a career in the military, so he put foreign affairs out of mind once he returned from duty. After the war, he concerned himself only with small town life—raising his pigs, and running his shop, and planning for the day when a son or daughter would bear his name.

My father's 31st birthday was probably unremarkable. Most likely, he did his day's work as usual and later enjoyed a dinner at home in the company of his new wife. He could not have imagined the importance of the events that took place on this

⁴ Even when I arrived in my father's hometown in the 1970s, few people I encountered knew where Korea was. They would ask "Are you from China or Japan?" and respond with confusion when I answered "Korea."

particular birthday that appeared to be like any other— that the war that erupted a world away would start the slow motor of desire and necessity that would pull him there to that unknown country and to a woman who was not his wife.

June 25, 1950 was officially the first day of the Korean War although combatants from the North and South had been exchanging fire across the 38th parallel for years prior. *“We fight the same war. We are inside the same struggle seeking the same destination. We are severed in Two by an abstract enemy an invisible enemy under the title of liberators who have conveniently named the severance, Civil War. Cold War. Stalemate”* (Cha 1982, 81). June 25, 1950 was the day that the Korean War escalated beyond a civil war fought by guerrilla armies to a conflict taken up by cold war superpowers. The U.S. and U.N. forces began bombing north of the 38th parallel, but in a matter of weeks both the North Korean army and the allied forces were targeting cities and towns in the south as well. The Korean War set into motion a massive migration in which millions of people fled in search of safety. They retreated to small villages that were not yet targets, or hid in tunnels or basements of abandoned houses.

There was no party for my mother’s birthday in 1950. She turned nine a few days after the war officially started, but it was not the first time in her life that celebration was precluded by circumstance. I’m not sure at what point my mother and her family were forced to leave behind their home and belongings and the very record of their existence. Their family photographs burned up along with everything else and it was as if my mother’s memories disappeared too. My mother took flight

to become part of the hordes of refugees pictured in documentary accounts of the war, but she does not talk about this. The constant streaming of refugees left millions separated from their families, many of whom would never be reunited. Many died in their search for safety. They drowned crossing rivers, died of disease and starvation, and many more were targets of military strikes. Some of the lost simply disappeared or became one of the millions of unclaimed bodies buried in mass graves.

Rarely does my mother speak of him. It was as if she could not acknowledge his life, because then she would have had to explain his absence and come to terms with his death. It was not until fifty years after the war that I heard her speak his name. Before that, she gave only the vaguest answers about her life and family in Korea. Out of three siblings, two were gone. Of the two gone, only her sister was "dead." Her brother was called "missing" or "disappeared" or "lost."

"somewhere, sometime, something was lost..."

The yanggongju is perhaps the figure, above all others, that embodies the traumas and losses of the Korean peninsula and the diaspora of its people during the past century — the loss of language and indigenous culture under Japanese colonialism, the loss of autonomy under U.S. military dominance since 1945, the decimation of the peninsula during the Korean War through the destruction of every major town and city and the massive loss of human lives. In 1950, the population of the peninsula was about 30 million and by 1953, at least 10 percent would be dead, and the vast majority of survivors homeless. The casualties of the war included 3 million civilians killed, 2 million missing or wounded, and 10 million separated from

their families by division and displacement. These are only some of the losses that can be named but far more difficult to reconcile is what Judith Butler (2003) calls “the loss of loss itself,” or the absence of a story that can bring closure to grief. While the numbers of the dead and missing have become part of historical record, the war and its effects remain unsettled.

“...no story can be told about it; no memory can retrieve it...”

Articulated in terms of a collective failure to remember, the Korean War is often called the “forgotten war” in the U.S., yet among diasporic Koreans, the war is still very much alive. Not only is the Korean War not over in geopolitical terms, the events that took place on the peninsula between 1950 and 1953 continue to haunt the diaspora. Some survivors continue to mourn while others remain unable to, unable even to remember their traumas even as they are deeply affected by them. These gaps in knowledge, both in the form of personal memory and public record, materialize as “transgenerational phantoms” (Abraham and Torok 1994) and circulate along with bodies in migration. But out of the ruins of catastrophic loss and evacuated memory, emerge the remains that “animate history through the creation of bodies and subjects” (Eng and Kazanjian 2003, 2)

The yanggongju is one of the subjects produced by the traumas of 20th century Korean history. Literally meaning, “western princess,” “yanggongju” is also translated as “yankee whore,” “GI bride,” or “UN lady.” The varied translations of yanggongju demonstrate how the figure occupies contradictory and shifting positions of privilege in Korean imagination, evoking a sense of American luxury and political

power at the same time as it evokes sexual subordination and moral decay. Not only does “yanggongju” refer to women who are sexual laborers for U.S. military personnel, it is also used much more broadly to talk about women who are marked by the stigma of the west – women who date or marry American men regardless of whether or not that woman is a known sex worker.

During the U.S. occupation of Korea and during the early stages of the Korean War, women who provided sexual labor to the U.S. military were called by the same name given to the “comfort women” who serviced the Japanese military (“wianbu”). But by the end of the war, “yanggongju” replaced “wianbu” as the popular name for a military sex worker. The yanggongju has been a central, albeit shadowy figure in Korean diasporic unconscious, yet virtually non-existent in American discourses about U.S.-Korea relations and Korean Americans. Her presence/absence raises questions about the psychic and political forces behind the shifting frameworks of visibility in which the yanggongju is put on display in some contexts, while in others she is made invisible. Against conscious efforts of institutions such as the U.S. military or the media to expose or hide her, the yanggongju also moves in and out of visibility through a spectrality that is immanent to diasporic unconscious.

“...a fractured horizon looms in which to make one’s way as a spectral agency...”

In some ways, telling a story about the yanggongju is paradoxical. I want to say something about loss that is unnamable and trauma that is dislocated and materializes in forms far removed from the traumatic event itself. The traces of it

most often show up in sensations and emotions and unconscious thought yet I am writing about it in the form of an academic project that privileges cognitive understanding above all else, and in a discipline that tends towards positivism.

I want to tell you a story about the role of the military prostitute in international migration and geopolitics, about the history of militarized prostitution in Korea, and about my family's history. But this telling is also a failure to tell these stories because there are too many uncertainties, and the very act of telling them in a way that makes sense would involve smoothing over the gaps and wounds. Rather than smoothing over, or filling in these holes, I am compelled to enter these empty spaces to find out what emerges, to find out what one can learn from listening to silence. Rather than writing a sociological narrative of military prostitution, I am making a methodological shift away from traditional sources of data and forms of writing my interpretations. Instead, I would like to tell you about the ways in which the yanggongju has been a spectral agency acting upon and interacting with various unconscious forces, particularly in Korean diaspora. I am less interested in the explicit content of narrative, as I am in the traces of trauma left upon narrative. How, for example, is trauma transmitted across time and space through vehicles other than the speaking subject (such as the interviewee) or the historical record? Do experimental writing, autoethnography, psychoanalysis, fiction and performance bring us any closer to an affective understanding of the yanggongju that cannot be conveyed through traditional narratives? I use both narrative and non-narrative methods of unfolding the layers of the multiple, often competing, stories about the yanggongju that have developed over the past fifty-plus years. She is a ghost who is

not just an apparition of the dead or a melancholic reminder of the past, but also a productive and powerful force of the present.

...a spectral agency, one for whom a full "recovery" is impossible, one for whom the irrecoverable becomes, paradoxically, the condition of a new political agency. (Butler 2003, 467).

This is a project about trauma and haunting, and so I seek to traumatize this text, to animate the very ghostly traces and traumatic disturbances about which I am theorizing, and to encounter the ghost as a voice from the future.

2. becoming ghosted

*Something like her shadow breathed through the empty spaces...
in the secrets and suspicions left unsaid...*

--Nora Okja Keller, *Fox Girl*

Sociologist Avery Gordon describes haunting as "how that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities, [and] the ghost is just the sign, or the empirical evidence... that tells you a haunting is taking place. The ghost is not simply a dead or missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life..." (Gordon 1997, 8). According to Gordon's definition, hauntings are not rare supernatural occurrences, but more often the unexamined irregularities of everyday life. The act of paying attention to the ghosts around us can be deeply unsettling on many levels. The mainstream of social science would dismiss

the notion that something that is seemingly absent or non-existent can be a powerful force in shaping empirical reality, let alone that this unseen presence can itself be the object of study. Even among cultural critics, the project of revealing the hidden or invisible is now politically passé, irrelevant, or even paranoid. Eve Sedgwick, for example, points out that many forms of violence are not hidden, but “offered as an exemplary spectacle” and that “visibility itself constitutes much of the violence” (2003, 140). Gordon anticipates this critique and defends the study of haunting, emphasizing that questions of invisibility are still crucial to understanding the workings of power. She writes: “In a culture seemingly ruled by technologies of hypervisibility, we are led to believe that neither repression nor the return of the repressed, in the form of either improperly buried bodies or countervailing systems of value or difference, occurs with any meaningful result” (16). In the case of the yanggongju, she is neither completely hidden nor free from the forces of social repression. Instead, she vacillates wildly between overexposure and a reclusive existence in the shadows. For those who are the subjects of her haunting, it is the phenomenon of her secrecy that is the most vexing.

What is your ethnic mix?

I am Korean/Caucasian. My mother is Korean.

How did your parents meet?

I'm not exactly sure how they met. All I really know is my father was stationed in Korea when he served in the Air Force

--from an interview published on www.halfkorean.com

Central to my theoretical framework is Abraham and Torok's theory of "transgenerational haunting," which says that a trauma can be passed unconsciously from one generation to the next. In their clinical work, Abraham and Torok found that this phenomenon most often took place around their clients' unconscious knowledge of the silences, secrets, and taboo words that belonged to someone else. Their clients' preoccupation with silences in their families, or the gaps in their own speech provided evidence of being haunted by the traumatic secrets of another. Within those gaps, the secrets become "phantomized" and the ghost then feeds off certain taboo words that are silenced along with the secret itself.

Produced by the secret, the gaps and impediment in our communication with the love object create a twofold and contrary effect: the prohibition of knowledge coupled with an unconscious investigation. As a result "haunted" individuals are caught between two inclinations. They must at all costs maintain the ignorance of a loved one's secret; hence the semblance of unawareness (nescience) concerning it. At the same time they must eliminate the state of secrecy; hence the reconstruction of the secret in the form of unconscious knowledge (Abraham and Torok 1994,188).

From the unconscious space sheltering the unspeakable trauma, the "words giving sustenance to the phantom" return to haunt the bearer of the secret (Abraham and Torok 1994, 176). Abraham and Torok's method for revealing a phantom is to focus on gaps, on that which was suggested but still silenced in their clients' speech, and their treatment of haunted individuals involved wresting the phantomized secret from its hold over the individual's psyche and releasing it into the world. The psychoanalytic work of making ghosts public "implies uncovering...[the dead's or loved ones'] shameful secrets..." yet the paradox of transgenerational haunting is that

the haunted person is unconsciously driven to know and speak the unspeakable even at the risk of betraying the person who transmitted the secret (1994, 167). This effort to speak the contents of one's psychic tomb is an example of what Abraham and Torok would describe as "Reducing the 'phantom' [which] entails reducing the sin attached to someone else's secret and stating it in acceptable terms so as to defy, circumvent, or domesticate the phantom's (and our) resistances, its (and our) refusals, gaining acceptance for a higher degree of 'truth'" (1994, 189). The appearance of the yanggongju in the scholarly and artistic works of diasporic Koreans, suggests that diasporic Koreans have inherited the entombed secrets of other generations, and the materialization of the ghost in their work suggests that this writing and speaking constitutes an attempt to speak the contents of the other's psychic tomb and thereby "reduce the phantom."

While the yanggongju has been a powerful figure in shaping certain discourses such as Korean discourses of nationalism (see chapter three), particularly around issues of U.S. military involvement, she has been absent from many official U.S. accounts about Korea such as that of the history of diplomatic relations between the two countries and that of Korea's economic miracle, as well as from U.S.-centered debates about feminism and even from discussions of "global" sex work. Since the early 1990s, however, there has been a proliferation of writing and filmmaking about prostitution and the U.S. military by diasporic Koreans as well as some non-Korean U.S. scholars (Choi 1998, Cumings 1992, Heldman 1997, E. Kim 1998, H.S.Kim 1998, D. Lee and G. Lee 1995, Lie 1995, Moon 1997, Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1992, Suh 2000, Takagi and Park 1996, Yuh 2003). This recent knowledge

production about militarized prostitution in Korea, in which the yanggongju is the central figure, demonstrates Gordon's notion that "that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence" (1997, 8) in that while the yanggongju is repressed in many dominant U.S. discourses, she returns via counter-hegemonic discourses. One interpretation of this phenomenon is that the glaring absences in public knowledge about military prostitution in Korea provoked a proliferation of writing about the topic in order to fill in the gaps. Another reading is that this relatively new body of work is evidence of the transgenerational haunting of diasporic Koreans. During the same time period during which this scholarly work was being produced, the arts community of diasporic Koreans took up the subject of the yanggongju and militarized prostitution in film and fiction. Many of these works were partly autobiographical and questioned the writer or filmmaker's own family history. One might say that the materialization of the figure of the yanggongju in the work of diasporic Koreans signals the ways in which we have inherited the unconscious and traumatic memories that belong to someone else, and the writing of the imagined secrets are ways of "reducing the phantom." But as I will discuss later, there are other effects of writing and speaking traumatic secrets beyond simply "domesticating" the ghosts.

3. the dissolution of body boundaries and the creation of new bodies

To whom does the ghost belong? What subject/body/nation? While the clinical work of transgenerational haunting moves the notion of trauma beyond the

individual to point out the ways in which “some people unwittingly inherit the psychic substance of their ancestors lives,” (Abraham and Torok 1994, 166) questions of history remain at the level of the family, and agency is still attributed primarily to the individual subject who chooses whether or not to exorcise the ghost by speaking. The capacity of the trauma to move across boundaries of time and space, however, implies that the ghost has an agency of its own that can be more powerful than either the subject who first experienced the trauma or the inheritor of the secret. A broad reading of Abraham and Torok’s theory that further de-individualizes haunting allows us to consider both how social groups and histories are affected by transgenerational haunting, and how haunting itself can produce bodies.

...it is not consciously that we enter history, not willingly... that we inherit the parameters with which our psychic reality begins. (Rose 1996, 23)

The work of literary critic, Jacqueline Rose provides a particularly interesting example of how the notion of transgenerational haunting can be applied to large-scale social phenomena such as geopolitical conflict. Rose describes transgenerational haunting as “forms of remembrance—most often hidden and shameful family secrets—which hover in the space between social and psychic history...” (1996, 5). She points out that the movement of trauma goes beyond the family unit, but also that the notion of family extends beyond bloodlines. Transgenerational haunting, in some cases, “works not just down through the generations, but *across* them; and not inside one family, but, creating a monstrous family of reluctant belonging...” (1996, 31). Rose speaks specifically here about the ways in which long-standing political conflicts such as those of Israel and Palestine, or apartheid South Africa, are mired in

this psychic haunting. One of the manifestations of this haunting is the power of unconscious fantasy and trauma to shape national politics and the writing (and forgetting) of history. Borrowing the concept of “land pornography,” from Palestinian writer and lawyer, Raja Shehadeh, Rose describes how transgenerational haunting materializes—in “...the way exile and loss transmute themselves into the most fervent forms of nationalist possession. Over-valuation of the object, Freud would call it, when a tree – to take Shehadeh’s example – becomes filled out, symbolized beyond recognition with the weight of desire, and then manipulated in fantasy to its purpose” (1996, 24).

Twentieth-century Korean history is full of parallels, especially around issues of Korean women’s sexual labor and U.S. military involvement. Like Shehadeh’s tree, the yanggongju has also been “symbolized beyond recognition with the weight of desire, and then manipulated” in Korean nationalist discourses. Yanggongju is the symbol of exile and loss in that she is a reminder of the Korean War and of Korea’s continued subordination to U.S. military interests. At the same time she is a symbol of desire for the U.S. and the American dream. In the case of the yanggongju, one can also trace the genealogy of her trauma and the movement of that trauma through time and space to ask how her haunting has created “monstrous families of reluctant belonging.”

Rose’s analysis of the literature of nationalist conflict provides an important contribution to an understanding of politics, in that it demonstrates how nationalism works at the level of unconscious fantasy. To read politics through the lens of transgenerational haunting means that every event must be understood in its historical

context, including that of its unconscious history. Seemingly incomprehensible acts of violence, for example, are thick with a history of collective trauma that refuses to remain fixed in the past or in its original place, but that has the power to move across time and space. Rose's work on the transgenerational haunting of collective groups implies the dissolution of individual body boundaries and takes us into the realm of the social unconscious.

If transgenerational haunting lies between the psyche and the social, then the task of revealing a collective haunting can be accomplished through the same methods that Abraham and Torok used in their clinical work. Being in this liminal space outside of consciousness, not acknowledged by either the individual or the collective as part of history, is what makes it difficult and sometimes impossible for the bearer of the trauma to recognize her own haunting. Haunting is immanent to, but not explicit, in an identity or narrative and therefore requires a close analysis of that which remains unspoken. Scholars in the field of Asian American studies have also used the theory and methods of transgenerational haunting to analyze the silences in Asian American history.

The collaborative work of literary critic David Eng, and clinical psychoanalyst Shinhee Han offer another example of how transgenerational haunting is relevant to Asian diaspora. They develop a theory of racial melancholia in which the Asian American subjects of their research, patients seeking therapy as well as the subjects of semi-autobiographical works of fiction and film, have inherited the unconscious desires and unspoken traumas of their parents. The implications of this intersubjectivity for clinical work is that a psychic haunting can only be resolved over

several generations and that “an incipient healing process” often involves returning to the site of the other’s trauma (2000, 354). Moving beyond the psychotherapeutic paradigm of “cultural difference,” Eng and Han call for a politicization of Asian American therapeutic interventions to recognize that inherited traumas are often linked to collective traumas such as economic and racial injustice, the most dramatic example they give being the internment of Japanese Americans. In the face of legacies of trauma, they suggest, the notion of Asian American assimilation becomes problematic. In his solo writings, Eng takes the theory of transgenerational haunting another step beyond the individual to make Asian American history itself the subject of haunting. Elaborating on the paradoxical relationship between sociological success stories of Asian American assimilation and the violently repressed history of Asian American exclusion, Eng remarks that the official story of Asians in America is so full of erasures that it “...threatens to consign... existence to oblivion” (2001, 37).⁵ Survival itself becomes dependent on rupturing the covered over spaces.

In December 1991, Ha Koon Ja was among the first women to come out as a former comfort woman for the Japanese imperial army, publically shaming her nation, her colonizers, and herself.⁶ Although the secret that broke from her lips was her own, it had haunted those around her, including the activists who persuaded Ha Koon Ja

⁵ The Asian American studies scholars whose work I draw on are highly critical of sociological claims that Asians are assimilated in the U.S. (I elaborate this point in chapter four). Perhaps the fundamental difference between the way in which these two disciplines frame the study of Asian America is the difference between the terms “immigration” and “diaspora.” Immigration implies a unidirectional trajectory from a “home” country to a “host” country to which the immigrant eventually becomes assimilated (see Lie 2001), whereas “diaspora” carries connotations of displacement that does not necessarily have an end.

⁶ Ha Koon Ja is one of the surviving comfort women featured in the documentary film, *My Own Breathing* (1999).

and the other women to speak out and file a lawsuit against the Japanese government more than fifty years after the systematic recruitment and abduction of Korean women for military sex work began.

A few months later, Yun Kum-i, a sex worker at a U.S. military camptown was raped and murdered by one of her clients, Private Kenneth Markle. It was not the first time a camptown bar girl had been killed, but this incident was different. Kum-i's body did not rest beneath the shame of what Koreans preferred to not talk about, nor did she submit to the U.S. military's power to disappear women like her. Yun's murder sparked massive anti-U.S. protests across the southern half of the peninsula to the extent that Markle became the first U.S. serviceman to be tried in Korean courts. 1992 was certainly not the first time a camptown sex worker had been murdered, but it was the first time the general public rallied around the figure of the yanggongju. The slain yanggongju set into motion not only a surge of political protests, but also a proliferation of writing about Yun in particular, and yanggongjus more generally.

Both "breaking silence" about the comfort women, and the recent knowledge production and popular protest about militarized prostitution are examples of a shameful secret breaking free from the unconscious after several generations. Korean history is riddled with such examples of silences that take fifty years to speak. It is a haunted and haunting history both for those who lived it but cannot remember it, and for those who remember it but never lived it. These gaps come to be lived as transgenerational haunting in the unconscious of diaspora. One of the most powerful lessons we have learned from the work on transgenerational haunting is that memory does not require the person who carries it to have been the subject of the trauma.

Ghosted memory becomes disembodied from the original event and its witnesses, thereby unsettling the very ideas of traumatic origin and witness. It raises questions about the boundaries of the individual body and individual agency and challenges the often taken-for-granted notions in sociology (and clinical psychoanalysis) that the speaking subject is indeed speaking as herself. Who or what is the subject of memory? Can memory have its own agency beyond the human subject?

As if to answer these questions, Patricia Clough asks us to consider the implications of “unconscious thought” that is not necessarily embodied in the human subject (2000). This line of thinking raises questions about what it means to be haunted by unconscious thought and how one might look at the figure of the yanggongju as not only the representation of an actual woman, but also that of a more generalized unconscious of history and politics. Drawing on the theories of Deleuze and Derrida, Clough’s work is a compelling de-individualization of trauma. But rather than moving in the direction of the collective, as sociologists tend to do, Clough treats “subindividual finite forces” as social agents on the same plane as the human subject. What are the subindividual finite forces of haunting that do not take the shape of a woman, and how is haunting at the molecular level of perception transfigured into the ghost of the yanggongju? If “technicity, the machine, the text, writing” are “bearers of unconscious thought,” then where else might we look for evidence of transgenerational haunting and who or what is the agent of that haunting? (Clough 2000, 17).

Turning to the work of Gilles Deleuze and John Johnston for a moment, I want to suggest that haunting can be understood in terms of Deleuze’s notion of the

machinic assemblage, or the dynamic non-organic body assembled from disparate elements in an environment in order to produce something. The bodies of diaspora, and particularly Korean diaspora, are constituted by unremembered trauma and loss. When an unspeakable or uncertain history, both personal and collective, takes the form of a "ghost," it searches for bodies through which to speak. In so doing, the ghost is distributed across the time-space of diaspora. I want to re-think the ghost not just as the psychic representation of the dead or repressed, but as a body assembled to transmit traumatic memory, or a force of "desiring production" (Clough 2000). The ghost is an assemblage in that it is not an individuated body, but rather a spectral agency made up of multiple fragments. As I explore in chapter two, for example, the trauma of the Korean War is an assemblage of the remains of the massacred, the ruins of cities and towns, the memories of survivors, affects of fear and hope, all of which become ghosted in the yanggongju. The ghost is an assemblage and at the same time it calls into existence new assemblages— listening and speaking bodies, which the ghost requires as witnesses to its own exorcism. These new assemblages are produced in and against the resounding silences of forgotten histories. They are bodies whose purpose is to see and speak the traumas that could not be seen and spoken by those who directly lived them.

The distribution of trauma through diaspora, and particularly the witnessing of trauma, is an example of what Johnston calls "machinic vision," or distributed perception. In other words, what the eye sees, or what the tongue speaks, is a co-functioning of many different agencies acting upon the witness or speaker. Memory does not depend as much on an individual recalling an event as it does on a

distribution of perceptions and agencies assembled for the purpose of remembering. However, common-sense understandings of the individual subject acting of one's own agency run counter to this notion of an assemblaged body. Johnston points out that "the organization of the body in an organic unity obscures how forces act on the body and how the body enters into different assemblages with other bodies... as if the hand had attained independence and passed into the service of other forces, tracing marks that no longer depend on our will or our vision" (1999, 33-34).

Both the bodies that receive and the bodies that transmit haunting are assemblaged, and there is not always a clear demarcation between one and the other. The line between ghost and haunted human subject is blurred because assemblages are temporary and their elements dynamic. A body part such as the eye can be what receives a trauma or the agent that shows it to us. It can be part of the haunting machine at one moment and part of the witnessing or story-telling machine the next. Above all what is produced is a constellation of affective bodies transmitting and receiving trauma, haunting one another. These are ideas I elaborate especially in chapter five, but in all the chapters that follow, I map out some of the constellations that make up a haunted diaspora. I also attempt to link together somewhat disparate theoretical pieces—psychoanalytic notions of trauma and a Deleuzian concept of the body. While I explore this link, I also must recognize that they are not always reconcilable, and therefore, the movement of thought sometimes alternates between the two analytic frameworks and sometimes attempts to bring them closer together.

4. Gaps and Wounds

To conceive of memory as non-individual or non-human is troubling for disciplines such as sociology whose livelihood still depends on discrete human subjects. Although quantitative methods of sociology operate on the level of statistical abstractions that erase individuality, standard methods of inquiry in qualitative sociology, such as interviewing and ethnography often take for granted the subjectivity and consciousness of the speaker. Qualitative methods of social science have thus come under the scrutiny of feminist science studies. When not practiced self-critically, these methods can run counter to the goals of my project—to study unconscious thought and dislocated memory, to see what emerges from the holes in history, and to explore the possibility of a witness to trauma that is a machinic assemblage of disparate elements rather than an individual speaking subject. Therefore, I look to the fields of critical methodology, literary criticism, transnational feminism, Asian American studies and performance studies to enrich the sociological study of haunting. While each of the methodological approaches I discuss deals with seeing and listening to what lies in the gaps, the gaps vary, as do the methods for studying them. The gap marks the site of a wound or trauma, and although the trauma itself may never be revealed, we can investigate it by the traces it leaves behind in the form of ghosts and voices that emerge from the wounds.

But how does one study that which is unseen and unspoken, that which has been lost, forgotten, made to disappear? How does one tell a story about it? David Eng argues that when confronted with a history full of holes, one must employ

“radical new methods of looking...in order to see something else” (2001, 37). Just as new methods of looking can allow one to see something that at first appeared to be an empty space, these same methods can also be used to look for an object that is outside the field of vision. One of the methods named by Eng include “focusing on personal memories and the dreamwork – on the unconscious aspects of looking...” (2001, 37). Like Eng, Anthropologist Michael Fischer also proposes that the social sciences take up the study of the unconscious and proposes a method of remembering, “a modern version of the Pythagorean arts of memory: retrospection to gain a vision for the future. In so becoming, the searches also turn out to be powerful critiques of several contemporary rhetorics of domination” (1986, 198). What is implied in the suggestions of both Eng and Fischer is that what they seek through dreamwork is a remembrance of that which has been violently repressed or made to disappear. The in/visibility of the yanggongju provides a powerful example of this phenomenon. In many discourses where one might expect to see her, such as in the official discourses of U.S.-Korea relations or of Asian assimilation in the U.S., she has been erased. In Korea, on the other hand, where the public knows how widespread camptown prostitution is, the proximity of the yanggongju as a traumatic image, or perhaps the shame of acknowledging her existence, still renders the yanggongju invisible much of the time.

The project of revealing the hidden is extremely important for political reasons since acts of erasure are often linked to a politics of domination. However, the limitation of this perspective is that it assumes that the object that comes into view was always available to be looked at and only needed to be uncovered in order to be

seen. In Eng's later work, he and David Kazanjian draw on Walter Benjamin's notion of animating the remains of history to take up the question of how loss can be productive. The examination of the gap then shifts from focusing on what is hiding, to looking at what is produced in the space of loss. Rather than being a hole left behind by a deliberate erasure, the empty spaces can be thought of as traces of emergency and evacuation, emergency and emergence (Benjamin 1968, Eng and Kazanjian 2003).

One method of engaging a haunted history is to look into the space of loss itself for its creative possibilities. As Eng and Kazanjian point out, departure also signals an imminent arrival. In this reconceptualization of loss, evacuation is the very engine that allows something new to emerge, however, this idea still does not resolve the question of where evacuated memory goes. Just as refugees are forced to leave their homes in search of safety during times of war, evacuated memory also takes flight and must eventually stop somewhere before moving on to its next destination. Onto what bodies is the memory of trauma displaced and what new bodies does this dislocation produce?

The word trauma literally means "wound" and can refer to the injury itself or the agency which inflicts the wound. Like Abraham and Torok's conception of the hole or gap in speech becoming phantomized, and Eng and Kazanjian's notion of the positive space of loss, Cathy Caruth also treats the question of the ways in which a loss or injury, can be generative, particularly in the relationship between speaking and silence. When one cannot assimilate the events of trauma into experience, when it "is

experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness," we come to know it as an agency that emerges from the wound (1996, 4). For Caruth, this agency arrives in the form of a voice that is a witness and wants to be listened to. What is particularly interesting is that the voice is not presumed to belong only to the subject of trauma, but rather it is a voice that has been displaced and transfigured, moving from one unconscious to another and momentarily settling in places from which to speak. Perhaps the voice of trauma is a ghost whose capacity to store and transmit information about the events of a traumatic history exceeds that of the person who lived that history. The idea that the voice does not belong to the subject from which it speaks is consistent with the theory of transgenerational haunting in that the trauma takes up residence in other bodies. As Abraham and Torok remind us, the voices of one generation live in the unconscious of another. When working with the kinds of gaps that are a result of memory that is foreclosed or evacuated, one must look beyond the subject of trauma for evidence of haunting and take seriously voices that may appear to be unrelated to the subject. This idea is an extension of Eng's method of personal memory and dreamwork, which includes memory that is dislocated and found in bodies beyond the human individual. This method implies listening, not only to another person's trauma, as Caruth suggests, but also to the voices that speak from wounds that stretch across disparate places, bodies, objects, and affects.

I am not suggesting that any of this work will uncover the truth about what happened or will recover lost memory. In fact, the starting point for many theorists who study haunting is that we can never really know it yet we have an obligation to

bring that haunting to bear on our thinking. As Judith Butler reminds us, the biggest challenge to coming to terms with a haunted history is “the loss of loss itself” (2003, 467). Because we can never really know the content of loss, any story that is told about it will fail to tell the truth and will underscore the fantasmatics of truth. But perhaps this storytelling itself is one of the products of loss. I am starting with the assumption that whatever story this project ultimately tells, it cannot tell what really happened or prove the cause of haunting, yet I am compelled to tell a story about haunting nonetheless. And even as I am producing some kind of narrative, I propose a kind of storytelling that makes a move away from narrative towards a “transmission of trauma from speaker to listener” (Taylor 2002). The most important methodological components for this project come from the work of cultural critics and artists who explore the question of how to perceive and transmit trauma without knowing its content. I am particularly interested in how writing about the self can move beyond the limitations of personal narrative.

5. performing trauma, displacing the auto

The writing of the self, particularly in the tradition of feminist methods, has long been used to challenge the assumptions of dominant histories, thus using the auto as a form of critique. Autoethnography, for example, has proven to be not only a means of engaging the unconscious but also of disrupting the unspoken power dynamics of social scientific research. Its “aim is to give a personal accounting of the

location of the observer, which is typically disavowed in traditional social science writing... It does this by making the ethnographer the subject-object of observation, exploring experience from the inside of the ethnographer's life..." (Clough 2000, 16). Autoethnography obscures the subject/object distinction while opening up questions about what counts as evidence. It's important to mention, however, that not all deployments of autoethnography are critical. This method can often re-produce the same logic it seeks to unsettle—that there is a truth to be revealed, and for some autoethnographers, it is just a matter of replacing a dominant narrative with a revisionist one. Clough, however, is quite aware of the problems associated with what Derrida calls "autoaffection" or the desire for one's own voice "that gives the natural grounds to the subject privileged in the western modern discourse of Man" and therefore proposes an autoethnography that seeks to bring unconscious thought to bear on the writing of the self (2000, 17).

Like Clough, literary critics such as Anne Anlin Cheng and Alisa Lebow, challenge traditional forms of autobiography that take for granted the authenticity of the speaking subject, and at the same time they encounter autobiographies that can subvert the form's own tendencies of self-revelation and confession. Cheng finds this radical autobiography in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*. Although *Dictée* is often presumed to be autobiographical, it contradicts expectations that the subject and story be recognizable to its readers, and very little of the text's content makes any obvious reference to Cha herself. Rather, it is a text full of borrowed images alongside what appear to be family photographs, quotes with no citations, and an "I" speaking in multiple voices and tongues, with practically no translation. Personal memory and

borrowed memory become indistinguishable, and the lack of identifiable sources calls into question the authenticity of every document and piece of narrative used in the book. *Dictée*'s constant self-obscuration undermines conventional expectations that autobiography reveal the truth of the speaking subject.

Dictée provides a powerful example of what Cheng calls "autobiography's antidocument". Just as *Dictée* unsettles accepted paradigms of writing autobiography, it also disturbs the practice of documenting history. Documentary evidence, like personal memory, always implies its prior absence.

This antidocumentary document takes apart traditional historical concepts of periodization, making it impossible to retrieve or recite historical atrocity as containable events... the documentation of history must be recognized as itself a process of pluralization and performative reiteration. It insists that retrieved history must be understood as an instance of dissimulated historicity with all the fantasmatic attachments inevitable in any act of reconstruction... What we are given in *Dictée* is the afterimage of the event ... that has been placed in constant and uncanny circulation... (Cheng 2000,145)

This method of writing is deeply troubling to an empiricism that believes that documentation corresponds to some original event and not to the citational practices that produce the very histories that are being documented.

Like Cheng's work, Alisa Lebow's analysis of autobiography also troubles both the writing practices of representation and the notion of a subject that speaks her own experience. For Lebow, a writing of the self comes in the form of "indirect memory and transitive autobiography" in which imprints of the past are everywhere yet the autobiographical subject herself is unlocatable. Lebow draws on Marianne Hirsch's idea of postmemory, which Hirsch describes as "a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through projection, investment, and creation" (as quoted in Lebow

2003, 47). Postmemory and transitive autobiography are particularly evident in the work of subjects who have inherited cultural traumas.

The methods of transitive autobiography and anti-documentary autobiography present the kind of “evidence that registers loss, even as it recognizes the unrecognizability of the content of loss” (Cheng 2000, 147). This is relevant to the study of trauma because trauma is never fully narrativizable despite the best efforts to explain its origins and trajectories. The analyses of Cheng and Lebow not only offer a compelling critique of writing practices at the levels of personal and collective history, they also shift the focus of sociological inquiry towards social relations that are affective. Displaced autobiographies enact “a relation to the world that is melancholic: a trace of something that cannot be named” (Cheng 2000, 147) and thus force us to consider agencies in the environment that are usually presumed to not be there. An engagement with the traces of haunting requires a methodology that produces affect and interaffection at the level of the unconscious and of matter. Because affect is sensory experience that operates in the domain of the subindividual just beyond the reach of consciousness and emotion, it parallels the workings of trauma. Some trauma theory suggests that unremembered trauma is that which exceeds frames of reference (Felman and Laub 1992). Put another way, trauma can be read as experience that is folded into the body but never quite reaches cognition (Massumi 2002). It is thought that is stored but cannot yet emerge because it precedes the technological apparatus required to decode it (Deleuze 1992). It is that which is immanent to memory and narrative even if not integrated, what is present

but cannot be perceived as such (Johnston 1998). This is the last kind of gap I want to turn my attention to, and perhaps the most radical in its potential to haunt.

In Brian Massumi's work on affect, he notes that the time between perception registered in the body and the subject's cognition of it is half a second (2002). The "missing half second" is a space between what one knows and feels, the content of which is inaccessible to human knowledge even by means of the most rigorous of scientific methods, yet this is also a space of possibility. What gets folded in during the missing half second is unpredictable in that it is unknowable yet can become activated at any moment, independently of the will of the subject. It is the ungraspable trace that Cheng talks about, which is in constant circulation and whose arrival is always imminent. This gap is not the kind that has been erased or covered up, but rather a positive space built of an accumulation of affect. The way in which microperceptions that get stored away during the missing half seconds have the capacity to act independently of the subject evokes Butler's notion of performativity in which, at any given moment, the citational practices that call the subject into being can be disrupted by unconscious forces from one's psychic tomb. Haunting is at the center of subjectivity, but at the same time it is an agency outside subjectivity in that it operates at the cellular level of affect, from a position that is not locatable.

Because haunting is dynamic and particularly because the gaps from which the ghosts emerge can be both negative and positive spaces, a study of haunting requires multiple methodologies. In the chapters that follow, I move among Eng's methods of personal memory and dreamwork, Clough's experimental autoethnography, Lebow's transitive autobiography, and Cheng's method of an

antidocumentary autobiography to explore the yanggongju's haunting of the Korean diaspora. All of these methods involve "unconscious aspects of looking" (Eng 2001, 37) that are distributed across the diaspora, across bodies and generations. But in order to bring alive these methods of remembering trauma, they must be written not only on the page, but also through other bearers of unconscious thought such as live performance. The field of performance studies, for example, has explored the relationship between trauma and performance showing that performance, in many cultures, is a way of summoning ghosts (Roach 1996, Schechner 1985). It also suggests that the circuitry of affect between performers and audience created in a live performance embodies and transmits trauma (Taylor 2002). The rest of this project, therefore, will combine elements of writing history and memory that are performative in their iterations, and in fact include some text that was originally written for the stage.⁷ Some of the chapters are more experimental (particularly chapters two and five), while others will be presented in a more "academic" voice. However, the academic voice will be interrupted by the multiplicity of unconscious thoughts that threaten the integrity of a single authoritative voice.

As important as it is to use multiple methods, it is just as important to employ "multiple drafts." Johnston suggests that a contemporary psyche no longer inscribes itself in text through stream-of-consciousness, but through the re-workings of multiple drafts (1998). In order to engage the repetition of trauma, the same moments must be revisited, the same phantomized words re-iterated, so that the ghosts can be released. If, as Eng says, survival itself depends on revealing what lay in the gaps of

⁷ Here I am appropriating contemporary poetry's distinction between the "stage poem" and the "page poem"

Asian American history, whose survival is implicated? Not only is the existence of Asian Americans at stake, so is that of the ghosts. Although western perspectives on ghosts tend to see them as either menacing forces to be eradicated or non-existent entities to be dismissed, this work draws on traditions of thought that believe that ghosts can inform and transform us. At first glance, the goal of Abraham and Torok's clinical work seems to be to get rid of the transgenerational phantoms. Another reading, however, suggests that they are calling forth the ghosts, not simply to free the patient from the ghost but also to free the ghost from the confines of the individual body. The power of not speaking results in the ghost's continued haunting of the family for several generations until eventually the ghost dies out. Speaking, on the other hand, or specifically a "staging of words" relieves the unconscious by "placing the effects of the phantom in the social realm" (Abraham and Torok 1994, 176). This process does not lay the ghost to rest, as much as it sets the ghost free, wrests it from a haunted subject and releases it. The ghost enters into the world with renewed agency and "the ones that have something in common find each other..." (Abraham and Torok 1994, 176) creating new bodies of haunting. Moving from the tomb to the stage, the ghost is fleshed out in and through performance.

I want to tell you a story about the yanggongju, but I also want to resist the tendency toward creating a piece of work whose politics remain at the level of representation about a lost or suppressed history. To tell a story of trauma is not to tell of what was lost, but to meditate on the ways in which "cultural trauma... recurs as a profoundly unlocatable event" (Cheng 2000, 149). Rather than claiming to

uncover the truth about what really happened to Korean women during the history of U.S. military involvement or to recover these women's lost memories, I hope that this work will look for the traces of haunting around us. To give form to the haunted spaces marked by trauma creates openings for trauma's productive possibilities. Rather than privileging research methods that are organized around the argument, this project shifts the focus of research from content to affect. I am just as concerned about what the presentation of evidence *does* as what it *says*. What affects are produced in listeners and what affects get stored away to be released in the future? "Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition" (Gordon 1997, 8). What gets produced in this process, I hope, will be new bodies that can offer insight about the present and "make the irrecoverable the condition of a new political agency" (Butler 2003, 467). This project is a staging of words, of traumas "too deeply embodied for an I to speak them..." (Clough 2000, 20). Where flesh and paper meet and unconscious is rendered into text, I share the stage with these ghosts.

Interlude⁸

One: the color of blood

The color of blood is not red. It is deep dark chocolate brown and gochu-jang stained in the center where the wound is still fresh. She is not afraid because she does not remember. Nothing tells her to fear him, not the holes in his chest, not the soft layer of white mold that grows all over his skin. She is not afraid because she thinks this fuzzy decay-growth is new fur. He is becoming animal spirit from before this life. She closes her eyes pretending to sleep so no one will disturb her plan. Tenses herself silent and motionless until the moment her body floats out the bedroom window to the tree in front of the house where he is waiting. He almost tricked her into believing he was a still-living boy, but then parts of her faintly recalled their last encounter. Although it happened right in front of her while her eyes were wide open, she could not see it. Only the tiniest ripples of cold on the surface of her arms reminded her that he was already dead.

Two: 1944

Lips curve breath pushes out through empty spaces where teeth will be and the tongue flops restlessly without purpose.

She was born into a world where oral language was reserved for men. They used the sounds that emerged from their throats and mouths to talk to one another, but never to her. For women, speaking was a dangerous act. Those who dared to speak out loud in their native tongue were punished and put on display as an example of what the others should fear, so if the girls said anything at all, they murmured so quietly that the sound was almost imperceptible, or else they voiced fragments of Korean-accented Japanese. Otherwise, they learned to talk with their feet. Stomping,

⁸ The vignettes that appear between the chapters were originally written as pieces of a larger fictional story. If read consecutively, they do make up a progressive and linear narrative about trauma. Broken up, they complement the chapters at some moments, and at other moments, disrupt them. I offer two ways of reading these vignettes – either as interludes as they appear in the text, or consecutively to get a clearer sense of the larger story. In either case, the vignettes are in dialogue with the chapters and interact with some of the events, characters, and theoretical musings in the rest of the work.

shuffling, tapping, swishing, marching, left-right-left, heel-to-toe, four-four, six-eight, eleven-and-a-half, a multiplicity of sound patterns communicating wishes, warnings, secrets.

Under normal conditions, a child her age would have been speaking already.

Three: september forty-five

She was too young to understand what was about to happen. All she could remember were the men in uniforms gesturing to the girls to get on the ship and go back home. From time to time an impulse seized her to jump into the water, to sink into the waves of unfamiliar black hair that surrounded her, but she did not release the hand that held her. Some of the girls cried from relief and others from shame. Some shouted in the language that she had only ever heard whispered. On the other side of the ocean, men in different uniforms were getting on a plane and going to the same place. She was too young on that day to see the future coming towards her. She was four years old then, moving towards...

The future is already present, already waiting for her to come home, the future being decided somewhere else. A trajectory of movement from north south, rural urban, east west is being mapped along the 38th. There is no dividing line that can bring security, no demarcation of before and after. All time collapsed into a singular moment. September forty-five.

Four: July 1950

On this day, she is old enough to be witness and executioner. Later, there will be no one left to tell the story to, but it doesn't matter because she won't be able to remember it anyway. And even if she could, it is the kind of thing that no one is supposed to talk about.

The sirens say run, and she does. Run, same as each time before. Run, only this time she lets go of her sister's hand and runs in a different direction.

“Soon-hee-ya! I-ri wah!”

She does not look back and op-pa follows after. She leads him into an open field, making him a target for the soldiers who are waiting to carry out orders. He is taller than most boys his age, the height of a small man. The people of this land all look the same to them anyway, so maybe they did not know he was just a child. The sirens scream and the decision to run away was already programmed into her muscle and her legs can't hear her older brother's panic at what he knows is about to happen, because the migoon soldiers do what they are told. *Shoot anything that moves.* She stops only at the sound of fire sound of flesh against cracked earth sound of blood bubbling into the sound of her name rising up his throat into her lungs screaming his name.

Five: armistice

There is no delineation between then and now. Only a temporary halt. No dividing line that can bring security no demarcation of before during after. Then always now moving towards that which has already happened is always already happening. Seconds minutes evaporate as she waits patiently for something to happen that something that has already happened. 7:50. *July fifty.*

There is no memory of when it began but it always begins the same. She arrives at their meeting place with delight as if she were seeing him again for the first time. Always the night air is perfectly crisp with no scent of death and his smile dissolves all guilt. *Op-pa...Op-pa, you have come back to me.* Always the wounds look the same with no new skin stretching over them, only delicate spores of mold. Through another's eyes, he might have appeared to be rotten meat littering the landscape, but in her perception he was her brother.

Chapter Two

A Genealogy of Trauma: The Korean War

So I've gone around in circles – China, to North Korea, down to O-san and to Seoul, then to the United States, back to North Korea... It's all a painful story; there's no pleasure in it. Sometimes I want to forget it but I just can never forget.

-- from the oral history of a Korean War survivor

After the war I returned to Paekdu... but there was no one. No village. No home. Our house and fields were burned to the ground...we decided to make our way south; somehow it was easier for us to keep moving, to keep busy, to keep not remembering.

--Nora Okja Keller, *Fox Girl*

She is caught in circles, in an endless repetition of the Korean War that resists all attempts to erase it from personal and public memory. In the two quotes above, each speaker is a “yanggongju.” One is a Korean War survivor who married a U.S. serviceman, and the other is a fictional representation of a post-war military sex worker. One moves to America while the other never makes it out of the camptown. Yet both are constantly on the move, in a state of physical and psychic exile in which neither forgetting nor fully remembering the traumatic events of the war and its aftermath is possible. Under such conditions, what are the mechanisms of remembering? Where is memory stored? And how does one tell a story about that which the subject does not want to remember?

I want to tell you a story about this figure of the yanggongju, about how she was constructed largely out of the ruins of war, and at the same time became the ghost that carries the history of the war forward into the future, and across trajectories

of movement. In doing so, she disrupts the narratives that go unquestioned about the Korean War and U.S.-Korea relations. What is articulated through these very disruptions is a story about the yanggongju and the multiple storyings that have both brought her into existence while also disavowing her.

I want to tell you a story although I am uncertain about where the story begins or if a logical beginning even exists. There is a chronology that is useful to keep in mind, yet I unfold this story through a temporality of forgetting and remembering, a temporality of trauma that is unconscious and non-linear. At best, what I can offer is an uncertain history about what has made the yanggongju into what she is now. In this chapter, I begin to tell this story about a specific time and place that we have come to know as 1950-1953 on the Korean peninsula, and an event known as the Korean War. In particular, I focus on the early days of the war, for it was the first five months of conflict that was most devastating. I layer in vignettes that return again and again to 1950 with others that come from a haunted future.⁹ These are snapshots of the way in which trauma is carried forward along with the movement of bodies, thereby evacuating the sense of progress that is associated with the passing of time. Although this chapter deals primarily with the events that took place on the Korean peninsula between 1950-1953, I approach this history by connecting disparate

⁹ These vignettes are based on oral histories with Korean War survivors, as well as on autoethnography or “transitive autobiography” as Alisa Lebow puts it, about my own uncertain family history and my mother’s traumatic (lack of) memories of the war. I pay particular attention to the stories of Korean civilians who survived and witnessed massacres, and I weave together a narrative that is about the diaspora of trauma in which it becomes unclear whose experience is being told. While many of the vignettes are written in the voice of a fictional piece of writing, the ones that are about my mother are more self-consciously fictionalized as a means of expressing the ambiguity about the kinds of traumatic histories that are passed down through transgenerational haunting.

points in time-space, moments that are joined by a common haunting of war and loss and the productive forces that have emerged from destruction.

So I begin this atemporal chronology of trauma and Korean diaspora and the making of the yanggongju with the Korean War because of its relationship to broader forms of collective trauma for Koreans and because this unresolved conflict is the underlying geopolitical rationale behind the system of prostitution around U.S. military bases in South Korea. In later chapters, I elaborate other moments that have also been significant in the creation of the yanggongju, while at the same time recognizing the salience of the war in the unconscious of Korean diaspora. I also want to point out that naming the Korean War as a starting point is somewhat paradoxical, because the war itself is a traumatic event that obscures notions of linear time. It is the first and last conflict of the cold war, whose beginning is uncertain and whose end has not yet arrived. It comes from some past but it is not over.

1. the forgotten war's monstrous family

June 25, 1950 is written in history as the day the Korean War broke out. According to official military history, the North attacked first. It was called a surprise attack, although some historians have now revised that accounting to claim that U.S. and South Korean forces had advance knowledge of the attack. And reporters who investigated the war as it was unfolding hypothesized that the U.S. did in fact know what the North had been planning. Decades after the end of fighting, incidents from 1950-1953 continue to surface, thereby resonating with current events, as if the traumas of the Korean war were already entangled with horrors that were yet to come.

“America’s First Vietnam”

I.F. Stone’s book-length investigative report entitled *The Hidden History of the Korean War* was first published in 1952 while the war was still raging, but its appearance was “met with an almost complete press blackout and boycott” (Stone 1952, viii). It vanished as soon as it could materialize. It is rumored that even copies of the Spanish translation were bought up en masse and destroyed by the U.S. embassy in Mexico. In 1970, a second edition was published with a publisher’s note that the re-release of the book was “urgently relevant to the Vietnam peace negotiations.” Prefacing the title on the cover of the 1970 edition are the words “America’s First Vietnam.”

“Korea’s My Lai”

In September 1999, the Associated Press broke the Pulitzer prize-winning story of the 1950 Nogun-ri massacre in which U.S. troops opened fire from the air and ground onto civilian refugees near the village of Nogun-ri. An estimated 400 villagers were shot dead. The media reports draw out striking similarities between the mass killings in Nogun-ri and the 1968 My Lai massacre of the Vietnam War. Other investigations follow this disclosure and there is speculation that Nogun-ri is merely “the tip of the iceberg” of the war crimes committed on the Korean peninsula (Park 2000). At least 37 other civilian massacres have come to surface in the southern part of Korea, as well as countless massacres in the North.

“In Korea, there is a Vieques called Maehyang-ri”

Maehyang-ri is a small fishing village located near the Koon-ni range, the largest U.S. Air Force bombing training site in Asia. During a bombing exercise on May 8, 2000, a U.S.A.F. fighter jet began losing control and in an attempt to rid its cargo of excess weight, dropped six 500-pound bombs over Maehyang-ri. In this most recent episode in the fifty-year long history of miscalculated bombings, 170 homes were damaged and 7 people injured. An anti-military activist from Vieques visited Maehyang-ri shortly after this incident and commented that “it is a situation that you have to see in order to believe...Before the struggle increased in Vieques [in 1978], we had a situation similar to the one in Maehyang-ri...” (Solidarity)¹⁰

These comparisons of Korea to Vietnam and Vieques speak to the ways in which the trauma of militarized violence can traverse boundaries of time and space so that the effects of military bombing practice can at once be embodied in two seemingly distinct geographical and historical locations: Maehyang-ri in 2000 and Vieques in 1978. They also illustrate how one occurrence can evoke another moment that has not yet happened. While Maehyang-ri is reminiscent of an earlier Vieques, Nogun-ri evokes a future My Lai. This temporal/spatial shift suggests a transgenerational haunting in which trauma can be passed unconsciously “not just down through the generations, but *across* them; and not inside one family, but creating a monstrous family of reluctant belonging...” (Rose 1996, 31) so that the

¹⁰ On April 18, 2004, U.S. military officials decided to close down the Koon-ni bombing range to U.S. bombing practice and transfer the control of Koon-ni from the U.S. Air force to Seoul by August 2005. This decision came shortly after 14 plaintiffs from Maehyang-ri won a lawsuit for injury and physical damage to homes and property.

past is future and Vieques is Maehyang-ri. A temporality in which past and future collide is the temporality both of an unconscious haunted by trauma, and of affect, in which the past opens directly onto the future because the present moment happens too quickly to be perceived. Events and their contexts are folded into the body as potentialities, and the present moment is only accessible to conscious “experience” through its traces (Massumi 2002).

Korean history articulated through the more familiar stories of Vietnam and Vieques also raises a series of questions about perception. Why is Korean history so little known in the U.S. and other parts of the world? Why is the official history of U.S.-Korea relations so riddled with holes, so full of silences that take fifty years to be heard? Are these stories told through Vietnam and Vieques because a history of conflict between South Korea and the U.S. is unintelligible on its own?

*The official script reads that the U.S. has always been a friend to South Korea.
A friend who has come to its rescue many times
to aid a country left demoralized by Japanese colonialism
to fight the communist north in the name of freedom and democracy
to rebuild a country left devastated by war
to grow its economy to miraculous proportions
to save its orphans to marry its women
to take them to the land of opportunity
where they are welcomed with open arms
and assimilate quickly.*

While in the U.S., unofficial histories remain largely unseen and unspoken, in Korea, stories and images of a traumatic history are too accessible, too visible, and can also create a state of not seeing. In either case, the object of analysis is outside the field of vision, requiring that one employ “radical new methods of seeing” such as “focusing

on personal memories and the dreamwork – on the unconscious aspects of looking...” (Eng 2001, 37).

The team of investigative reporters on the Nogun-ri story, for example, employed these methods of seeing because the incident had been covered up in the U.S. They found evidence that both the military and the media heavily censored reports documenting the deliberate destruction of civilian ways of life, or the targeted killing of civilians themselves. The A.P. reporters spent a year analyzing both the gaps in military reporting and the traces of evidence that remained after the erasures. They looked at the unpublished accounts of dead journalists who recorded the brutality of the Korean War only in personal diaries and letters to their families due to the level of media censorship during the 1950's. Beyond that, the A.P. reporters retrieved the bodily records of witnesses, both Korean and American— evidence in the form of nightmares, visions, auditory hallucinations, and nagging memories of things they wished they had not seen. The American veterans reported that their memories had been plagued by visions of the people they killed, the faces of people they knew were not the enemy, but who looked like them. Several of the vets talked about a little girl. She was one of the refugees who counter-intuitively ran towards the soldiers during the massacre, instead of hiding from them. “You should have seen those guys trying to kill that little girl with their machine guns,” one of the veterans recalled (Hanley, Choe, and Mendoza, 2001, 127). The man who ultimately claimed responsibility for killing her explained, “We understood that we were fighting for these people, but we had orders to fire on them, and we did” (Hanley et. al. 2001, 126). Edward Daily, another veteran who had been involved in the massacre returned

to Korea in 1999, shortly after the A.P. story broke, so that he could make peace with the victims. For almost fifty years, he said, he had not been able to let go of his grief and guilt for the lives he had taken, nor had he known that there were any survivors to whom he could apologize (Kim and Lee 1999). The 50-year-long silence around the civilian massacre and the psychic ties among the victims and perpetrators of the crime is another example of how transgenerational haunting has created “monstrous families of reluctant belonging” (Rose 1996, 31).

2. warning: we are here

My first contact with Americans came in the form of fliers dropped from planes. The fliers read “You are safe. We are here.”¹¹

--Chong Suk Dickman, *I Remember Korea*

Park Sun-yong was a young mother of two in July 1950 when she fled south from her home village towards No Gun Ri. She remembers that at the start of the war, she felt comforted that the U.S. soldiers were there to protect them. On the first day of the massacre, when she saw U.S. airplanes above, she believed the Americans had come to transport them to safety, but moments later the bombs dropped. And after that, the ground troops ordered the surviving refugees into a train trestle where they waited for several hours before the troops fired upon them again, this time with their guns. Those who tried to run were shot down, and so were those who waited under the bridge. A few survived, by escaping at the right moment, or hiding beneath the

¹¹ From a personal essay entitled “Thank You” by Chong Suk Dickman, a Korean woman who married an American serviceman and moved to the U.S. (See Granfield 2003).

bodies of the massacred. Sun-yong had watched her mother-in-law and her two-year old daughter die, and made a decision to try to save her remaining child. With her four-year-old son strapped to her back she ran away from the trestle and was fired at repeatedly. Both mother and child were hit and fell to the ground. "Blood was spreading from the small body of my child," she said. "That day I saw the two faces of America" (Hanley et. al. 2001, 139). Another survivor, Chun Choon-Ja, also experienced the stunning contrast of these two faces. Ten years old at the time, she witnessed the killings of her mother, grandfather and baby brother. Between rounds of shooting, the soldiers offered her something to eat. "Maybe chocolate," she said, "But I didn't eat it" (Hanley et. al. 2001, 138)

***"Warning: Yellow food parcels and cluster bomblets may look alike"
"...please exercise caution when approaching unidentified yellow
objects..."***

***"Aid is being dropped by plane at a very high altitude using large
parachutes... Do not stand directly below them...if you follow these
instructions you will not be injured... The United States cannot warn
you enough about the danger that you will put yourself in if you do
not stay away from the bundles until they land...These supplies are
being sent to help you..."¹²***

The two faces of America –murderous and benevolent loom large in the memories of Korean War survivors, although for some, one face is recalled more readily than the other. Perhaps the narratives of U.S. benevolence have proven more powerful than bodily evidence that suggests the contrary. Perhaps it is a defensive mechanism, what Freud called a protective fiction, yet it is about more than just an internalization of one story over and against another, but rather, this inability to see is

¹² From the transcript of U.S. psy-ops radio broadcasts during the beginning of the war in Afghanistan.

one of the workings of trauma. According to Cathy Caruth, "Traumatic experience... suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it..." so that many of those who witnessed the unjust killing of civilians are unable to make sense of it, or even to remember it (1996, 92).

When I ask her about the war, she says practically nothing. Sometimes she cannot remember, or does not want to remember, or remembers things that are conspicuously out of place. I do not know for sure what horrors even belonged to her, if she had been witness to her brother's death or to the deaths of neighbors or strangers traveling with her, if she was like the young people whose memories are documented on paper...

After fifty years, some of these memories have begun to be documented, usually by those of the post-war generations who have been haunted by the uncertainty of their pasts. But what about when the stories do not get documented in this way? When there is no one recording, or no speaker to speak of? How does one piece together a history that is always rendered incoherent by what's missing and unknowable except in fragmentary moments? Although the Korean War is known as "the Forgotten War" in the U.S., it is a war stored in body memory, even if not consciously remembered. The method of dreamwork does not just ask about one's memories, but it also retrieves bodily records and carves out spaces where flesh and paper meet...

... You are safe. We are here...

June 25, 1950. This was not the beginning of the war for those who lived near the border. The conflict was at least as old as the division of the peninsula, and the first

Korean's life was taken in September 1945, the same day that the Americans began occupying. The border fighting was especially intense right before the war. June 25th was not a beginning as much as it was an escalation towards the unresolvable.

Brother against brother gave way to superpower against superpower. And those who lived near the border had already learned to bear witness to how the splitting of land demanded blood.

Choon-ja lived in a southern province, more than 300 kilometers south of the 38th parallel. She was far away from the official first day of fighting, so she did not witness the first American bombs drop, and took for granted that the Americans were there only to help. She was nowhere near womanhood and so had not yet contemplated death—the departure of the spirit into the next life and the decomposition of the corpse. She certainly had never imagined the particular form the flesh takes when it is drained of blood and submerged in stagnant water. Over the days and months that followed June 25, 1950, she would come to know death. And loss. She would become intimate with the disarticulated limbs that she could only guess belonged to her mother, and the wholeness of her own body by contrast, the capacity of her own two hands to cradle the flesh already falling off her father's bones.

The official rhetoric in the North was that the U.S. troops were hostile invaders who had divided and occupied the land. In the South it was that they were allies who had come to liberate them. Some Koreans embraced one of these ideologies and many did not care for either regime, but they all had something in

common by the time the fighting had erupted into full-scale war. They were targets of American military strikes.

By mid-July of 1950, news came that the warfront was heading towards the southern provinces and that fleeing was the best chance for survival. There were military orders to evacuate villages that were near projected lines of combat. Families who lived in the path of war packed whatever belongings they could carry and left the rest behind or buried beneath their homes. Choon-ja was ten years old when everyone in her village started walking further south. At first, this move appealed to her sense of adventure, but as her legs grew heavier and her feet blistered, the excitement withered away. But at least they were getting out of harm's way... they did not know that by this time the U.S. military had already issued warnings that bands of refugees might be harboring enemies and should be treated accordingly. They did not know that orders from the highest command in Korea stated that regiments could exercise "complete authority... to stop all civilian traffic in any direction" and that "responsibility to place fire on them to include bombing" was in the hands of individual commanders. They did not know that "strafing fire from low-flying aircraft" was regarded by many officials as an effective means of "clearing a roadway" of civilians (Hanley et. al. 2001, 181).

Soon-hee was one year younger than Choon-ja during the summer of 1950. They did not know each other although they lived in the same southern province, only a few kilometers apart, but Soon-hee's hometown was large enough to be a town and Choon-ja's was only a village. Was this the variable that determined the path of war,

that Chang-nyung was a town and Im Ke Ri a village? Was this the variable that sent Choon-ja south towards her family's massacre and kept Soon-hee safe at home, safe for the time being?

Warning: yellow food parcels and cluster bomblets may look alike...

1950. "One midsummer morning in this year of the tiger, the Americans arrived in the valley..." (Hanley et. al. 2001, 102). This arrival was a premonition, a promise of something more to come. They arrived with exotic goods in hand, giving Marlboros only to the men because women weren't allowed to smoke. Chocolate was for the children, their grubby hands and voracious eyes devouring the Americans' good will. These were the same Americans, who weeks later would extinguish entire families of refugees, even against their own sense of ethics, simply because they were ordered to kill. Maybe they were the same Americans into whose arms Soon-hee would later run, into the arms of these men who soothed little girls' tears with candy, who tempted their desires for America.

Soon-hee's older brother had already disappeared and by the time her family fled, she was put in charge of caring for her brother's young son. She traveled by foot across mountains and rivers from Chang-nyung to Pusan, a nine-year-old carrying a three-year-old on her back. In the mountains she encountered the red army, and what startled her most was that many of the North Korean soldiers were women. In the mountains, the girls with guns let refugees pass unharmed. Or so it would be told years later in the memory of survivors, that the North Korean army, although

brutal in its own right, spared the lives of civilians. Maybe it was a recognition of kinship that these people belonged to one another that kept the North Korean soldiers from shooting. And this was a recognition that most Americans could not register. Some survivors would say that it was the Reds who gave them tips on how to survive strafing from aircraft. *Don't move and the pilot won't see you.* (Liem, Forthcoming). As much as those who lived south of the 38th had been told to fear the Reds, it was the communist soldiers, the teenage girls, who let refugees continue on their paths through the mountains. But it was the Americans who guarded the crossings at the river...

...You are safe...

Jin-Sok was fifteen in July 1950 when U.S. troops ordered his village to evacuate and flee, but when his family reached the crossing at the Naktong river, all the bridges had already been blown up. The only way to the other side was to wade across, but U.S. troops fired upon his group. His father was shot and died by the time they reached the riverbank. Koon-ja was eighteen in July 1950 when bullets showered around her so she withdrew from the water and left her group members floating upstream. She headed north and encountered Nogun-ri after the massacre, including the bodies of Hee-Sook's family, whom she did not know but who on another day also turned back at the river. Hee-sook was sixteen in July 1950 when her mother hid her in a kim-chi jar because American men were passing through their village. Weeks later Hee-sook encountered these men at the Naktong.

...Warning...We are here...

In 1950, 875 women were reported raped by U.S. soldiers stationed in Seoul (Halliday and Cumings, *Statistics on Crimes*). But the evidence of rape and killing at the crossing of the rivers also lives in the material of memory—in Jin-sok who still sees his father's blood coloring the river red, in Koon Ja who retreated from the bullets and backtracked to find the human remains of her neighboring village, in Hee-Sook who was invited to go to the other side because her young body was just what the soldiers were looking for. The memories of what happened at the river are stored in the flesh of the survivors, and in the flesh of the dead, and in the bloodied banks of the Nakdong.

It was not until almost fifty years after the cease-fire in 1953 that written evidence began to confirm these memories. Declassified U.S. military documents show that army units made calculations to destroy bridges, in order to block the movement of refugees, and in cases in which groups of refugees attempted to swim across anyways, deliberate decisions were made to kill them. Advanced directives ordered troops to “shoot all refugees coming across the river” (Hanley et. al. 2001, 188). Bridges were sometimes blown up at the very moment that refugees were crossing. *“August 2, 1950: It was a hard decision to make, for hundreds of refugees were lost when the bridge was demolished”*¹³ (Appleman 1961, 251).

¹³ From the five-volume series published by the U.S. office of the chief of military history that calls itself “the narrative of the Korean War.” (See Appleman.)

3. “burn ‘em out, cook ‘em, fry ‘em”¹⁴

Declassified memoranda show not only how destruction of civilian life was indiscriminate, but also how it was whitewashed by military officials. In a July 1950 memo whose subject heading was “Policy on Strafing Civilian Refugees,” Col. Turner Rogers of the U.S. Air Force expressed his concern that “Our operations involving the strafing of civilians is sure to receive wide publicity and may cause embarrassment to the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. government...” (Turner 1950). Rather than proceeding with discretion in order to prevent civilian casualties, the strafing of refugees, the massacre of civilians, and the destruction of homes continued. By the end of the summer of 1950, the military’s public relations office in Washington D.C. had heard rumors that U.S. bombers in Korea were “promiscuous” (Hanley et. al. 2001, 164). Ultimately, the Pentagon recommended that U.S. forces in Korea stop documenting the bombing of villages and begin calling them “military targets” in order to avoid negative press. One of the biggest challenges of fighting the Korean War was precisely that there were so few industrial and military targets, and most of these were destroyed within the first few months of fighting. Despite these challenges, U.S. Air Force operational summaries often reported “excellent results” in implementation of the “scorched earth policy” in which entire villages were routinely burned to the ground or given “saturation treatments” if they were believed to be enemy-occupied (Stone 1952, 256-258). Scorching the earth, as well as the people who inhabited it, was facilitated by the use of chemical weapons that were tried and

¹⁴ From the voiceover of the 1951 John Ford film, *This is Korea!*. The scene depicts the use of napalm against Korean civilians as John Wayne narrates.

tested a few years earlier against the Japanese. Thanks to these new technologies of killing, the scorched earth policy yielded excellent results:

The first damaging effect of a napalm bomb is, of course, a burn...

The second... is carbon monoxide poisoning...

The third... is a burn in the upper part of the windpipe...

The fourth is shock...

The fifth is an effect on the blood and internal organs...

The sixth is a change in the bones... (Hashimoto 1967)

Napalm was conceived in 1942 in a science laboratory at Harvard, and then the U.S. government contracted Dow Chemicals to develop it into a new form of warfare to be used during World War II. The U.S. used it extensively in three wars, dropped it over Japan, Korea and Vietnam, and then to a lesser extent, over Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War and the on-going "Operation Iraqi Freedom." This weapon is composed of a highly volatile sticky substance held inside an aluminum casing. When the substance combusts, the aluminum explodes and the "incendiary jelly" contained inside disperses and sets fire to everything with which it comes into contact. Over the years it was refined into "super napalm" a chemical weapon that would burn at increasingly higher temperatures, destroying the land and population more quickly with each war in which it was used.

Between 1950-1953, U.S. bombers dumped as much as 600,000 tons of napalm over the Korean peninsula, or in Churchill's words, it was "splashed" over the landscape. This was more napalm than was dropped over Japan, and comparable to the quantity that was dropped over Vietnam. However, the use of napalm would not become an issue of widespread public concern in the U.S. until years later, when Americans saw images of Vietnamese people being burned alive. When social protest

against the Vietnam War solidified, U.S. military practices during the “Forgotten War” began to resonate. But between 1950-1953, neither did the U.S. government exhibit restraint in their deployment of “weapons of mass destruction,” a term that came into common usage in military vocabulary during this time period, nor did the practices of warfare become public knowledge in the U.S. On November 30, 1950, President Truman held a press conference in which he admitted that since the beginning of the war, he had been planning to drop atomic bombs over Korea, but even as he was making this confession, he sent secret orders to the Strategic Air command “to be prepared to dispatch without delay medium bomb groups to the Far East... this augmentation should include atomic capabilities.” (As quoted in Halliday and Cumings 1988, 123). The plans Truman disclosed during his press conference sent murmurs of discontent through the international community, but despite the generalized disapproval of atomic warfare, the American public remained unaware of the mundane practices of the war. They were not aware of the indiscriminate bombing of villages, schools, and hospitals, the rape and massacre of civilians, the burning of fields, or the torture and execution of suspected communists, nor were they aware of the particular damage that new technologies of war inflicted upon the body and upon the population. The policies of scorched earth and the widespread use of napalm was unquestioned, and even celebrated, as in the American war propaganda of the time. *Burn ‘em out, cook ‘em, fry ‘em...*

poison-and-burn pathology...

The people who were being fried and cooked were gooks, and as some veterans and war correspondents recall, “every man’s dearest wish was to kill a gook.” (Halliday and Cumings 1988, 88). According to military psychologist Dave Grossman, it is racial difference and a belief in one’s moral superiority, perhaps above all else, that hinders the kinds of guilt responses that are normally exhibited when one human being takes the life of another. The perception of “the gook,” constructed by both military rhetoric and 1950s American popular culture, was that of a racially and morally inferior class of beings who needed to be saved in the south and extinguished in the north, yet because of the constant movement of refugees across boundaries of conflict, north and south became virtually indistinguishable. The very Koreans who were purportedly being saved from communism were massacred by U.S. and U.N. forces and held as political prisoners by the South Korean and American armies. When British reporter, James Cameron raised concerns with the U.N. Commission about the extreme human rights violations he witnessed against political prisoners, the Commission’s response was “Most disturbing, yes; but remember, these are Asian people, with different standards of behavior...” (as quoted in Halliday and Cumings 1988, 92). These perceived differences facilitated the institution’s capacity to let die, and the soldier’s capacity to kill.

Although many veterans of both the Korean and Vietnam wars were haunted by the knowledge that they had killed innocent people, and others refused to carry out “special missions” involving the murder of civilians, there were some whose willingness and desire to kill was almost pathological. One Vietnam vet, for example,

talked about how he experienced a perverse pleasure in killing, in spewing bullets and penetrating the body of the other. By the end of his tour of duty he had become addicted to killing. "...it can consume you," he said. "...just like sex can" (Grossman 1995, 137). Other soldiers may have experienced indifference rather than pleasure in killing civilians. After all, "What's a couple of gooks? A couple of goddamn gooks?"¹⁵

The poison-and-burn pathology of napalm is such that its combustion changes the chemistry of the air, so one need not be hit by the substance itself to be killed. Napalm produces lethal levels of carbon monoxide, deoxygenating the air so that everyone caught in a strike zone dies of asphyxiation almost immediately. If one does survive the poison, napalm can generate so much heat that breathing the air near a strike zone can burn the inside of the mouth, the throat, the lungs. And direct contact on the skin results in a combustion of the flesh that penetrates the body quickly and deeply, so that even after the burn has been extinguished on the surface, the tissues continue to spread fire...

first degree: the outer skin only
second degree: the inner layer of the outer skin
third degree: the inner layer of the inner skin
fourth degree: the deepest hypodermic tissues
fifth degree: the muscles¹⁶

¹⁵ From Thomas Anderson's novel, *Your Own Beloved Sons*. After having executed two North Korean prisoners, the protagonist shrugs of the killing by asking, "What's a couple of gooks? A couple of goddamn gooks?"

¹⁶ Classification of Napalm burns, from the expert testimony of Masahiro Hashimoto, Vietnam War Crimes Tribunal: Session 2, Roskilde, Denmark, 1967

Napalm ignites at such high temperatures, in excess of 6000 degrees Fahrenheit, that first degree burns from Napalm contact are impossible. In most cases, the substance burns its victims through the skin to the muscle, and through the muscle to the bone. *"There is a phenomenon of bone-ashes dropping away and burnt bones fusing together or disappearing..."* (Dreyfus 1967). Expert testimonies from the Vietnam War Crimes Tribunal describe Napalm as "a means of extensive indiscriminating destruction..." (Dreyfus 1967). Ironically, the remains of these bombs also served as a means of survival for Korean War refugees who searched for aluminum casings that were only partially exploded so that they could use the residues of the napalm jelly as cooking fuel. Their will to survive outweighed the risk of getting burned.

June 27, 1950: President Truman addressed the nation about the United States' involvement in Korea, in which he framed all U.S. involvement in Korea as a defense against the threat of communism. For the Truman administration, the events of June 25, 1950 justified a permanent military draft and the quadrupling of military spending over the next three years. During this speech, Truman also announced his decision to securitize all U.S. military posts in Asia, thereby accelerating the dispatch of troops not only to Korea, but also to the Philippines and French Indo-China. Korea was an impetus, and a testing ground, for Vietnam. Fifteen years later, a scorched earth policy would be re-deployed in Vietnam. "The American forces that poured into South Vietnam...soon viewed all 'gooks' as potential enemies..."(Hanley et. al. 2001, 225).

1950: 8th Cavalry Regiment Log

- 0745 "U.S. bombers committed a saturation bombing of Seoul, killing 1096 civilians, leaving 1,201...wounded and rendering more than 7000 homeless" (Stone 1952, 257)

Results: excellent.

- 0900 "The inhabitants throughout the village and in the fields were caught and killed and kept the exact postures they had held when the napalm struck—a man about to get on his bicycle, fifty boys and girls playing in an orphanage, a housewife strangely unmarked, holding in her hand a page torn from a Sears-Roebuck catalogue... There must be almost two hundred dead in the tiny hamlet." (Stone 1952, 258)

Results: excellent.

- 1015 An investigation into U.S. war crimes finds that the U.S. deployed bio-terrorist tactics, such as the air-dropping of relief goods contaminated with smallpox. ("GIs Mass Killings" Joint White Paper).

Results: excellent.

- 1120 The targeting of a civilian population would be a strategy that the U.S. military "perfected" during the Korean war, leaving at least 3 million civilians, or ten percent of the peninsula's population, dead.

Results: excellent.

June 25, 1950: the horrors that began to unravel on the Korean peninsula were already reminiscent of a future of U.S. military domination in Asia, flashing forward to images of napalmed children running through the streets of Saigon, naked and burnt to the bone.

"Every deep burn is a wound that is vulnerable" (Dreyfus 1967). With a burn the magnitude of what napalm inflicts, the growth of new skin begins only at the outer edges. The wound attempts to heal itself from the periphery. New tissue grows

around the outside, but it is not the type of tissue that can stretch itself over the wound, no matter how much time has passed. The wound heals slowly, and sometimes not at all. The scar tissue that grows on the edge is extremely fragile, making the wound susceptible to being re-opened again and again, with little provocation.

Every deep burn is a wound that is vulnerable. It heals sometimes not at all, but this state of never healing, of never making progress, is not even the worst-case scenario because the wound has the capacity to spawn new pathologies. The trauma can spread into other parts of the tissue, into the blood, generating infectious agents that attack the immune system and resulting in what burn pathologists call secondary death. *Such deaths can appear long after the trauma itself...* (Dreyfus 1967).

4. air raid: by orders of the U.S. military, you are instructed to evacuate

Up to ninety percent of the population of the Korean peninsula survived the war, but more pessimistic estimates, particularly those coming from North Korean sources, say that it was closer to eighty percent. But what does it mean to live through such massive devastation? Perhaps the most enduring effect of the way in which civilians were targeted, was the scale of their displacement. A classified report issued to President Truman after the first year of the war estimated the number of homes destroyed at 400,000. Even eighteen months after the signing of the armistice, 4 million Koreans remained homeless. One of the most salient aspects of the Korean War in the accounts of both historians and survivors is the relentless bombing led by the U.S. *"Americans were bombing every day and night. The Korean War was a*

bombing war ... North Korean army did not have much power to destroy, but American airplanes were indiscriminate, just flattened everything” (Liem, In Press).

In this respect, the U.S. displayed more force than any nation involved in the war. They had the technology to not only destroy the land and the people, but perhaps more significantly to spread fear through the population. “The USA had complete control of the air: everyone and everything that moved was subjected to constant bombing and strafing. People could move only at night...” (Halliday and Cumings 1988, 144). The knowledge that one might be killed at any moment kept millions of refugees in a state of constant displacement, on the move without any particular destination other than beyond the reach of bombs. The U.S. military also made careful calculations about the psychological impact of bombing, especially in the North. Pyongyang, for example, was the target of “operation insomnia,” a bombing campaign designed to “exhaust the population.” The U.S. bombed continuously for forty days and nights, and by the end, only ten percent of the population of the city of Pyongyang remained. No doubt, many of them died, but many more fled south and would eventually renounce their identifications with the North for fear of being summarily executed. The displacement of civilians was not just about the movement of bodies, but about psychic exile in which survivors bear the lasting effects of trauma and are unable to be settled in the present moment. *“All that happens has already happened, will come to appear as the always already happening... entangled and extended through time through the force of repetition...”* (Butler 2000, 64). The bearers of traumatic effects of war are in a constant state of emergency.

So I've gone around in circles...

From Japan where she was born, to Chang-nyung, the town that her family called “home,” down to Pusan after the evacuation, back to Chang-nyung, and then to Pusan again to look for work. From the camptown at the naval base, to rural America where her GI husband was born and raised and lived practically his whole life, back to Korea again, and again, until finally she could no longer return. But this small town would not be where the journey ended.

It was forty years after the end of the Korean War, the year she moved cross country for the first time (the first of three) after her second divorce in three years to the American, her second divorce but one of countless separations. She moved into a small one-bedroom apartment in a New Jersey suburb, a quiet neighborhood except for the routine sounding of an alarm that neither of us could identify. The noise did not increase in volume or frequency but it grew increasingly more disturbing. Any external noise bothered her because it interfered with the sounds only she could hear, but this noise was particularly problematic. She began having flashbacks of air raids when she was nine-years old. Although all reasoning told her that it was not 1950 and we were not in Korea, the siren told her that the bombers were coming. During an air strike, civilians have to make quick decisions about whether it is better to seek shelter and possibly get caught in a strike zone or run and be exposed. Of course, in order to really calculate one's chance of survival, one would need to know the exact moment of impact and the type of bombs used, and civilians are not privy to this information. The decision, then, is always a gut reaction, except in cases when verbal commands ordering civilians to evacuate are radioed from above. The siren, and the voice coming from the radio, told her to run.

Trauma evacuates memory. It perpetually disturbs one's sense of being settled as memory is poised to take flight whenever it is threatened, when there is a sense of a trauma returning, or a new trauma that is about to happen. This sense of impending catastrophe is an illusion, however, because the trauma never quite arrives. It never quite arrives because it has already happened, it is already in the present from some past that is not yet over. The traumatized subject is continually uprooted. She might seem to be in a familiar place, in the sense that she has been there before, and will most likely return there again and again through the force of repetition. Yet this place is neither an origin nor a final destination, keeping her suspended between a failed remembering and an incomplete forgetting. There is no memory that she can speak because trauma is that which is in excess of frames of understanding. It is about the impossibility of speaking or knowing one's memory, of knowing what really happened. Yet memory is also not bound by the subject who forgets. It materializes in the most unlikely places, or fixes itself to things for which there is no logical connection to the traumatic event. It yields an investment in objects, an overvaluation as Freud called it, when something becomes so full of desire and longing and fear that it is hardly recognizable.

"Let it die," she said. It had been a gift, this potted wildflower, a housewarming present from her first granddaughter. The house was her second residence in this part of the country, to which she returned after her third and final divorce from the American. Some would say that she was incapable of caring for the plant, or for any living thing. Or maybe it was not a question of her capacity or incapacity for sustaining the life of another as much as a willful refusal to allow this particular life to carry on. But killing it through neglect proved difficult and she could not bring herself to inflict

direct violence upon it. Even when left outside and untended, it hung on to life. In the wild, it continues to grow through winter and spring, producing new flowers month after month. Some thought her insensitive, even vindictive, for allowing the plant to wither away like that, especially in the presence of the child who gave it to her. I asked her for an explanation, expecting that if she offered one, it would make sense to no one. "The name" she said. "I hate the name... Cyclamen... It sounds like cycle." The plant survived most of the winter and rotted into the soil by spring.

Summer of 1950 was unusually hot. This is how survivors of the war remember it, regardless of what temperatures actually registered on the thermometer. It was the first "hot war" of the cold war, and entire villages were evacuated. Families gathered children and grandparents at a moment's notice and carried sacks of rice and pieces of their homes on their backs. They walked south along paths that would soon be well-worn by the millions of displaced. They packed up and traveled down the length of the peninsula towards Pusan and northward again, waded across rivers, watched their children drown, finally to return to nothing but earth that had been scorched. And the heat that summer was particularly memorable for what it did to the flesh that littered the landscape.

During the days and weeks after Nogun-ri, the few survivors returned to the site of the massacre to gather the remains of their family members. Hee-Sook was sixteen in the summer of 1950. She escaped after witnessing the deaths of her mother, father, sister and niece. Perhaps it was the few words in English she called out to the Americans that prevented them from shooting her. She continued walking southward, dazed, hungry, and encrusted with blood, her white dress turned stiff and brown. She

came to the Naktong River, where the American military were selectively allowing refugees to cross the river, but only if they were young and female. "People were saying everywhere that GIs did bad things to young women" (Hanley et. al. 2001, 189). Hee-Sook turned around and walked back to Nogun-ri.

It had rained a lot that summer so there were pools of stagnant bloodied water that contained the dead. There she waded through decomposing corpses and found the body of her father. "It seemed that the bones and flesh moved separately...I virtually scooped up the remains of my father—like mucus—with the cup of my bare hands." (Hanley et. al., 191) "The heat and humidity, the rain and the insects were all rapidly breaking down the bodies...one nine year-old girl returned to the scene and saw here dead mother's pregnant belly burst open, the fetus liquefying on the ground..." (Hanley et. al., 192)

after the war I returned... but there was no one. No village. No home. Our house and fields were burned to the ground...

To what did she return after this journey deeper into the south? After having avoided the most intense lines of combat in the area that the U.S. Army called "the Pusan perimeter," she made her way back to Chang-nyung. On rare occasions when she can remember anything of the war, she tells a story about being lost. She is nine or ten, depending on whether her age is measured in American or Korean years. Something happens that makes her disappear from her family's sight. Maybe they are crossing a river when the bullets order them to go back, maybe the air raid siren is screaming at them to run and she goes off in the wrong direction, and among the dispersal of bodies and particles of dust, she is lost. The details of how it happens are left blank.

*In this story there is only an outline— fleeing, getting lost, and returning. The return was almost a year later, she says, because three seasons had come and gone. She does not say what was left in Chang-nyung when she made her way back in the spring. She says only that the photographs were destroyed, and that is why she has never shown them to me. Other families had enough warning to bury their belongings beneath their homes before leaving, but not hers. **After the war... there was no one. No village. No home.** Only remnants of burnt family photographs and bone ash seeping into the ground.*

In the years following the massacre, residents in and around Nogun-ri reported occurrences that might have been strange had they not been so frequent. Farmers dug up human bones. Villagers saw the flickering of “ghost flames.” And the spirits were most restless in the summer. In Korean folklore, *hon-bul*, or ghost flames, often appear at the site of a massacre or unjust killing. There are theories about *hon-bul* that go beyond the supernatural. Some explain *hon-bul* as a visual hallucination caused not by mental disorder but by malnutrition. Others say that they’re sparked when warm rain and wind agitate the bones buried in mass graves, causing phosphorous to ignite (Hanley et. al. 2001, 244). The survivors of the massacre were haunted by *hon-bul*, the ghost flames that were stirred up each summer near Nogun-ri, and by *han*, the unresolved grief and rage of having been witness to their families’ slaughter. In their futile attempts to assimilate the horrors that took place before them, survivors are caught in a cyclical re-living of the traumatic moment.

Sun-yong dreaded the cycling of seasons. Cold weather offered her some relief, but summers were heavy with the promise of pain. When it was warm, she

could no longer block out the visions of her 4-year old's body perfectly still except for his hair trembling in humid air and his blood draining into the earth. The forward march of time was disrupted every summer by fragments of July 1950. She perceived things that, by other norms of perception, were not really there to be seen or heard. Her son's bloody foot. His voice crying "um-ma." The white cloth bag that the U.S. soldiers placed his body in as she lay immobilized on a stretcher, watching.

The forced repetition of this scene agitates the han that still reverberates within and beyond Sun-yong's body. If trauma is that which exceeds frames of reference for understanding, then it cannot be assimilated into a coherent narrative about oneself. For Sun-yong, images of her dead child were not just absorbed by the eyes, but by the skin and nerves so that July 1950 permeates the cellular memory of survivors like Sun-yong, and those to whom their trauma has been transmitted. While the traumas of war and militarism are often unremembered events rooted in lack and loss-- the massive loss of lives and homes and the lack of public record about the atrocities committed-- they also operate at the cellular level of affect. The primary means by which the unassimilable of trauma and grief become incorporated is through the very matter of the body.

The sound was familiar, yet nothing she had actually heard before. The sound signaled an emergency and her body responded exactly as it had been trained to do when she was nine years old. She began having flashbacks of the air raid sirens screaming at her to make a decision. Hide or keep on running. It was forty years after the end of the war when she stopped going outside because the prospect of being exposed induced severe panic attacks. But the thought of being trapped inside terrified her just as much so she took drastic

measures to fortify an escape route, breaking the glass out of the window leaving only a frame, so that in the event of an emergency all she had to do was jump. There were times, however, when she grew uncertain as to whether she had executed the best plan of action, especially as mild September days gave way to dark nights of winter. But the empty pane provided some relief. At least she knew that she was prepared, that at any given moment she would be ready for evacuation.

The failure to assimilate trauma is repeated through cycles of time, but trauma is unfaithful to these patterns in that it is also triggered by the senses. The sensation of heat, the sound of sirens, the smells and tastes of war incite the reliving of trauma and send the present moment into flight...

5. relief: ...our bodies were purged...

I still remember the stamp on the top of the drums, the first English letters I ever saw: U.S.A... we drooled at the thought of so much food...

--Chong Suk Dickman

During the 1950's the popular press promoted images of Americans overseas as essentially generous and kind. "GIs in Korea were photographed giving chewing gum to children. American leaders traveled abroad with candy bars and soft drinks in their hands to distribute during photo opportunities..." (Lutz and Collins). Although the U.S. is producer and distributor of the American Dream discourse, this distribution rests upon a mutually lived-out rescue fantasy, which is not only constructed through ideological impositions, but also through sensory experiences that register at the level of matter. The way in which relief goods emerged from the

rubble as symbols of American luxury and freedom demonstrates how benevolence is also a tool of domination that is linked to ideals of a racialized moral superiority. But just as sensory perception can be a site of colonization, it can also be an important site of resistance precisely in that it is unpredictable.

My mother told me that when I was a kid during the American military occupation I used to suck on hard candy from the relief goods until my tongue turned red. So she made me spit out the candy that colored the inside of my mouth. She'd get mad and say, "Do those little sugary things fill you up?" When I think about it now, it was our poverty that made her angry...I got money from a GI for the first time, and suddenly I remembered the [candy from the relief goods] I ate when I was young. I realized vaguely that I'd gone back to where I started from... (Kang 1989, 17-18)

The speaker of this narrative is a woman whose memories of paid sex with a GI and U.S. humanitarian aid bleed into one another. This image evokes a longing that is instantiated in the body. New sensations and pleasures come to be sedimented as body memory outwardly expressed as yearning, horror, and shame. It is only fitting that the speaker here is a military prostitute, in that the yanggongju is an embodiment of Koreans' collective ambivalence towards America. At the same time she transmits a trauma that is a threatening reminder of the horrors of war and U.S. militarism that lurk behind the American dream.

At one moment she says the war was too terrible to think about and at another, she says it wasn't so bad. She offers no narrative about her life as a refugee child during the war, or about her life after the war, or about her work at a U.S. military base, where she met her American husband.

"In 1953, the Korean peninsula was a smoldering ruin..." and the U.S. army stayed there to offer relief to those good Koreans south of the 38th parallel who did not

publicly espouse communism (Cumings 1981, xix). They provided relief in the form of food—staples like rice and exotic treats like powdered milk and chocolate. They re-built the schools and hospitals they had blown up and built orphanages and shelters for the people whose homes and families they destroyed. They helped re-construct the economy to the extent that it was soon centered around U.S. military bases. In 1953, the peninsula was a smoldering ruin, and the U.S. army stayed there for years on end so they could continue to safeguard the good Koreans from the regimes of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, so they could maintain their dominance in Northeast Asia, so they could have a training ground for generations of young men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces.

In 1953, she was twelve. She was not yet a woman, but there were few places left for her to go. In 1953, U.S. military bases were bases of survival for the Koreans who were left alive at the end of the war, so she, like other Koreans gravitated towards the Americans. Of course, the Americans were more likely to be generous to Koreans who spoke English, and it would be several years before she began studying English, painstakingly memorizing one word at a time from a dictionary and later practicing them with the men who bought her drinks at the bar. But there were already some English words that anyone could identify, words that came to be associated with the strange-looking men riding on military vehicles tossing candy and sugar-coated words into crowds of children, children who could have been their own flesh and blood. Sometimes they threw out words in Korean too—"saekshi" (young woman), which they pronounced "sexy." She was not yet a woman and she could not yet speak English, but maybe, like other girls who met American husbands, she knew how to entertain. Other girls as young as she did find work at the bases. They danced on stage and let the men admire their pigtailed and call

them by American nicknames or by Korean words that meant "virgin girl." I do not know what happened in 1953, but at some point in the future, she would entertain the American men who stayed there to provide the Koreans with relief.

When the barrels were opened, we found that we had an endless supply of powdered milk... This foreign aid, being foreign to our systems, caused all who drank it to suffer for days with diarrhea. Though our bodies were purged of all that we had, we were grateful
(Dickman 2003)

*She was taught to be grateful for everything the Americans had given them. Grateful for their kindness and mercy. Grateful for their protection. Grateful for the opportunity to entertain them in the GI clubs. Grateful for the rations and the powdered milk that violated her body. The substance did not just react with her digestive tract, but it was equally violent to her tongue. She hated the taste, even as she showed signs of gratitude. **The taste of it**, she said, **reminds me of war.***

Within her own being she is fraught with contradictory impulses, to be grateful towards the very thing that tastes like war. The yanggongju is the figure upon which Koreans' desire and resentment is projected, who carries the violent and intimate history of U.S. military involvement in Korea folded in her body, who disseminates the contradictions of this history throughout Korean diaspora. The primary contradiction is that the Korean War is forgotten in the U.S. and not over in Korea. But the trauma of war embodied by the yanggongju does not allow for this forgetting to be complete, even if rescue is that which gets remembered over and against slaughter.

ity and peace

*We are well aware of the American role in making the Korean peninsula peaceful, and we know that the presence of the American military forces is essential to our prosperity and peace. We will never forget you for what you did for us.*¹⁷

--Dr. Suk San Kim

*I have never seen such devastation... After I looked at that wreckage and those thousands of women and children and everything, I vomited... If you go on indefinitely, you are perpetuating a slaughter such as I have never heard of in the history of mankind*¹⁸

--General MacArthur

6. Out of the ruins...

The Korean War was a war of near total destruction. General Curtis LeMay, who Halliday and Cumings describe as the “architect” of the “genocidal air war” reported that “...over a period of three years or so...we burned down every town in North Korea, and in South Korea, too.” (1988, 118). Half of the population of the peninsula was either killed, wounded, missing, or permanently separated from their families. Those that remained were left homeless. But out of the ruins of catastrophic loss and evacuated memory, emerge the remains that “animate history through the creation of bodies and subjects” (Eng and Kazanjian 2003, 2). The magnitude of the destruction of the Korean War as well as the failure to resolve it solidified the grounds for the emergence of the yanggongju.

¹⁷ From a speech delivered by Dr. Suk San Kim, President of the Korea Welfare Foundation, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the armistice agreement and the ribbon-cutting of the Korean War Children’s Memorial in Bellingham, Washington. (2003).

¹⁸ from MacArthur’s statement to Congress after he was fired in 1951, as quoted in Halliday and Cumings 1988, 152.

A previous incarnation of this figure, namely the comfort woman, already set the stage for a system of prostitution for the U.S. military, but the poverty of post-war Korea sent millions of Koreans to the U.S. army bases in search of livelihood, many of whom were women and girls who entertained soldiers, while others informally exchanged dates for American goods and dollars. A whole economy sprang up, and military prostitution continues to be a crucial part of camptown life in Korea. The yanggongju, as camptown prostitute, has been perhaps the most salient memory of Korea for generations of American men who have served there, while for Koreans the yanggongju has been perhaps the most salient figure of conflict in the U.S.-Korea relationship. She enacts a generalized over-investment in the American dream and, even in her silence, threatens to expose the nightmare beneath the glossy image.

There is almost no memory that she can speak. When I ask her about the war, she says practically nothing. Sometimes she cannot remember, or does not want to remember, or remembers things that are conspicuously out of place. I do not know for sure what horrors even belonged to her, if she had been witness to her brother's death or to the deaths of neighbors or strangers traveling with her, if she was like the young people whose memories are documented here, who at every turn encountered bodies that were burned or ripped apart, who came to embody the ripped apartness that was the Korean War, whether that war began on June 25, 1950 or in 1945 with the division of the peninsula. She has never recounted any visions of bone ashes falling from napalmed children, or pregnant bellies burst open, or ghost flames flickering at the site of a massacre. The only detail she has ever elaborated about the war was about her journey through the mountains. There were North Korean soldiers there, young women who looked like her older sisters. The vision of these girls with guns, she says, is the most horrifying image she can remember from the war. It was so terrible that she has been unable to forget it. It was

terrible, she says, because women are not supposed to fight. A woman in combat was beyond her frame of reference for what counted as appropriate female behavior, but then again, so was entertaining American men in bars. But this, she does not talk about either. She does not talk about it, but out of her silence, something else emerges...

out of the ruins, emerge the remains...

“In 1953, the Korean peninsula was a smoldering ruin... and still the war that ended in 1953 resolved nothing...” (Cumings 1981, xix). In a state of psychic exile, the yanggongju circulates the unresolved grief and rage from the Korean war throughout the diaspora. She has gone around in circles, from north to south, from the village to the city, from the camptown to America. She has gone around in circles re-living the war and searching for the American dream. Her *han* takes flight with her own restless movement along these lines of travel and beyond.

Interlude

Six: post-war

She is squatting in a field of cucumbers. Perhaps the one her family used to farm before the occupation. Thirsty, she plucks one off the vine and sucks its juice. No one is there to tell her not to eat it. Mother father sister brother, all gone.

Dream image rattles itself into her waking life, for the first time since.
Parched memory awakening...

... A tall figure walks steadily in her direction, gesturing for her to come close. There are no buildings left in which to hide. All that remains is rubble and ash and empty space. She is crouching in his shadow and for the first time, her child body is not small enough. It wraps around itself, wishes it could shrink into nothing. "I-ri wah," he says. "I-ri wah." Her eyes unsqueeze to let in the image. It is a migoon soldier with hair that looks like sunshine. He bends down in front of her and extends his hand, offering her a tiny package wrapped in shiny silver paper. She accepts not knowing what it is, what it could do to her, this brown bitter candy that unfolds petals on her tongue...

Powdered milk. Canned sausages. Taster's Choice. Non-dairy creamer. Hershey's chocolate. Chewing gum. Cigarettes. Relief goods. That's what her older sister Ok-hee brought home after her first time at the base. Grandmother looked in the box and snorted.

"This?? They expect us to live off of this? You bring shame to us all so we can have someone else's leftovers?"

A couple months later when grandmother filed the missing person's report with the military police, they just laughed it off.

"She probably ran off with a GI. Don't worry, Grandma, she'll send you a postcard from America."

It is a strange perfume, the burning blood. Many times its scent has permeated memory, since before she had the capacity to name it. In the labor camps

and comfort stations. In the scorched-earth battlefields that were once villages. Behind the camptown bars where bones and teeth turn up in trash incinerators. Even now she does not call it what it is. She does not call it anything. It is just there, another element in the air. The smell the taste the breath stored in the folds of her skin.

Seven: the years that follow

She was 14 when Ok-Hee un-ni disappeared. She searched for traces of her lost sister at the bar where Ok-Hee worked but the bar lady told her nothing useful, just complained that Ok-Hee still had a debt to pay. The men called out in their broken Korean. "Saek-si! Ir-i wah...Come here, little lady. Come sit in uncle's lap."

Trickles of cold run along the curve of her ankle forming puddles of pink water in the basin. She works the rough cloth in a circular motion, methodically scrubbing the stains. Dots of red appear and melt away against a pink and brown background. She opens the faucet, wrings out the cloth under icy water, and begins again. She increases pressure and focuses on the task at hand, repeating each action until the water runs clear.

Ten years and two babies later the taste of the first time is still fresh in her mouth. There were three of them, barely older than she, and they paid premium because she was young and a virgin, but that only settled half of Ok-hee's debt. She has learned not to pay attention to all the minor details that make this job unpleasant. She tunes out their grunts and groans and "oh baby's" with incantations of her own.

First son, he will be wealthy millionaire doctor or lawyer or banker and he will be go to Harvard like his father. Mang-nei, she will be president of the United States of America. First thing I do when I get to America: have a meeting with President Lyndon B. Johnson to convince him to change the rules. Even though

mang-nei was not born in America, she will make good president. What time is it? Almost mang-nei's birthday. Almost 1:07...januaryseventhjanuaryseventhjanuaryseventhjanuaryseventhjanuaryseventhjanuaryseventh...

No one called her children by their given names any more. Her first child was named George after the American movie star she most loved and to her ears it was romantic, but to most Koreans it was too many nonsensical syllables. “Jo-roo-juh.” She named the girl after the British model Twiggy in hopes that it might bring her luck and fame but it brought only contempt from those who hated seeing that little white face staring back at them, a taunting reminder of their own inferiority. They could not resist mocking this name “twiggy” that sounded remarkably like the racial epithet for a half-American. So she resigned herself to calling them simply by their birth order—first son and mang-nei. After mang-nei, she didn’t bother to name the babies any more, but because she knew they were not truly hers. No one wanted to marry a prostitute with a bunch of kids so she had to sacrifice some of them in order to save the others. She had considered sending mang-nei away but had faith in love and believed that mang-nei’s father would return any day and take them to America. First son got to stay because he was first son. Few women are lucky enough to give birth to boys on the first try.

Chapter Three

Fractured Nationalisms: Tracing the Dis/appearances of the Yanggongju

She allows herself caught in their threading, anonymously in their thick motion in the weight of their utterance... she would become, herself, demarcations... (Cha 1982, 4)

Arrest the machine that purports to employ democracy but rather causes the successive refraction of her none other than her own (Cha 1982, 89).

An armistice agreement to bring a temporary halt to the Korean War was signed on July 27, 1953. It was an agreement that would put the peninsula in a permanent state of war temporarily suspended.¹⁹ After the mass slaughter of civilians and the burning of villages, it appeared as if there was nothing left but millions of displaced Koreans to whom the U.S. and international relief organizations would come to rescue, particularly if they lived south of the 38th parallel. Bruce Cumings notes that the biggest tragedy of the Korean War was not the millions killed, or the millions more separated from their families, but that despite this destruction, nothing was resolved. In geopolitical terms, nothing was resolved, yet the war was productive in other ways.

It seemed as if nothing remained after the fighting was suspended in 1953, but out of the ashes of destruction, emerged this figure, although this was not her first appearance. She was there already, this woman who was the body of the divided and dominated nation, the body assembled and re-assembled by a fractured nationalism. This figure of the yanggongju emerged not only from the ruins of the war, but also

¹⁹ The armistice was signed by North Korea and China on one side, and the U.S. led U.N. forces on the other. South Korea, because of their subordinate status to the U.S., was not a signatory.

from the ghostly vestiges of Japanese colonialism imprinted upon the bodies of the women who were taken to serve as sexual laborers for the Japanese and upon the psyches of those who participated in and were shamed by this aspect of Korean history. The yanggongju, as the woman who sexually services American men, was first sighted during the Korean war, yet her figure was already there in the form of the “comfort woman.” The yanggongju’s beginning is uncertain, and the story of her development is ambiguous. Both the recent literature on camptown prostitution and the narratives of comfort women and of early generations of camptown women suggest that there is no clear delineation between one system and another, or one body and another (Cumings 1992, Howard 1995, Lie 1995, Moon 1997). When the U.S. occupied Korea in 1945, they also occupied the comfort stations that were set up in Korea by the Japanese, taking over the women who were stationed there as well. And the women who were returning from Japan to Korea in 1945 and later, to what did they return? Many of them did not speak of their experiences in the comfort stations, but among those who did, some say that they had nothing to return to other than more of the same.

The yanggongju was already there prior to the war, as a potentiality to be unfolded, or as a shadowy outline to be filled in by the materiality of the war and the agency of trauma. This figure has gone through various transformations, from her early days as the struggling war survivor to later incarnations of sexual “ambassador” and symbol of the anti-U.S. base movement. While these transformations do correspond to certain critical moments in Korean history, particularly around issues of U.S.-Korea relations, they do not simply follow a linear trajectory of movement. The

yanggongju is brought into different modes of being through multiple contestations. She is a figure that is diffracted through the tensions and desires around competing nationalist discourses in Korea, and at the same time she expresses the woundedness of Korean nationalism. As a nation that is endlessly divided, the quest for a unified homeland can be read as a collective repetition of trauma, and nationalism as an assemblage of wounds. The yanggongju, as a figure of collective trauma, as well as a symbol around which nationalist struggles are waged, is the ghost of a haunted history of U.S.-Korea relations. She has been variously deployed by different nationalist movements, being kept behind the scenes at some moments and publicly displayed at others. Although among the general population in the U.S., this figure is virtually unknown, in Korea she alternates between being overexposed and hidden in camptown ghettos.

This chapter traces the dis/appearances of the yanggongju through twentieth-century Korea and beyond to work through some of the ways in which the fantasy of nation and the trauma embodied in the figure of the yanggongju are interimplicated. In the repeated and frustrated attempts for unification and independence, the figure that emerges as the raped woman/sexual laborer serves as projection screens for collective unconscious. In taking a position that the different forms of militarized sexual labor in Korea are continuous, I also take up how the yanggongju is haunted by the comfort woman, and thus how these ghosts are affective bodies produced and staged for nationalist struggles. They are ghostly bodies that haunt one another, along with nation and diaspora. The yanggongju, however, is not merely a repository for national fears and desires, but rather she is a spectral agent that acts upon the larger

fantasy, and her movement in and out of the shadows suggests the dynamism of hiding.

1. birth of the yanggongju

I am uncertain about when or where the first sighting took place, or who first named her yanggongju. There is some suggestion that she was already servicing American soldiers in the comfort station the Japanese army had built in Itaewon since the moment U.S. troops arrived, but perhaps she went unnoticed because at this point she was still called wianbu, comfort woman, and not yet yanggongju. Maybe like refugees who tried to be inconspicuous to American bomber planes, she went unseen because she did not move. She did not move from the country to the city in search of work or refuge, because she had already been conscripted and confined. She was behind protected gates and therefore out of public view. But the comfort station was not yet called kijich'on, and this woman was not yet associated with the Americans who occupied the land.

Today there are 37,000 U.S. troops still stationed at the ninety-nine military bases and installments in Korea because a peace treaty bringing an official end to the Korean War has yet to be signed.²⁰ The number of sex workers who cater exclusively to U.S. military personnel is 27,000, approximately 17,000 of whom are officially licensed and work in the bars and brothels, and about 10,000 of whom work unofficially on the streets in and around the camptown. These numbers are inexact, however, especially since over the last ten years, anti-American protest in Korea and

²⁰ An on-going series of talks are currently being held between the U.S. and the Republic of Korea to consider troop reductions.

in other parts of the world have caused some U.S. military bases to close, simultaneously dispersing Korean sex workers away from camptowns that had shut down in Korea, and sex workers from other countries towards the bases in Korea that remain. After the closing of U.S. bases in the Philippines, for example, Filipinas migrated to Korea, as did women from Thailand, China and Russia who were searching for employment. The vast majority of camptown sex workers in Korea, however, are and have been local Korean women. The numbers say that over one million Korean women have been sex workers for the U.S. military since the Korean War, but I am not sure how these numbers were calculated, or by whom. These figures are imprecise at best since early generations of yanggongjus were absorbed into the numbers of comfort women, or wianbu, and into the numbers of war survivors who turned to prostitution as a survival strategy and were not yet the curious objects of data collection. I do not know when this counting of one million women began, but the phenomenon of yanggongju, as distinct from wianbu, reaches as far back as 1950.

In July 1950 the U.S. Army set up command posts near villages in Kyung Sang province. Although it was only a couple weeks into the war, the Americans had already been present for five years and many villagers had heard about the kinds of things American men did to Korean women. *“U.S. soldiers would break into the homes of private Korean citizens and rape women—housewives and young virgin*

girls." (Moon 1997, 155)²¹ So Kyung Sang residents hid their daughters and wives when the Americans came through. Although most of the villagers did successfully "protect" their women, there were rumors about men who allegedly traded time with their daughters for American cigarettes and gum. The threat of American men's sexual appetites served as a rationalization for many Koreans to condone prostitution as a necessary evil that would prevent the rape of "innocent" women and girls. The public fear of rape coupled with the will to survive and a desire for American goods, created the conditions for the rise of the yanggongju.

I saw through the window. American soldiers with Korean lady...they look just like a toy ...they don't know how to speak, only 'honey, kiss, honey, kiss' pretty cheap language. Then they kiss... And after that, she has chewing gum and packs of Marlboros. Then they sell that on the street...they can buy about 10 meals and some clothes you know. But I feel very bad for that... I don't complain about that girl. She has to eat. She doesn't have good background, but she has to survive... (Liem, in press).

Under conditions of war, public scrutiny was softened and the yanggongju was excused as a price one has to pay for American "protection," or as a victim under duress of the war. She was in full view then, but those who were watching looked the other way, or at the very least, they did not call her a whore. The speaker above, for example, described a series of events without directly articulating any conclusions about the yanggongju's morality: first she kisses the GI, then she has American goods, then she sells them, then she buys food and clothing. Yet this description is ambivalent, in that what goes unnamed here also implies that her actions are too

²¹ From Moon's interview with a camptown sex worker who discusses the function of camptown prostitution for Korean society. She sees it as a way of protecting "normal" Koreans from the unwanted sexual advances of American GI's.

shameful to speak, laying the grounds for the secreted words to phantomize, as Abraham and Torok would say. The exchange of sex for money or goods was increasingly commonplace during the war and post-war years, yet despite the public nature of it, the act of prostitution, particularly for the U.S. military, became the shameful family secret for Koreans who lived in the southern half of the peninsula.

The composition of the “family” and the contours of the shameful secret would go through a series of transformations over the next fifty years as camptown prostitution became systematized and highly regulated to meet the needs of the U.S. military servicemen on the peninsula and a budding Korean economy struggling to gain international recognition. Korean government officials strategically manipulated the yanggongju as a tool of international cooperation, at times keeping her behind the scenes and at others, bringing her onto the local stage of U.S.-Korea relations.

The U.S. military, on the other hand, kept this aspect of their involvement in Korea under wraps, constructing it as an activity solely organized by the local population in Korea, making official statements such as “the U.S. military does not condone prostitution, but whatever Korean civilians make available is beyond our control” (Takagi and Park 1996). By not acknowledging their role in creating and regulating the system of camptown, or *kijich'on*, prostitution, the U.S. military effectively erased the yanggongju from all public records, thereby rendering her invisible to a general American public and disposable to U.S. servicemen in Korea. In the words of Bruce Cumings, the “sexual exploitation” of Korean women is “so obvious and so soundless, making barely a cat’s paw imprint on the literature and lore

of Asian-American relations..." yet it is also, "...the most important aspect of the whole relationship and the primary memory of Korea for generations of young American men who have served there" (1992, 170). What Cumings points out is that despite the fact that prostitution has been absent from an official history, it is still very much present, and even dominant in unofficial histories. This wavering in and out of a public gaze made the shameful family secret of prostitution difficult to enforce on one hand, and increased the sense of shame on the other. But as Jacqueline Rose reminds us, the family secret is never fully hidden and often appear as "forms of remembrance... which hover in the space between social and psychic history..." (1996, 5).

There are few photographs of my family in Korea. They all burned up during the war, I am told. The handful of pictures that traveled across the pacific with us are all from the post-war period, mostly after 1960. There is an image of this woman, maybe twenty-five years old, in a whole row of other women. She alone stands out. She is not wearing a hanbok or canoe-shaped rubber shoes. She does not have long hair pulled back in a knot. This woman is unmistakably western. Short skirt. High heels. Heavy make-up and hair coiffed into a bee-hive. Between the hair and the heels, she stands a head taller than the rest of the women, and the child she is holding looks different than the other children too, an awkwardly long child with strange features. But she is smiling wider than any of the other mothers, smiling so wide that her dimples carve deep valleys in her cheeks, and it seems as if she is enjoying something that the other mothers are not, the other mothers who look the way Korean mothers are supposed to look. She recalls a memory of this day, after she got her hair done at the salon, or maybe it was a different day, a different event for which she got her hair done. She is walking down the street, and a man shouts out to her, "Who do you think you are? Miss Korea?" After

telling this story, she says, "I never liked Korean men, but I don't know why." She had already been marked (had marked herself) as a woman reserved for American men, the object of Korean people's envy and loathing.

2. Prostitute, patriot, princess

At some point during the Korean War, the yanggongju, as distinct from the comfort woman was birthed. First she appeared as a war survivor looking to date American men, or a young girl who entertained them at the mess halls, but even as she was being birthed, she was already transforming into yankee whore, western princess, UN lady, GI bride. Just as the word yanggongju implies ambiguity in its various translations, the figure has taken shape in multiple forms, and perhaps it is a characteristic of a subject produced by trauma to shift in shape and meaning, to embody the uncertainty that constitutes trauma.

I saw through the window. American soldiers with Korean lady...

Tracing the development of sex work in Korea through the 20th century, John Lie (1995) analyzes the shift from sexual labor by a caste of women (kisaeng) for the elite landholding classes during the premodern/precolonial period, to commercialized and militarized sex work during the colonial and post-colonial periods. While Japanese colonization of Korea modernized the country, thus eliminating the caste system of sexual labor, it also gave rise to two new forms of prostitution-- commercial sex work for business men and government officials, and the "comfort

stations” set up for Japanese soldiers. Several researchers have pointed out that the Japanese ruling elite imported Japanese prostitutes to serve them during the colonial period, and later Korean girls from the lower classes were added to the mix, thus establishing the first red light districts in Korea. Lie and others also argue that the *kijich'on* are a continuation of the “comfort stations” set up by the Japanese. “The U.S. dominance in Northeast Asian geopolitics ensured the privileged position of American soldiers (virtually all men in 1945) in the domestic sexual economy of South Korea...Under U.S. dominance, the primary organization of sexual work catered to American soldiers stationed in Korea. In the colonial period, Korean women served Japanese colonizers; in the postwar period, they entertained American GIs...” (Lie 1995, 316). Although the U.S. occupation government officially outlawed prostitution in 1946, it is estimated that there were 350,000 prostitutes in Korea by 1953 and that 60% of them worked around U.S. military bases throughout the 1950's and 60's. The “sex slaves of the Japanese military serve as the historical prototype of U.S.-oriented prostitution in Korea” (Moon 1997, 46).

...Then they kiss... And after that, she has chewing gum and packs of Marlboros...

It was during the post-war period that women who consorted with Americans first became associated with the image of the “western princess” because of their access to American products. But while American goods were the most valuable form of currency for post-war Koreans, these new objects also became ambivalent symbols of the way in which U.S. aggression and benevolence are conflated in cultural and personal memory. As chocolate was the peace offering that U.S.

soldiers gave to little girls whose families they had just executed and the taste of relief goods were tainted with sensations of loss, anger and shame. The yanggongju transfigured into the privileged woman who enjoyed the resources of the army bases and the “America towns,” and the yankee whore who suffered from the maladies of desire and greed.

In the work of Korean filmmaker, Shin Sang-ok, one can see the transformation of the yanggongju into “western princess” and “yankee whore” through the shift in filmic representations of yanggongju from his 1952 film “The Evil Night” to his 1958 film, “A Flower in Hell.” The woman protagonist in the earlier film is portrayed as the prototypical victim of war— orphaned, homeless, impoverished, and forced to sell her own flesh to foreign soldiers. As film critic Hong Sung-nam argues, “It realistically captures the misery of postwar Korean society” (Hong 2002). In the 1958 film, however, the protagonist expresses a conflicted agency in which she is not just victim, but thoroughly implicated in the budding system of camptown prostitution, succumbing to her longings for all things American. “Like a flower blooming in the swamp of hell... she has her material desire and American soldiers satisfy it... Yanggongjus like Sonya... are all parasitic, living on American soldiers and even each other to fulfill their desires.” (Hong 2002).

Sonya, the fictional hell flower demonstrates the way in which a Korean imaginary of the U.S. has historically been fraught with envy and loathing. The yanggongju here is the figure of moral decay and erosion of traditional values, a morally bankrupt woman who violates Confucian gender norms on one hand, and a

woman who enjoys the perverse privileges associated with her affiliation with the U.S. military on the other. The yanggongju intensified collective feelings of shame and yearning that could not be fully acknowledged, and at the same time became the screen upon which Koreans projected these feelings of fear and resentment of the U.S. alongside their desire to become part of the American dream. Although the yanggongju serves as a reminder of Korea's subordinated status to the U.S., prostitution was not simply forced upon Korea by the U.S. The phenomenon of military prostitution was tolerated by the public so that yanggongju could be the buffer between respectable Korean citizens and the "beast-like" American GI's, and indeed military prostitution became the only form of legal prostitution in Korea, highly regulated by both governments despite the absence of its official mention in U.S. military documents. But this absence is perhaps the space of a larger fantasy about Korea's relationship to the U.S. in which the U.S. believes itself to be the benevolent protector of South Korea while Koreans experience a simultaneous rejection and identification with the U.S. Despite this ambivalence, camptown prostitution flourished largely due to the South Korean government's desire for international recognition.

The sexual labor of more than one million Korean women who have worked in the bars and brothels around U.S. military bases has been one of the unacknowledged forces behind the U.S.-Korea relationship and South Korea's economic miracle, as Katharine Moon (1997) analyzes in her study of camptown prostitution during the 1960s and 70s. During this period the South Korean government began to recognize the role that camptown prostitutes played in building

Korea's economy. Moon documents the South Korean government's attempts to socialize kijich'on workers into this role during the "Camptown Clean-Up Campaign" of the early 1970's. Due to heightened racial tensions between black and white service members as well as between black Americans and Koreans, government officials tried to construct a new identity for the military sex worker not as a struggling woman negotiating the poverty of post-war Korea but as a "personal ambassador" who would be trained to smooth out racial tensions in the camptowns, and a "diplomat" fulfilling her patriotic duties to nation by keeping U.S. interests engaged. She serves her country by "increasing Korea's foreign exchange earnings from the dollars spent by the men and contributing to security by 'providing comfort' to them" (Moon 1997, 158). The mandatory government-sponsored "etiquette and good conduct" lectures were supposed to inspire the women to model their behavior after Japanese prostitutes who served the post-WWII US occupation forces. "The Japanese prostitute, when she finished with the GI... knelt before him and pleaded with him to help rebuild Japan. The spirit of the Japanese prostitute spread to the rest of society to develop Japan" (Moon 1997, 154). At this moment, "yanggongju" acquires another layer of signification taking on the connotation of "UN Lady," and it is during this era of the camptown cleanup campaigns, that the yanggongju emerges as a symbol of Korea's national security in elite circles, while popular sentiments relegated "Korean women working with foreign men to the lowest status within the hierarchy of prostitution" (H.S. Kim 1998, 178).

Camptown sex workers interviewed in Moon's study failed to internalize an identity as patriot prostitute and "all of the women stated...that economic need was

what drove the women to remain in prostitution” (1997, 155). Many were in fact quite critical of this notion that the selling of sex is necessary to national security. They pointed out the contradictions inherent in the idea of national security—that the women who are supposedly securing the country’s interests with their bodies, are put in the most danger. If the Korean government were really concerned about national security, then *kijich’on* women would not be working under such harsh working conditions, nor would they be faced with such scant options for making a living. “All of the women... stated that their greatest need for ROK government protection (after the Korean War) was not from North Korean threats but the exploitation and abuse of club owners/pimps, local Korean police and VD clinic officials, and the power of U.S. bases” (Moon 1997, 153). As Moon notes, both camptown women and Korean feminists often describe the Korean state as a collective pimp, but without providing protection against abuse. The labor of camptown prostitutes increased the foreign exchange earnings of the country while the women workers were incurring large debts that kept them bound to work in *kijich’on*.

While the Korean government used this figure in the service of nationalist desire to gain power and visibility in an international scene, day-to-day practice in the camptowns remained quite contrary to the official gestures that military prostitutes were “ambassadors.” The *yanggongju* body became a site of control as well as a playing field for negotiating international relations. One impetus for launching the “Camptown Clean-up Campaign,” or the “Camptown Purification Movement” as it is sometimes translated, was the spread of STD’s to what the US military considered “epidemic levels” and the US put pressure on the Korean government to “clean up”

the camptowns (Moon 1997, 144). The Korean prostitutes were the targets of these campaigns, which included mandatory STD testing, treatment and quarantine if she tested positive, and a series of mandatory trainings in sexual diplomacy. The clean-up campaigns of the 70's marked a loss of agency for Korean sex workers. The terms of the exchange between Korean prostitutes and their American clients could no longer be negotiated between individuals, but began to be dictated by the two governments. The campaigns imposed a tight system of regulations upon women working in *kijich'on* that continue to be enforced to this day. For example, *kijich'on* prostitutes are denied rights to choose or refuse a client, to set boundaries about what specific acts they will engage in, or to negotiate price or length of time. The rules of the exchange are predetermined for the prostitutes and are often negotiated or broken by the men if they are not satisfied with the service. Furthermore, the women usually incur large debts to the brothel owners because of the expense of job requirements such as renting and furnishing a room in the club, buying an entertainment system for the clients, and paying for clinic visits. If a *kijich'on* worker attempts to leave before she has paid her debt, a "slicky boy" is sent out to "rough up the girls who [didn't] pay [their club debts.]" (Moon 1997, 21).

The system of controls placed on the *yanggongju* body serve nationalist interests in several ways— to legitimate the sale of sex to the American military as an act of patriotism, to regulate the behavior and the bodies of the women, and to contain foreign contamination. In order to maintain her license, an "entertainment hostess" must submit to HIV tests every three months and tests for other STDs every week at her own expense, carry a passbook stamped that she is "clean" and must show it to

military police whenever she is sighted with a GI; if she is unable to produce a stamped passbook upon request, she may face prison time (Moon 1997, 21). Furthermore, women who test positive are quarantined and “tagged” with an identification number so that a GI can report her ID number to a superior if he thinks he’s been infected by her. (Moon 1998, 165). The regulations regarding STD testing has little to do with the health of the women, but with maintaining the dominant and privileged position of the soldiers. This is a policy that is aimed at regulating only the women, and places the power entirely in the hands of the male elites-- the Korean government and the US military. Furthermore, the mandatory testing policy reinforces the image of prostitutes as “dirty” women. Wendy Chapkis notes that “Little attention has been paid to the fact that before sex workers can transmit disease, they must first themselves have been infected. The lack of interest in the “contamination” *of* prostitutes-- rather than *by* them-- exposes the belief that prostitutes (like homosexuals) are always already ‘sick’...” (1997, 166). Kijich’on prostitutes also discuss this contradiction and they are convinced that Americans introduced STDs to Koreans. Ms. Pak states “We heard that the first AIDS patient was a sailor... Koreans don’t have it. We got it from Americans. In all cases, it’s related to Americans. While we’re here, we don’t receive Korean customers. So AIDS and syphilis and things like that come from Americans” (Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1992, 211). Another worker, Nan Hee, also pointed out that the health clinics’ emphasis is entirely on testing and treatment but not on prevention: “We get a weekly checkup and blood test but there is no sex education. I don’t know much about AIDS. I just heard about it... Since American GIs have more than one sex

partner in other countries, we have to be careful about AIDS” (Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1992, 211).

Both the official regulations and the comments of the sex workers highlight another discourse about disease—that it is something that comes from exposure to the foreign. Besides the perceived function of preventing widespread rape, “In the eyes of so-called normal Koreans, the prostitutes...[contain] undesirable foreign influences on the greater Korean society” (Moon 1997, 39). This belief exemplifies the Koreans’ phobia of contamination by the US and displays both discourses about disease—that the (willing) prostitute body is always already diseased and therefore, it can be legitimately sacrificed as the receptacle for foreign illness. Korea’s response to foreignness, however, is also a response to colonization that is marked by profound ambivalence—an irrational hatred of and desire for everything American. The yanggongju, as the projection screen for collective fantasies, allows this ambivalence to be made visible. On one hand she is a “diplomat” embodying Koreans’ desire to be recognized in the international political/economic landscape, while on the other, she is a “yankee whore” whose very being reminds Koreans of their subordinated status to the US and their legacy of war and colonial slavery.

In recent years, however, the yanggongju as a symbol of a colonized nationhood has transformed from an object of contempt to a poster child for resistance. As hostilities towards the U.S. and the Korean government grew throughout the 1980’s and into the 1990’s, so did the conditions which would allow the figure of the yanggongju to be imbued with anti-imperialist desire. According to Hyun Sook Kim (1998), the 1992 murder of a kijich’on worker named Yun Kum-i by

an American serviceman set a precedent for U.S.-Korea relations in that it was the first time that an American GI was turned over to the Korean courts for a crime committed against a Korean sex worker, and it was also the turning point at which yanggongju became the controversial figure of anti-U.S. organizing.

While previous protests against the murders of camptown prostitutes did not receive widespread public attention, the Yun Kum-i case was supported by a diverse range of groups including feminist, human rights, labor, nationalist and Christian groups. This coalition of protesters formed the “Committee on the Murder of Yun Kum-i by American Military in Korea” and Yun’s case received so much attention that Yun Kum-i and Kenneth Markle became household names in Korea and among Korean-American feminists. In addition to setting a precedent of prosecuting an American GI in the Korean courts, “the Yun Kum-i incident created a new arena of discussing gender and sexual politics” for Korean feminists in that “Yun’s mutilated body was material evidence of imperialist violence against the bodies of Korean women” (H.S. Kim 1998, 189). “Material evidence” certainly existed prior to this incident, but violence against yanggongjus remained unseen by this particular audience because military prostitution was still a shameful family secret for most Koreans.

Kim also points out the ways in which the Committee on the Murder of Yun Kum-i’s anti-U.S. discourse is fraught with contradiction in that Yun was showcased as the ultimate victim of the U.S. military, even in the absence of popular concern for living sex workers. Kim observes:

When alive, however, Yun Kum-i was shoved to the margins of Korean society and viewed derogatorily as a “Yanggongju.” The brutal way she was

killed led Koreans to remember and reconstruct the image of her as a “good woman” passively victimized by “beastlike” (*maengsu*) American soldiers. This re-shaping of Yun’s image is unusual: typically, Koreans and Korean Americans consider “Yanggongju” as “crazy women” (*mich’inyon*), “loose women” (*baramkkiga itnun yoja*), and “women plagued by the longing-for-America-sickness” (*migukbyong gollin yoja*). Children born of Korean “bar women” and American GIs are similarly viewed as “bastards of the Western Princess” (*yanggongju saekki*), “seeds sown by GIs” (*guninduri ppurigogan ssi*) and “darkies” or “niggers” (*kkamdungi*). (1998, 190).

After Yun’s murder, however, *kijich’on* prostitutes were romanticized as victims of military domination whose suffering “embodies the collective suffering of Koreans and the Korean female” (H.S. Kim 1998, 190).

As Rolando Tolentino suggests in his discussion of violence and nationalism in the Philippines, “the mattering of national bodies involves the politicization of bodies for hegemonic use” (2003, 121). One of the ways in which this mattering is achieved is through the use of spectacle, which Tolentino argues is a mechanism of demarcating privileged from marginalized bodies, privileged from marginalized positions in national and transnational politics. He cites the creation of bodies for strategic purposes and the disappearance of these same bodies when they are no longer useful for the politics of nation. Both the camptown clean-up campaigns and the anti-U.S. activism organized around the murder of Yun Kum-i offer examples of the ways in which the yanggongju body has been mattered into a national body, and has mattered other national bodies, through different degrees of spectacle. The population of bodies in Tolentino’s work are nationalized for the purpose of “staging a landscape of the nation for another foreign body that mattered” so that the Marcos regime could have a populace of loyal subjects on display for U.S. viewers (2003, 120). The corps of camptown women who were disciplined as prostitute-patriots also

served to stage a landscape for the foreign U.S. body, however this particular scene is staged for a limited audience and is visible only to elite segments of the U.S. military and invisible to a general U.S. population.

As the case of Yun-Kum-i demonstrates, the bodies are politicized for counter-hegemonic use as well. The yanggongju is exposed to a greater extent by anti-U.S. nationalists than by the Korean ruling elite. The yanggongju is not put on display in a transnational scene by Korean officials; rather, it is in their interest to keep her on a semi-private stage. Among anti-U.S. nationalists, by contrast, images of Yun Kum-i were widely distributed in order to gain international recognition for the cause of anti-base activism, thus creating what Tolentino calls a "transnational macrospectacle." Making the yanggongju a symbol of a movement may be about trying to combat her invisibility outside of Korea to bring attention to issues of U.S. military violence on a larger scale, however, the yanggongju is not simply made visible. Instead she moves in and out of view, manipulated by the masses who become nationalized into anti-U.S. activism through the spectacle of the prostitute body.

While anti-U.S. nationalist groups clearly had an interest in making a spectacle out of the yanggongju, this deployment of the figure was also somewhat unpredictable. The dispersal of traumatic images of the yanggongju as the raped nation sensationalized issues of U.S. military violence against Koreans, but it also spread shame to many Koreans who disidentified with this movement, as well as to those within the movement, who did not want to be associated with yankee whores. Despite efforts to use the yanggongju as an organizing trope, this figure undermined

that very organization because there was also an impulse to keep her hidden.

Disturbances in the semblance of unity among anti-U.S. nationalists would become apparent as some strains would dissociate themselves from the yanggongju. As Shohat and Stam point out, "The nation of course is not a desiring person but a fictive unity imposed on an aggregate of individuals, yet national histories are presented as if they displayed the continuity of the subject writ-large." (1994, 101).

For Koreans, especially, the nation is quite literally dis-unified, and the desire for unification is the lack around which collective identities are often organized. During the 1990's, particularly, the yanggongju body became a terrain upon which longings for a unified homeland would be endlessly negotiated, where internal contradictions would be played out and repeated. In the futile attempts to unify around the plight of the yanggongju, divisions multiplied as some strains searched for victims of U.S. imperialism that were not sullied by the shame of commercial sex, and the yanggongju was forced back into the shadows of the camptown. Yet the yanggongju, did not rest obediently where "normal" Koreans, or "slick boys," or government officials ordered her to stay. She would serve as a haunting reminder to those who tried to distinguish themselves from her by making her presence felt as the excluded outside that threatens the boundary, or as the boundary itself... *she would become, herself, demarcations...* (Cha 1982, 4).

3. labor camp to camptown

Here in the camptown, there is an image of a woman displayed on the walls of the barracks. Her head and eyes are lowered submissively. She wears only a short see-through nightgown and a pair of panties. Alongside her image is a poem, written in the voice of a GI, presumably that of one of her customers:

...Two little legs around me tight
 Two slanted eyes look into mine
 A little movement to and fro
 A little whisper "give me more" ...
 A little hunch, a little sigh
 A little phrase, "you come GI?"
 A little bath when you are through
 A little drink or two
 A little sleep and finally then
 A little breakfast at half past ten
 And as you dress and put on your hat
 You look back and say
 "Did I fuck 'that'?????!!!!!"²²
 (Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1992, 305)

This is a story about the imagined woman in this poster, how she became a play-thing for GI's, but also much more than that—a companion for lonely men who were far from home fighting for imperialism. This imagined woman was not just fashioned by the men who frequented her bed, but also by public protesters who wished these men would leave them in peace, who wished the woman would disappear too. They re-appropriated the image of the submissive slut and manipulated it into a figure of raped nationhood, so that the Yankees would go home and the image of the woman could be washed away forever, and then her absence could free up space for the proper women who were wives and mothers. But this imagined woman could never

²²From a poster displayed at a U.S. Army facility in Korea. This is an example of the kind of merchandise marketed to American GIs that boasts of the availability of sex with local women.

be erased completely, nor could she be returned to a state of innocence. She was a woman descended from fallen women, women imagined to have been innocent and unknowing before they were warehoused across Asia, in Japan, in the Philippines, and in their own country where the U.S. army now resides.

This is a story about the fall. She was a peasant girl once. A white hanbok and two long braids down the length of her back with ribbons tied at the ends. Father was a rice farmer. Auntie had a peach orchard near Chang-Nyung, Kyung Sang province. Under the rule of hostile invaders, they lost most of their land, but there was room for negotiation, as some men quickly learned. So Father made a bargain. He could keep the farm in exchange for the girl. He stayed in Chang-nyung and sent her with the soldiers, to the station where her body would become a place of comfort.

This is a history that she cannot speak. There are others who can, and their stories are made public generations after these events took place. They are given the utmost respect, because they are now elderly women, halmonis, who must be honored, even if they carried these shameful secrets hidden in the folds of their skirts for fifty years. "My story, as hidden as it is from those around me, will follow me to my grave."²³ But the story says that these halmonis were raped. Enslaved. Taken by surprise and detained against their will. And unwillingness excuses some of the sin. Unwillingness lets their shame be the engine of anti-imperialism. And the unwilling is made visible only against one who is not. This is a history she cannot speak, and the unspoken is passed down from flesh to flesh. The unspoken already lining the inside of the womb.

²³ From the testimony of Ch'oe Myungsun, entitled "Silent Suffering." For full transcript, see Howard (1995).

This is a story about the fall, but it is not a fall from innocence. Because the woman protagonist of this story was born bad. She was not forced by human hands or imperial guns, but walked with her own two feet to meet her destiny. She walked willingly from the labor camp to the camptown, where she would serve occupying soldiers from a different country. There, she would work to "endear" them to her nation, to encourage them to fight for her freedom, to make them feel like this foreign nation was their home... "fraternization [in the form of prostitution] is near the core of troop-community relations here...If a fellow is that far away [from home], his sexual appetites are met, and he'll serve better..."²⁴ (Moon 1997, 84-85)

It appears that the ghost of the comfort woman returns to haunt prostitution for the U.S. military, but this is not exactly accurate. Because she was always already there in the body of the yanggongju, a body composed of ghosted matter from a traumatic and ever-present past. There was no break between the two systems, as some would have us think, only continuity and change. The wianbu and yanggongju served the same basic purpose – to keep up the morale of imperial troops by providing them with comfort.

Since the early 1990's, two movements against militarized prostitution have emerged in Korea– the chongsindae (comfort women) movement (CM) and the kijich'on (US military camptown) movement (KM). While many scholars have noted the parallels between the Japanese occupation of Korea and the U.S. military presence as well as between the experiences of the women for whom the two movements are fighting to gain recognition, the Chongsindae movement has refused to acknowledge

²⁴ From a 'Human Factors research report' on troop-community relations, as quoted in Allies, 84-85

any similarities. Although both movements began as part of a larger struggle against the sexual exploitation of Asian women, the two have diverged because of the assumption that comfort women were “forced” while kijich’on workers were/are “voluntary.” Moon observes that:

...the CM retained a traditional understanding of acceptable female sexual behavior. Many of the leaders and survivors emphasized that former “comfort women” were innocent victims whereas kijich’on women were not. Chongsindae survivors were insistent that their cause not be linked to that of kijich’on women, emphasizing that their identities as sex slaves were not to be equated with those of “willing whores.” In the CM’s view, the chongsindae survivors represent in body and mind the most humiliating, degrading, and painful colonial oppressions that were imposed on Korean people, not voluntary adventures into the world of sex. (1999, 316).

This dichotomy of forced/voluntary is an issue that has long troubled feminist debates concerning the “nature” of sex work. In Moon’s study of the two movements, however, she argues that the demographic backgrounds, conditions leading women to work in kijich’on, and long-term effects of the work are quite similar to those of the comfort women. Moon points out “that although there are women who walked into the camptowns without having been kidnapped or otherwise physically coerced, and also those who were sexually curious about the goings-on with American soldiers, this does not mean that they agreed to debt bondage, beatings, and murder” (1999, 316). While the majority of kijich’on workers were not physically forced into sexual servitude to the same extent as were comfort women, the demographic profile of women servicing these two groups is that they both came from the least educated and poorest sectors of society. Perhaps the most compelling piece of evidence Moon presents in favor of the notion of continuity between

Japanese comfort stations and U.S. military brothels is that some of the women among the earliest generation of kijich'on workers may have also been former comfort women (1999, 313). Yet the distinction between these two groups of women come up again and again in the politics of nation. The raped and fallen woman is the trope for the occupied and oppressed nation, but there is also always a demarcation between raped and fallen... *Arrest the machine that purports to employ democracy but rather causes the successive refraction of her...* (Cha 1982, 89).

In February 2004, Lee Seung-yeon, an actress and former Miss Korea staged a photo shoot in the Philippines at a former comfort station used by the Japanese military. The video and photo exhibit, was art according to Lee and her producers. The exhibit included some provocative, some would say, pornographic images such as one of Lee partially nude, kneeling before a Japanese soldier with the rising sun of the Japanese flag in the background. In Lee's own words, the purpose of this project was to "console" and "commemorate" the comfort women, and part of the profit would go to the halmonis to compensate for their pain and suffering.

Lee's project was met with outrage that she would disrespect the halmonis who had been shamed by sexual slavery. The public could not accept this project as art, and former comfort women made statements such as "It is a serious offense against the human rights of comfort women to use their painful moments for commercial purposes" and "I want to see Lee Seung-Yeon on her knees in front of me telling me how this all began" (Knoll 2004). Lee submitted to the comfort women's demands, knelt before them and publicly apologized. But the apology, with bent knees and bowed head, with the whole world watching, was not enough. Lee was excessively

punished. Broadcasters cancelled her television appearances. Advertisers cancelled her modeling contracts. The producers of her art project publicly burned Lee's photographs and then shaved their own heads to mark themselves with regret. Ultimately, with her career in ruins, Lee fled the country.

Lee Seung-Yeon, the westernized actress and model, was publicly shamed for staging suggestive images of comfort women and thus, contaminating the virtuous images of these halmonis as violated virgins. Some critics even charged her with "killing the comfort women a second time" (Nudity, Profits). Lee herself became the yankee whore against which the former comfort women's purity was measured.

Twelve years earlier, another image scandalized the nation, that of Yun Kum-i's body at the scene of the crime. In October 1992, her landlord found her naked, legs splayed, her body covered in blood and bruises. This image was made into a transnational spectacle far more pornographic than Seung-yeon's re-enactment of a comfort woman kneeling before a Japanese soldier. The descriptions of Yun's murder that were disseminated among anti-U.S. activists around the world included every graphic detail of how her body was violated. A coke bottle lodged so far into her vagina that the tip was embedded in her uterus. An umbrella driven into her rectum. Twenty-seven centimeters to be exact. Matches shoved into her mouth. Laundry detergent poured all over her body and caked into her blood.

This scene was replayed repeatedly by activists who claimed to be saving women like her, and thereby saving the nation. The public became outraged by Yun's murder because her body did not quietly disappear the way the others had, but instead it was put on display for everyone to see and Yun became a symbol of what the U.S.

had been doing to Korea all along. U.S. military officials told the protesters that there was nothing to be angry about because their two countries had always been close friends and that U.S. soldiers were only there to “safeguard” their country. But the Koreans kept protesting until Yun’s murderer was tried and convicted in Korean courts. Yun’s mutilated body solidified movements around anti-U.S. politics, but at the same time ruptured them because not everyone agreed that a prostitute could rightfully be called a victim. She continued to be a controversial martyr for anti-U.S. nationalism for the next ten years until two little girls on their way to a birthday party, were flattened by an American tank. The graphic posters of Yun, dead and naked with foreign objects sticking out every orifice, came to be replaced with pictures of the crushed school girls. Yun was disposed of because the movement found more worthy victims, two “little girls” who were only a few years younger than Yun when she started working as a yanggongju.

Unlike the Lee Seung-Yeon scandal, the dissent around the images of Yun’s naked and brutalized body was not about disrespect of living kijich’on sex workers, but about why anyone should feel sorry for a dead prostitute. Were these pornographic images of Yun put on display because she was already a whore? At the same time Yun was portrayed as the ultimate victim of U.S. imperialism, but her sordid past never allowed this image to be free from transgression. She could not recover her innocence because she was already a fallen woman.

The story of the fall is a story of repetition... a fall into whorishness again and again. The yanggongju is sometimes called “Korean in birth but no longer Korean in

body or spirit" (Moon 1997, 3). She is the expression of a disavowed Korean nationality, irreversibly contaminated by foreign disease, yet the object of desperate attempts to re-claim this body as a symbol of nation. Paradoxically, there are attempts by some nationalist groups to distance themselves from the yanggongju even as she is the ground upon which their political battles are waged. At certain opportune moments, the yanggongju falls from victimization into whorishness as more innocent victims are made, like the comfort women who get exploited a second time by the westernized capitalist beauty queen, or the two school girls who were run over by an American tank.

Yet it is impossible to separate the good victim of imperialism from the bad yankee whore because of the way in which the yanggongju body is composed of ghosted matter that flashes up from the past and carries forward into the future. The repeated drawing of boundaries, the repeated attempts to make oneself innocent are futile because there is no innocent past to which to return. The innocence of comfort women is soiled by the fact that they were not all abducted or forced to work against their will. Some were traded by their fathers, and some reluctantly agreed as a means of supporting their children. Nor were all yanggongju willing. Some were deceived and others were abducted. "Although there are women who walked into the camptowns without having been kidnapped or otherwise physically coerced... this does not mean that they agreed to debt bondage, beatings, and murder"... (Moon 1999, 316).

4. death of the yanggongju

Did you hear about Mi-ra? asks a camptown woman about her colleague. Mi-ra, we find out, has disappeared. She is one of a million women whose absence could have gone unnoticed because she is a yanggongju, because her body is unremarkable even as it is demarcated and disciplined. Yet she is present even while missing. She is a ghost whose apparent absence yields a force strong enough to keep her memory alive in diasporic culture. In "Days and Dreams," Kang Sok-Kyong's ethnographic short story about life in the camptown, Mi-ra is one of the most prominent characters but is never physically present because she is already dead before the story starts.

Did you hear about Mi-ra? She's dead. A Korean man killed her early yesterday morning. A pimp. He stuck a pair of coal tongs between her legs...

She'd live it up with the GIs and then give him leftover sex. She gave him plenty of money and secondhand clothes from the GIs, but they were leftovers too. All the bitch gave him was some damned foreigner's leftovers. That's what he told the police...

The lousy son of a bitch... He's nothing but a pimp who tried to drag down a defenseless woman. Is he the only one who's eaten leftovers? This whole country's been living off other countries' leftovers... (Kang 1989, 16-17)

Here, three yanggongjus discuss the news about their missing co-worker as they play cards. The dialogue reveals the way in which camptown prostitution symbolizes the neo-colonial state of U.S.-Korea relations. The women here are doubly colonized by the U.S. military and by the Korean man feminized by his subordination to the U.S., who kills the yanggongju because she reminds him of his subordinated status to both the American serviceman who can buy sex from Korean

women and to the yanggongjus who have greater access to American privileges than the men who work as pimps in this system. Perhaps more striking is the way in which the news of Mi-ra's death is not shocking, but rather an item of chit-chat over a hand of cards, a taken-for-granted fact of life in the camptown. Some readers of Kang claim that the fictional rape and murder of Mi-ra with a pair of coal tongs foreshadows the actual murder of Yun Kum-i a few years later. In diasporic memories of the camptown, however, the dead or missing yanggongju has been present since long before the 1989 publication of Kang's story or the 1992 murder of Yun.

A child's memory: There is a story about a little boy in Korea. It takes place circa 1965, because he has vague recollections that there is a war starting somewhere in which his father is getting ready to fight. This boy is the biracial child of a Korean woman and American servicemen. His un-ni, his older sister, is a yankee's girlfriend just like his mother. One night before he goes to sleep, the boy sees his sister's body floating beneath the branch of a tree. Her hand flaps in the wind as if waving and she is smiling at him one last time. He sleeps soundly because he believes that she is watching over him, but then awakens to the screams of his mother and aunt. There are rumors that she did it because the yellow-haired soldier refused to marry her, but then he hears his aunt say to his mother that it was the life itself that killed her, that living the life of a yanggongju means that you are already dead... (Fenkl 1996)

A yanggongju's memory: Ms. Pak worked in a camptown brothel outside of Seoul in the 1960's and 70's. "Her sister, also a camptown prostitute, was mutilated and

murdered allegedly by a U.S. serviceman, but U.S. authorities never turned the man over to the ROK authorities... the U.S. military offered neither apology nor financial compensation to her family... camptown residents had to collect money from one another to pay for the funeral expenses" (Moon 1997, 153). This was the same time period when Korean officials tried to construct identities for yanggongjus as "ambassadors" and "patriots." Of course no real ambassador would be treated with such disregard. Oftentimes when camptown women turned up dead, there was no collection to pay for the funeral because there was no funeral. Families did not always come to claim the bodies of slain women, nor were the bodies always found to be claimed. These unclaimed prostitute bodies turned up in rivers and dumpsters, impressing themselves in the memories of women who are equally disposable...

A child's memory: There are few photographs of her life in Korea, and none before 1960, none of the siblings who disappeared. Her brother was lost during the war and her sister shortly after. I think the year was 1957, but the story always gets mixed up. Sometimes they say she died of skin cancer and sometimes it is stomach cancer, but she died much too young for this to be plausible, yet she was too old not to be married. A twenty-six-year old single woman found dead. No one is really sure how it happened. She was just found that way, and her absence made the youngest daughter stand out as the only unmarried woman in the family. Not even a woman really. A girl of sixteen who was put to work to compensate for this loss, who carried the weight of her dead sister's truncated life and entered a world populated by ghosts...

A yanggongju's memory:

"When I first entered this world," she said "I thought the Americans were well-educated and great people." But with time came disillusionment. "At first, I really treated them well... I always used terms of respect when talking to them. Then I was tricked by them once or twice, and I saw many bad things happening..." It is sometime in the late 1980's when she tells this story, by which time the killing of yanggongjus had already become commonplace... "I saw people being killed. Like once, an Amore cosmetics saleswoman was walking to her job one day. On the way she saw an American GI burning trash; but it had a strange odor. She smelled hair burning so she got suspicious. She called the police. They found him burning the body of a woman. He had killed her during a fight..." (Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1992, 213-214)

Here in the camptown, the living are haunted by those who have been unjustly killed and by the specter of their own certain deaths. These women who work in the camptown bars and brothels have been witness to their sisters' murders and suicides, their bodies hanging from backyard trees or burned in army trash incinerators.

By the time we get to 1992 and Yun's infamous murder, not only does the raped/fallen woman become the ambivalent trope for anti-U.S. nationalism, but the dead yanggongju becomes the trope for diasporic memory. Visions of the yanggongju, murdered by the U.S. soldier, or by the system itself, permeate the

memories of those who have lived and worked in the camptowns, and those who imagine this life. These visions highlight at once the disposability of the yanggongju body, and the way in which she becomes a figure more powerful in death than in life. She is martyr and ghost. She is the disappeared against which the face of the nation becomes visible... The image of the dead Yun-Kum-i brings the specter of the wounded nation to life. Kum-i haunts the nation to the point that popular protest demands that Yun's murderer be the first U.S. serviceman to be tried in Korean courts. She haunts the literature of the 1990s so that there is a proliferation of writing about "our Kum-i." She haunts the collective memory of diasporic Koreans so that the dead yanggongju is memorialized in written and unwritten stories. Although the infamous murder was the impetus for much anti-U.S. action of the 1990s, the ghost of the yanggongju had been dwelling beneath the surface of an already haunted history even prior to Yun's death in that 1992 was not the first time a yanggongju was murdered nor was it the first time Koreans felt hostility towards the U.S.

Layers of anti-American sentiments had been building, for the military dictatorship that had been propped up by the U.S., for the 1980 Kwangju massacre in which hundreds of peaceful protesters were gunned down, for the nearly fifty years of U.S. military occupation. The death of Yun Kum-i unleashed a well of affect accumulated from a growing generalized anger towards the U.S., as well as from the piling up of dead yanggongju bodies that had been unclaimed. This accumulation of affect fleshes out the yanggongju as the ghost that haunts Korean nationalism, "filled out, symbolized beyond recognition with the weight of desire, and then manipulated in fantasy to its purpose" (Rose 1996, 24). But the creation of the "yanggongju as an

allegory of the nation” shows the wounds of Korean nationalism (H.S. Kim 1998). Putting the yanggongju at the forefront of anti-U.S. politics was an attempt at national redemption whereby the yanggongju body became the site of contestation of U.S.-Korea relations, but also of intra-national dynamics in which the trauma of division and the fantasy of unity was replayed through the various ripping open of bodies... The accumulation of affect both fleshes out the ghost and points to an excess that cannot be symbolized. The yanggongju, de-humanized in life, becomes a super-human spectral agency in death who has the capacity to multiply the ghosts that materialize in the memory of diaspora, from Mi-ra to Kum-i...

Interlude

Eight: 1971

“Etiquette and good conduct” lecture again this month. The government official in the grey-green uniform stands beneath the two flags almost touching, like they are shaking hands. Stars and stripes reach out to heaven and earth to come to its perpetual rescue. Row upon row of young women are packed into this tiny room, and the man in the front talks to them about their patriotic duty to make the Americans feel comforted, like this is their home. They are “ambassadors of good will” who fuck for national security. She cannot listen to this man talk as if her life matters to him. She knows that she is just another disposable body, like the bodies that were never put into the ground to return to the earth. Like op-pa’s. Like un-ni’s. But she could not bear to call them dead.

What time is it? Not time yet? 1:38. Later than mang-nei’s birthday and earlier than first son’s. 1:39. January thirty-nine...two years before I was born. Well...what should I do now? Ok-hee, are you there? Please talk to me, un-ni.

She watches the sweat on the talking man’s nose bead up and form reservoirs beneath his nostrils. Disjointed words burst from his mouth and float into the air like soap bubbles whose life lasts only an instant. With each signal, she must take action before her chance has evaporated. The word-sound “Migook” wakes her from reverie.

Wish-for-America chant? All right...

Migook saram, if you have hair like color of sunshine, if you are good man and don’t call me a whore, I want to go with you to America. Please take me with you soon so I can get out of here. Please take me with you so my children have better life and be educated. Please take me with you so I can start again and my children never know what I am here. Take me away over there, take me away over there, over there not here, over there not here over there not here over there not here NOT here NOT HERE NOTHERENOTHERENOTHERENOTHERENOT...

Nine: Migook

Dear Un-ni,

How is your health? I will send money to buy medicine. Husband is good to me and children. We live in a big house with fireplace and big yard and lots of trees in yard. Flowering dogwood and maple and big oak trees. Children are in school and learning English very fast. Mang-nei already know names of all animals at zoo. I think the girl is a genius. She will go to Harvard one day. Next week I have appointment to talk to President Gerald Ford. First son want me to send you message, say he will take care of you when you get old and he is rich. Husband say it's ok you can come stay. I bring you soon. That is it for now. I miss you.

Soon-Hee-ya

Fluorescent aisles wide enough to drive a car through and strange soothing music that falls from the sky and air like inside the refrigerator.

Can you believe it, Ok-hee? A thousand times better than the PX.

Limitless rows of boxes and cans, stacked neatly according to brand name and size. Quaker oats, Kellogg's cornflakes, Post raisin bran, General Mills Cheerios.

Ha! That's a funny name. Chi-ri-oh-se. This one?

Yes, children will like that one.

A grin spills over her face as she puts the box in the overstuffed cart.

Chi-ri-oh-se... Chi-ri-oh-se... Do you hear that, Ok-hee? Mang-nei must be here.

No, it is not mang-nei. Keep shopping.

But I can hear her laughing. How come she's not in school?

Hurry up. Better not be late with dinner again. Husband will be angry.

It was not exactly the America of her Technicolor dreams. The house was bigger than any she had ever set foot in, large enough to make her resent having to clean it, and far from the excitement of city life that she had grown accustomed to. She settled in her husband's home town, where people prided themselves on being neighborly, which usually meant they wanted to know everything about where you came from, especially if you were the only one who came from somewhere else. Her strangeness made her more determined to blend in and she carefully studied the habits of American wives and mothers and referred regularly to the textbook she had gotten from the USO bride school in Korea. She cooked spaghetti and meatballs and green jell-o mixed with cottage cheese and fruit cocktail, hosted parties for the neighbors, smiled hello at people's stares, hung lights at Christmas, carved jack-o-lanterns on Halloween, went to PTA meetings, donated to bake sales, volunteered for the United Way, went to a church despite being Buddhist, did everything in hopes of becoming an American wife and mother.

It is "culture day" at mang-nei's school and she is the only parent invited, the "guest of honor" who has been asked to teach the children what it is like to come from a culture. She arrives carrying a big tray full of noodles while mang-nei is standing in front of the class modeling a han-bok and pointy rubber shoes.

"This is noodle dish we serve on special occasions," she says proudly and begins scooping adult-size servings onto each child's plate, even though it is not even close to lunchtime.

"They look like worms!" a child screams.

"No, they made of potato starch."

"I don't wanna eat it!"

"Potato, ok? Potato!"

"I don't wanna eat worms!" The child continues and sets off a chain reaction of fussing and crying. The young teacher struggles to calm them down, begs them to try just one bite, and finally gives up saying to just leave it on their plates. Mang-nei is the only one eating, her eyes cast downward, while the other children watch noodles spill down the front of her dress.

The guest of honor's face is glowing red, but she forces a smile as the teacher asks if any of the children have questions.

A boy raises his hand and announces, "My dad says you're a war bride."

The guest of honor says nothing and fixes her eyes on the clock. A few moments later, she points to it and says, "September forty-five."

These days she has been talking to the baby in her belly, and to her pleasure, the baby talks back. During the fourth month she heard it make the sound *mama*. *Mama*, not *um-ma*.

How lucky you speak English already and no one have to teach it to you. I give you American name and this time nobody laugh at me. You be all-American baby because you born here. Mama give you anything you want because you are special English-talking baby, and Daddy give you anything you want because you are his own child he want for so long, so long. Ha! You spoiled already, aren't you English-talking baby? Do you hear that Ok-Hee? Baby say "Mama!" Mama.

Wake up Soon-Hee-ya. Wake up.

One eyelid struggles to open partway. The other is swollen shut. She lifts her face, cracking the brown crust that glues her lip to the shag carpet.

Look in the mirror Soon-Hee-ya. You come to America for this? You want children to see you looking like monster?

She ignores the scattering of purple that flowers across her throat and face and reaches for the washcloth and basin.

I can't talk to you right now, Ok-hee. Children will be home soon. I have to clean up this mess.

It is still sticky between her legs, and she thinks it's from letting him satisfy his desire. But then the mirror shows her the dark stain on her nightgown and the blood on the inside of her thighs, so much that it looks like the first time.

Look, Soon-Hee-ya. Look what you have become.

Chapter Four

Haunted Histories and the Fantasy of Honorary Whiteness

...the area around an American army base is like an island between Korea and the U.S... and those of us on the island are only whores for Westerners... we're temporary sweethearts, nameless 'honeys' for the GIs.

--Kang Sok-Kyong, "Days and Dreams"

The camptowns around U.S. military bases in Korea are often described as islands— “not part of the sea, not part of the mainland” (Kang 1989, 22). For some Korean women they are exotic locales in which dreams of America are played out through a repeated and performed romance between Korean women and American soldiers. For others the camptowns are spaces of trauma and exile from which escape is nearly impossible, and in which marriage to American GIs is not a lived fantasy as much as it is a desperate attempt at finding “a way out” (Suh 1999).

Although the camptowns are understood to be enclosures whose boundaries are strictly policed, the effects of military domination are dispersed well beyond the confines of the camptown. It is through transgenerational haunting, that the traumas that are inflicted, repeated, and repressed in the spaces of camptown, as well as the traumatic traces of militarism and colonization more broadly, take flight from the camptown to circulate within Korean diaspora. The yanggongju, as the primary vehicle of migration from Korea to the U.S. during the past fifty years, has been one of the most important agents of this haunting.

In this chapter I shift the focus from the yanggongju as yankee whore to the yanggongju as GI bride, and the severing between the two. I take up how

sociological narratives about assimilation in which Korean Americans are posited as honorary whites is a fantasy, in that this story can only make sense through a willful forgetting of the everyday life of the camptown and of the violent and intimate history between Korea and the U.S. But it is a fantasy that is mutually supported by both the producers of this knowledge and the subjects that inform it. The story of honorary whiteness is a facet of the American Dream, the larger fantasy of how the U.S. imagines itself as a site of liberation and a nation of saviors. It is the figure of the “yanggongju,” that most complicates this narrative in that she is heavily invested in the Dream, carrying the weight of a familial longing for America, yet at the same time, her “assimilation” in the U.S. is contingent upon a violent severing from the past, a past that is always present. The silences among Americans surrounding issues of U.S. military prostitution, as well as the yanggongju’s inability to remember her traumatic histories create the conditions for these traumas to be passed unconsciously across bodies in diaspora, thereby threatening to disrupt the dream.

Ultimately I question whether marriage to an American, both a marker of prestige among camptown women and a marker of assimilation within the discourse of American sociology, allows the yanggongju and her kin to participate in the sociological fantasies of assimilation, upward mobility, and honorary whiteness. Is this trajectory of marriage and migration indeed a way out of the camptown, and if so, to what does the escape give way?

1. the diaspora of camptown

...the dead remain in the memory of the living and the threshold for flight is everywhere... (Johnston 225)

The body of social science and social work research on U.S. military prostitution asserts that military sex workers view marriage to an American as the only way out of the camptown. The fictional and autobiographical work about camptown life tells of another way out—death. This alternative to marriage suggests that these avenues are not disarticulated from one another and highlights some of the violence obfuscated by the romantic façade of international/interracial marriage. The work of diasporic Korean writers question the ways in which the fantasy of America and the violence of U.S. military domination are bound together. They examine these power dynamics in ways that sociological narratives of migration and assimilation do not. In this chapter I will be drawing upon the creative work of diasporic Koreans as a counterpoint to standard sociological explanations of assimilation, as well as to Korean military brides own accounts of their experience. I also use short semi-fictional vignettes based on the life histories of Korean military brides to explore the ways in which social science, testimony, autobiography and fiction narrativize the fantasy of honorary whiteness.

Since these islands have no roots, the girls living on them have no roots either. They know full well they can't rely on the islands, and that's why they have a pimp—or long for a one-way ticket to the U.S. Mi-ra and Sun-ja were just extreme cases of this. (Kang 1989, 23)

In the imaginary camptown of Kang's short story "Days and Dreams," there are three yanggongjus whose tales of escape are woven together—Mi-ra, the yanggongju who materializes only in memory because she was murdered by her pimp at the start of the story, Sun-ja who desperately wants to be taken to America and hopes for romance with one of her American clients, and the narrator who exhibits shamelessness at being a prostitute and is complacent enough to make no move towards leaving. For Sun-ja, the fairy tale of going to America nearly comes true, but Kang adds an important twist. Sun-ja invests all of her hopes in one of her American clients, as the story often goes, but this client is not the white man that is the symbol of America for Koreans, but a black woman named Barbara.²⁵ Sun-ja transgresses the prescriptive fantasy of marrying a white male GI, and enters into a relationship that defies norms even among the deviant women of the camptown. She pursues the relationship initially out of desire to leave Korea, but also because she encounters love for the first time. As the end of the story approaches, readers are led to believe that Sun-ja's dream will come true, but moments before meeting Barbara for their flight out of Korea, Sun-ja falls down a flight of stairs to her death, and "in this meaningless way, she left the world of the living for the eternal America of her dreams" (Kang 1989, 23). The day of Sun-ja's cremation, a letter to Sun-ja arrives from Barbara in which she makes her rescue fantasy explicit: "I love you and your agony. I hope I can be your savior. Think of our meeting as a blessing and please

²⁵ Although there are many GIs who are non-white or female, the American GI is always presumed to be white and male in both the Korean fantasy of marrying an American GI and in the sociological fantasy of honorary whiteness that measures assimilation in terms of intermarriage.

plan for our future” (Kang 1989, 24). But Sun-ja’s alternative exit subverts their mutual dream and leaves Barbara to wonder why Sun-ja never appeared.

Unlike Sun-ja, the narrator indulges no escape fantasy. Her first sex-for-money exchange brings the realization that her movement is only circular, returning to the same subordination to the U.S. from which she started in post-war Korea, and she quickly becomes disillusioned about being saved. Although she takes pleasure in American men, she does not dream of romance or a married life in the U.S. She even ridicules this dream in the final scene when her married American boyfriend is about to return to his wife in the U.S. and promises to write. “I started giggling and told him I didn’t need his letters. If he could just give me ten dollars, I’d call his name even in my dreams...” (Kang 1989, 27). She calls out romance as a commodity, placing sex and affection on the same plane in the business of militarized prostitution. “He stuffed two hundred dollars in my hand saying, ‘pay off what you owe your madam.’ I gave him a violent kiss. I’d paid off my debt to the madam a long time ago, but I still had plenty of places to spend the money” (Kang 1989, 27). The final lines of *Days and Dreams* subverts the discourse of the American dream because we are confronted with a narrator who remains in militarized prostitution not because she is searching for a ticket out of Korea, and not because she is debt-bonded, but because she already knows that she is going nowhere.²⁶ In Kang’s narrative, marriage is not a viable option, and for those who dream of escape, the only way out is death.

²⁶ Unlike much of the social science and social work research on Korean military sex workers, we see in Kang’s work a portrayal of a yanggongju who takes a certain kind of pleasure in her work, even if she is jaded. I have been asked about the extent to which desire plays a role in women’s decisions to enter camptown prostitution. Although I am reluctant to answer this question without first deconstructing the notion of “choice,” the available sources of data about camptown prostitution say that most women are drawn into the work by economic

Although Kang's work has been critiqued for portraying the yanggongju as the tragic woman whose body represents a nation dominated by the U.S., I offer a different reading in which the yanggongjus are not simply passive bodies or receptacles of national sorrow. Kang's characters, in both their cynicism and their tragic outcomes, unsettle common-sense ideas of migration and marriage, particularly sociological assumptions about assimilation. The narrator, for example, harbors no notions of either romance or progress when it comes to marrying an American, thereby challenging the fantasy in which the white American soldier rescues the abject Korean woman from prostitution and the third world and takes her to revel in the abundance of the U.S. The discourse of assimilation in the U.S. supports this storyline that marriage to white Americans is a sign of assimilation and upward mobility, however, neither the narrator nor Sun-ja conform to these desires. "Days and Dreams" challenges ideas about movement that equate marriage to an American with progress, although we do not see any characters who are actually married, and raises questions about how death can be a line of flight out of the camptown.

Perhaps the deaths of Mi-ra and Sun-ja speak less to Kang's nihilism about camptown life and more to the ways in which the migration route of marriage to Americans is haunted by a history of militarized violence. In both the sociological accounts of interracial marriage between Korean women and American men, as well as the oral histories of Korean military brides, there is an erasure of this violent past by both the women who are telling their stories and the researchers who narrativize

necessity rather than either coercion on one hand, or sexual desire on the other. However, the stigma against prostitution and particularly military prostitution is so great that few women would actually admit that sexual desire was one of their motivations. As I suggest in this chapter, a collective desire for America is a motivating force that trumps individualized sexual desire.

the phenomena of migration and interracial marriage. Perhaps the “fictional” yanggongju who has been memorialized in the work of Kang and others, as well as the “real” yanggongjus who were murdered and made symbols of the nation, are spectral forces of memory against forgetting. As there is movement in and out of the camptown, whether through marriage or death, the traumatic effects of the system also take flight. As yankee whores become GI brides, the ghosts of a haunted history circulate with and beyond the yanggongju as forces that refuse to be assimilated...

2. imminent arrival

“...arrivals, in turn, transform thwarted desires into desirous anticipations.” (Eng and Kazanjian 2003, ix).

One-hundred thousand Korean women have migrated to the U.S. through marriage to U.S. servicemen, and upon their arrival in the U.S. they are absorbed into a storyline about immigrant success and honorary whiteness, a storyline that attempts to erase traumatic history and make the yanggongju as yankee whore disappear altogether. But when she is made to disappear, what comes to occupy the space of her departure? In Eng and Kazanjian’s conceptualization of loss, absence is not just a negative space, but also a potential presence. The site of departure is also a signal of imminent arrival (2003, ix).

The departure raises the question of what rises up in the space of the yanggongju’s absence, of what new forms of haunting are generated and passed along transgenerationally. But I also want to question the “imminent arrival.” If the yanggongju is a figure in perpetual exile, then her arrival in the U.S. is always

imminent without ever being complete, and the women who migrate to the U.S. through marriage to American servicemen never fully arrive at assimilation, yet are made to appear assimilated within the discourse of American sociology. What gets left out in order to construct Koreans in the U.S. as statistical persons of honorary whiteness?

Yanggongju One²⁷

was a young girl during the Korean War. She used to go to the U.S. military bases to buy the leftovers from the messhall. "In there you have toothpicks, napkins, there's all kinds of things—prunes, meat, everything... that's how we lived month after month..." The bases were an outlet for survival, but also a promise of so much more. She got a job at the base, where she would dance for the sergeants. They pulled on her pigtails and called her "virgin girl" and gave her an American nickname. "I thought it was kind of an exciting name, unusual. I carried it all this time...kind of a treasure to me..." From a very young age, she developed a desire for American men, eventually married a sergeant twenty-five years her senior, and moved to America.

²⁷ The following vignettes about yanggongjus one through seven are based on: oral histories published by Ramsay Liem in *Amerasia* journal and Ji-Yeon Yuh in *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown*, my family history, as well as social work literature about battered Korean immigrant women, media interviews with biracial Korean Americans, and accounts of high profile yanggongjus such as Yun Kum-i and Chung-Sun France, a Korean military bride who was convicted of murdering her child. Some of the vignettes are based on one particular woman while others are amalgamations of several women. I fictionalize some of these vignettes to the extent that life histories of Korean military brides are fictionalized by the women themselves as they are asked to reveal their lives to an audience of social scientists, historians, social workers, and a general public in the U.S.

Yanggongju Two

met her husband in a bar in Itaewon. He was a U.S. serviceman. She was an "entertainment hostess." She attended "etiquette and good conduct lectures" to learn the art of comfort, and although the lectures were mandatory, she looked forward to them with hope. Her studies paid off because she found a man who wanted to marry her and take her to America, and upon their engagement, she enrolled in the USO bride school. She and the other yanggongju learned the basics of American cooking and vocabulary to prepare for their new lives. When she arrived in the U.S., she wiped the slate clean and told no one about her past.

Yanggongju Three

moved with her two children to her husband's home town in Kansas in 1979. A few months later she gave birth to a baby boy, the first child by her husband. The other children were legally adopted by the husband, and with that act of benevolence he won the right to raise them according to his rules. No Korean was to be spoken under his roof, so the older children learned English quickly and forgot their native language while their mother continued to speak broken English in Korean syntax and thick accent. As her children grew, she became unable to communicate with them, and they became embarrassed by her and identified only with their father.

Yanggongju Four

sponsored six of her relatives to come to the U.S. and they sponsored six more, until almost all her extended family were living nearby. Few of them acknowledged her after their immigration because of the relentless shame associated with her marriage to the American. Many of them became successful in one way or another—they opened small businesses or moved into respectable neighborhoods or sent their children to college. They attributed their successes mostly to the abundance of opportunity in America, partly to their own hard work, and none to their yanggongju sponsor.

A hundred thousand yanggongjus have forged lines of movement for Korean diaspora. The work done by Korean American historians, such as Ji-Yeon Yuh (2003), has documented that marriage between U.S. servicemen and Korean women was the most common migration route for Korean immigrants to the U.S. from the 1950's through the 1980's. It is estimated that for every one military bride, fifteen relatives followed through chain migration. Nearly half of the Korean community in the U.S. today arrived here through familial ties to the U.S. military, a trajectory born of the intimate and violent relations between the U.S. and Korea. These power dynamics are whitewashed, however, by both the popular discourse of U.S. benevolence as well as the sociological discourse of Asian assimilation.

The discipline of sociology has paid little attention to the role of U.S. militarism in Korean immigration and treats assimilation as an a priori desirable outcome. Asians in the U.S. are coded as highly assimilated and assimilable, even "honorary whites," despite a long history of Asian American exclusion in the U.S. In

their critiques of theories of assimilation, Asian American studies scholars such as Anne Cheng and David Eng argue that it is precisely the erasure of Asian American history and the denial of grief that allow the discourse of Asian assimilation to live.

In classical models of assimilation theory, assimilation is understood as a normal social process that is linear— “progressive and irreversible” in Robert Park’ (1921) estimation, or incremental with each new generation (“straight line”) according to Herbert Gans (1979). But diasporic subjects are often constituted by trauma, particularly the Korean military brides and her kin who make up the backbone of the Korean American community in the U.S., and the temporality of trauma is non-linear. If we pay attention to the unconscious traumas that migrate along with Koreans in the diaspora, we can “be attentive to the disjunctive and retroactive hauntedness of history...” (Cheng 2000, 28). Besides the underlying assumption that assimilation is an almost inevitable and linear process, it is also presumed to be quantifiable by the ethnic group’s proximity to whiteness (Alba, Gordon). It is a taken-for-granted fact among some sociologists of immigration that Asian Americans are assimilated because of “their large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institution of the host society...[their] acceptance by the dominant group” as measured by “...their high intermarriage rates,” their residence in white neighborhoods, their proficiency in English (often at the exclusion of the native language), and their overall tendency to “prefer whites ” (Min and Kim 1999, 34-35). In a seminar on immigrants and American society held at the City University of New York, for example, sociologist of immigration Richard Alba defended the notion of assimilation against recent waves of criticism about the model’s ethnocentric biases.

He asked the audience to take Asian Americans as an example of a non-European group that is successfully assimilated. His evidence included statements such as “Asian kids don’t speak Asian languages.” On a second occasion, another Nancy Foner delivered a lecture in this same seminar, stating that Asian Americans are “honorary whites.”²⁸ If intermarriage and English-only are the markers of assimilation, then Koreans are the most assimilated of all Asian groups. What are the exclusions operating through this logic?

To take up this question, sociologist Pyong Gap Min challenges romantic notions of intermarriage, although his other work is ambivalent about assimilation and fraught with silence around issues of U.S. military prostitution. Min notes that:

According to *Annual Reports* by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 42,044 Korean female immigrants were admitted to the U.S. as wives of U.S. citizens in the 1970’s... a similar number were admitted in the 1980’s (Lee, 1991). The vast majority are married to U.S. servicemen...Korean women who marry U.S. servicemen generally had low socio-economic status...many of them were born and raised in rural villages and migrated to Seoul and other large cities in search of urban employment (1995, 219-220).

Although Min also omits any mention of the likelihood that the urban employment many of these women obtained, through which they met their husbands, was sex

²⁸ Foner gave her talk about one week after September 11th. In the talk, she did not make distinctions among Asian groups, treating South Asians and East Asians alike as “honorary whites.” During the Q&A, I asked how she understood the wave of violence against South Asians and people “who appeared to be Arab” during the aftermath of September 11th if all Asians were indeed “honorary whites.” I suggested that the events following 9/11 showed evidence that Asian Americans were not as close to being white as sociologists of immigration once thought, and that the moment we were living provided an opportunity for sociologists to revise the storyline about Asian assimilation in the U.S. At this point, the seminar coordinator went to the next question rather than give Foner time to respond to my concerns. A few questions later, another Asian American member of the audience said, “I would like to repeat the question Grace asked since it was not answered,” however, the question was glossed over again. Neither the speaker nor the moderator made any attempt to address the questions. Perhaps the revision of the story about Asians in the U.S. is also a rupturing of the story that sociologists tell themselves about themselves, a disruption of the fantasy of honorary whiteness, a fantasy in which sociologists have as much investment as do those who are named “honorary white.”

work in the camptown, he critiques intermarriage as a taken-for-granted indicator of Koreans' successful assimilation into mainstream U.S. without questioning the quality or context of those marriages. Min goes on to say about Korean military brides that "Their language barrier and lack of assimilation make marital adjustment very difficult...Moreover, many interracial married U.S. servicemen neglect and even abuse their Korean wives, deciding that the women who provided them companionship in Korea are no longer valuable to them in this country" (1995, 220).

But the Korean immigrant women whose stories are told above also support this storyline. Their quiet efforts to be thankful and unobtrusive and secretive about their pasts have earned them a leading role (off-stage) in the production of the fantasy of honorary whiteness.

One

does not tell her interviewer the details of how she met her husband, other than that it was at the sergeant's club, that when she first started working there she was a young virgin girl who was hired to entertain the men, and that there were older girls there too, looking for American boyfriends, and that she too became an older girl looking for an American boyfriend.

Two

speaks to her interviewer about how military brides meet their husbands.

Ninety percent of them, she says, met through prostitution. But she, of course, is in the ten percent of women who were not prostitutes.

Three and Four

say the same. "Most of those women were yankee whores. But not me. Not me..."

3. the denial of grief

People changed names, lied about their ages and ports of entry, and generally covered over their tracks so their lives became unintelligible to their children... (Fischer 1986, 210).

What is denied in service of the project of assimilation?²⁹ David Eng argues that the history of Asian America is a history of exclusion—an exclusion of Asian bodies from the official history of the U.S. and an exclusion of Asian bodies from migrating to U.S. shores. He refers to these omissions as “a lack that threatens to

²⁹ In Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai’s paper, “The Remaking of the Model Minority: Perverse Projectiles under the Spectre of (Counter) Terrorism,” the authors refer to assimilation as a “project.” Like Cheng, they suggest that assimilation is part of a national agenda of idealizing white citizenship through the demarcation of racialized bodies. The theoretical frameworks for studying assimilation used by Asian American studies scholars such as Puar and Rai, Cheng, and Eng contrast sharply with traditional sociological models that view assimilation as a normal “process” that immigrants go through, rather than a “project” of normalization carried out by networks of discipline and control, of which the field of sociology is thoroughly implicated.

consign existence to oblivion” (Eng 2001, 37). There are other exclusions to add to Eng’s list. Asian immigrants are denied grief about the traumatic histories that precipitated their migration, but also about the traumatic beginnings in a country whose national ideals are “sustained by the exclusion-yet-retention of racialized others...” as Anne Anlin Cheng points out (2000, 10). In order to participate in the project of assimilation, Asian immigrants must perform the role of the “almost white” who never quite arrives at assimilation, the “excluded-yet-retained” racialized other. They suffer from the “deep-seated, intangible, psychical complications for people living within a ruling episteme that privileges that which they can never be” (Cheng 2000, 7). They must deny their own grief and risk being consigned to oblivion...

Yanggongju Five

could not find a husband. Neither Korean nor American wanted to marry her, and so she stayed in Korea working the backrooms of camptown bars until one day she was found dead and naked, her body raped and skewered like a pig’s. The murdered Five mobilized anti-U.S. politics and became a household name in Korea, and among Koreans in the U.S. too.

One

considered herself lucky. Her fate might have been like Five’s had she not met the sergeant. Some of the other girls at the bar questioned how she could

marry an old man like that. Instead, she took the advice of women who assured her that older men know how to take care of a girl.

Two

wiped the slate clean, but traces of what once was still ached and especially at times like this. She hid the shock of Five's murder. She hid it along with everything else because how would she explain to her family that she knew Five personally because they once worked in the same bar? Two pretended to not know anything about Five or the world in which she lived or the national drama incited by her death. Two kept quiet and raised her children to never mind about politics and just be good citizens.

Three

made every effort to shelter her children from things that were unpleasant. And still, she ended up losing them to her husband. But she was as also to blame for alienating them. On rare occasions when they asked about her life during the war, she did not give them any of the information that they would not find in textbooks- that there were 5 million dead or missing (among them her father), that there were thousands massacred by U.S. troops (among them her brother), that there were 10 million separated from their families (among them her sister), that almost all the rest were left homeless. Instead she said, "Why you wanna know about those kind of things? We're in America now"

and her children went on believing that the U.S. had done a great favor to Korea by leading the war.

Four

divorced and remarried and relocated to New York City, far from her extended family. More and more, she found herself bruised and bleeding like Five, except that she did not die and have a whole country demand her vindication. The conflict carried out on her flesh was unremarkable. Her aggressor went unpunished and her wounds unnoticed by everyone except the social worker who referred her to the shelter, and there she would meet yanggongju six...

Against the denial of grief that is the condition for a sociological narrative about Koreans as honorary whites, comes the social work counternarrative, which paints a radically different picture of yanggongjus as women who are broken by the “process” of assimilation. The body of work done by social service providers in Korean American communities demonstrates the ways in which the unequal power relations in marriages between Korean women and American GIs often make assimilation more difficult, not less, for the Korean women who have migrated to the U.S. Takagi and Park (1996) estimate that 80% of such marriages end in divorce, and many of the women come out of these marriages abused, homeless and/or mentally ill. Although the research in this area is fairly new and much of the evidence is anecdotal,

the services provided by organizations such as the Rainbow Center in Flushing, New York and My Sister's Place in Seoul, Korea attest to the fact that there is a population of intermarried Korean women who are the recipients of housing assistance, social services, and psychiatric care. The social work counternarrative suggests that the yanggongju as GI bride lives in equally abject conditions as the yanggongju as yankee whore, yet her abjection is not easily apparent because of the way in which she is cloaked in the glitter of the American dream.

Yanggongju Six

married a man who left her almost as soon as she landed in the U.S., so she started her new life with no resources and two young children. She found work in a massage parlor and one night while she left her children at home unsupervised, her youngest was killed in an accident. An accident, yet Six was convicted of murder. There were things that influenced the jury – Six was a sex worker and a foreigner with a heavy accent in a North Carolina courtroom. Word spread about Six's conviction, and even Koreans on the peninsula began to rally around her as if it had been their Koreanness that was put on trial by the United States. After seven years, the International Committee to Free Yanggongju Six liberated her from prison.

One

heard about Six while watching her daughter perform on television. One had proudly sent her daughter to college and then to graduate school where she

got a Ph.D. in English, but instead of becoming a professor like One had hoped, she became a spoken word poet of a group called Yellow Rage. She spoke her rage about everything except the circumstances of her own birth. Once, the daughter was asked in a media interview how her parents first met. To One's relief, she answered, "I don't know."

Two and Three

no longer paid attention to news about Koreans, either in the U.S. or on the peninsula. They had arrived in America, so there was nothing left to complain about.

Four

had never heard of Six until they met at the shelter. Six had only been out of prison a couple years before she ended up on the streets, homeless and hallucinating. It seemed that the International Committee to Free Yanggongju Six hadn't considered all the implications of her liberation but somehow Six managed to find a shelter full of yanggongjus. Four thought it strange that all the women there were married to Americans, and she started to wonder if maybe she had been wrong all this time, thinking that American men were better...

These stories begin to question intermarriage as an indicator of successful assimilation and offer an example of what's left out so that the sociological story of

assimilation can make sense. They also begin to unfold some of the ways in which there is a price to pay for honorary whiteness. The psychic violence experienced by diasporic subjects when they attempt to assimilate is perhaps what is most troubling about the project of assimilation. As Michael Fischer says about the experience of immigration for Asian Americans, the first generation participates in the project by always covering over their tracks in order to make their lives unintelligible to their children. Likewise, Korean military brides go to great lengths to hide their pasts from their children to try to erase the stigma of prostitution. But this type of psychic violence is not only what's most troubling *about* the project of assimilation, it is also what's most troubling *to* it as the yanggongju comes to haunt the fantasy of honorary whiteness. She is ghosted by her own past covered up, as well as by all those yanggongjus left behind in the camptown and those who have escaped the camptown through death. The secret she harbors about herself and about the historical traumas she embodies is transmitted unconsciously, down and across generations, creating a monstrous family of Korean assimilation in the U.S.

4. the ghost and the dream

I dream of her still... she drifts through my sleep almost nightly...When I wake, I try to envision her face, but her features melt into one another... as if through several layers of photographic negatives... at fourteen, peeking out from under the paper bag she had put on her head when we went to Dr. Pak's VD clinic; at seventeen when, with her mother's makeup smeared over her face, she taught me about "honeymooning" in the backbooths of the GI clubs; at twenty when she pushed a wet and wailing MyuMyu into my arms... in every memory I have of her, I can hear her words, see her gestures, but her face remains a fragmented blur. (Keller 2002, 1-2)

This is a portrait of the yanggongju in the unconscious of Korean diaspora, particularly from the perspective of the biracial Korean American writer, Nora Okja Keller. In Keller's imagination, the yanggongju is a figure not fully enfigured, but rather a fuzzy outline filled in by a suturing of memory flashes. The yanggongju seems to be less amorphous in the dream state, but it is upon waking that she becomes ambiguous and phantasmatic. She hovers there, in the liminal space between sleeping and waking, between psychic and social history. The yanggongju about whom this narrator dreams is a perfect example of the transgenerational phantom of Abraham and Torok's conception. She lives in the dreamer's unconscious as an assemblage of traumatic moments and a shameful family secret who threatens the waking fantasy of honorary whiteness.

When the yanggongju as GI bride represses within her own body the yanggongju as yankee whore, she is haunted by the ghosts of her own past and these ghosts are passed down through the generations, haunting children with the gaps in knowledge about their family histories. On www.halfkorean.com, a website dedicated to exploring the unique issues and struggles of biracial Koreans, you can find interviews with "prominent half Koreans." One of the standard questions is "how did your parents meet?" The answer is always some variation of "I don't know." But so often, we do not even know that we are haunted by what we do not know.

Yanggongju Seven

like so many other yanggongjus, does not tell her children how she met her husband. When one of them asks what she did for a living in Korea, she is silent and stares at a little spot on the wall as if to tune out the infantile questions. But the child asks repeatedly. At first, Seven says that she was a waitress, but later she changes her answer to teacher, because teacher is a far more respectable profession. Whenever the question is asked, Seven's fear is palpable. She is visibly disturbed, and her disturbance passes through the other members of the family. They live with an anxiety that is so present that it becomes almost imperceptible.

Traces of transgenerational haunting can be found in the fiction and non-fiction works of diasporic Koreans in which the yanggongju appears as a mark of a traumatized collective memory and an ambiguous personal history, suggesting that there is a shared theme of haunting around one's mother, or other relative, as a U.S. military prostitute. Historian, Ji-Yeon Yuh (2003), for example, describes how in Korean American communities, military brides are "women in the shadows." She confesses that part of the motivation for her research stems from her own uncertainty as to whether someone in her own family might have been a yanggongju. The work of biracial Korean Americans also explores questions of the authors' uncertain kinship to the yanggongju. In Heinz Insu Fenkl's memoir, *Memories of my Ghost Brother*, the child narrator recovers a lost memory of an older brother who disappeared as a young child, and we find out that this disappearance was a

consequence of the mother's desire to escape her life as a yanggongju. As in Keller's narrative, the memory of the separated brother flashes up in the form of a photographic image, a memory of a family photo taken when Fenkl was an infant and his brother was a toddler. The mother eventually confesses that she had placed the brother in adoption as a condition for her marriage to Fenkl's father, a U.S. serviceman. But this sacrifice only makes her invest more hope into her image of America. America comes to haunt her dreams even more because "That's where all the wonderful things come from, and that's where he is... Someday I'll find him... That's why I'll go to America" (Fenkl 1996, 267). This act of giving up a child in exchange for a ticket to the U.S. can be read by some as greedy and morally bankrupt, especially when the person in question is already stigmatized by her status as a prostitute, but on the other hand it can also be read as an act of courage and love, especially when the grandeur of the U.S. is hyperbolized in the psyches of most Koreans and what better gift can a mother give than the chance to grow up over there?

The lost brother is not the only ghost, however. Fenkl's autobiography is teeming with them, like the black biracial child who mysteriously disappears shortly before his mother marries a white GI (because "who would marry a whore with a Black kid?") and the young yanggongju who commits suicide because she cannot find a husband (Fenkl 1996, 229). Ultimately, *Ghost Brother* is a story of how family lineage is deliberately obscured as part of the mother's investment in the fantasy of America and in the chance to leave her history as a prostitute behind.

The camptown of Fenkl's memoir as well as of Keller's fiction is the camptown of the 1960's, which in a few years would become the target of the clean-

up campaigns discussed in Katharine Moon's work (see chapter 3). Bruce Cumings diary from 1968 offers another portrait of a camptown outside of Seoul:

The areas near the American military base are drastically deprived... here the local parasitic population lives... [in] filthy, backward, shameful "living establishments." The worst aspect, though, is the whoring district... there are clusters of 'clubs' catering only to Americans. Rock-and-roll blares from them, they are raucously painted and titled, and ridiculous-looking painted Korean girls—often very young—peer from the doors. Nothing is more silly-looking... than these girls in minny skirts [sic]. Several of them hooted at me as I walked by... but the most disconcerting of all was a middle-aged woman with two kids hanging on to her who, in the middle of the street, asked me to come and 'hop on' in the chimdeh [bed]... The town is crawling with mixed-blood children. They seemed fairly well cared for—certainly not beggars... these kids are probably well cared for because the whole town is in the dregs, removed from the prejudices of wealthy Koreans from which the terrible treatment of mixed race kids results. There is no reason to shit on them—they'll bring in good money as whores or pimps when they're fourteen. Goofy-looking, stupid soldiers walk arm-in-arm with whores who are often only young girls—very very young girls... (Cumings 1992, 171)

Although Cumings observations are somewhat consistent with other depictions of the camptown from this era, his tone is highly moralistic, indicting both the "goofy-looking, stupid" GI clients and the "local parasitic population," but without implicating readers in the "filthy, backward, and shameful... whoring district" that he allows them to voyeuristically look upon. Keller's novel *Fox Girl*, by contrast, shows the same world yet it is a world that is thoroughly interimplicated with ideals of America. Like Fenkl's autobiographical work, Keller also looks at how the phenomena of colonization, war and prostitution obscure bloodlines. *Fox Girl* is set in an America Town in Korea during the 1960's, a community made up of American GI's and the Koreans who serve them. It is a world that reflects the gaze of those who prefer to think of themselves on the outside- where biracial children are hated for being racially contaminated but envied if they are taken to the U.S., where

American goods are looked down upon as “whore’s rubbish,” yet seductive enough to lure new generations of girls into the camptowns. In the following scene, two teenage girls explore one of their mother’s belongings.

Sometimes we’d open up a drawer and find strange things to eat, like Ho Hos. The first time I tried that chocolate roll, I spit out the cake with its too-sweet lining of sugar cream. I couldn’t believe that Americans, who could have anything in the world, would eat that. I thought Sookie had played a joke on me, handing me that shiny-wrapped present and telling me it was *U.S.A.* so I would expect something delicious... she and I ate our way through the box before I decided I liked it. I saved the wrappers from those Ho Hos for a long while after that day, pasting them on my bedroom wall with chewed up bits of rice. (Keller 2002, 11).

This scene evokes the internalization of an imperialist gaze in which American goods are superior to the indigenous and results in an inability to reject even the packaging – or maybe it’s precisely the packaging that is so seductive. In the landscape of *Fox Girl*, it is the desire for American pleasures and the transgenerational psychic bind to America draws the girls into prostitution.

In another scene, the girls and their pimp, a 17-year-old biracial boy, are singing a song in English, even though they are uncertain of what the words mean. It is an army song they have heard American soldiers sing while marching. The boy-pimp may have learned this song from his yankee father, although he can’t be sure because memories of his father are as worn and faded as the letter from America that he carries in his pocket. They decipher the words, one by one. “Toad” is easy. *Toggobi*. But some of the words prove more challenging because there is no direct translation into Korean. “Fucked,” one of the girls explains, “means... ‘Your mama will die.’ So don’t ever say it.” “Whore” is the second word that comes into question. This question is met with silence among the children, perhaps because the knowledge

of this word was corporal. "We knew what whore meant. We knew whose mothers they were" (Keller 2002, 81).

*I found a whore by the side of the road.
Knew right away she was dead as a toad.
Her skin was all gone from her tummy to her head.
But I fucked her, I fucked her even though she was dead...*

The children of yanggongjus, Keller suggests, carry the knowledge of their family histories in their bodies despite an absence of language to translate or narrate. One of the refrains of *Fox Girl* is "Blood will tell," referring to the future of the yanggongju's children. The suggestion is, of course, that there are generational continuities in military prostitution. "Blood" here can be regarded as genetic disposition, but it can also be read as a transgenerational haunting in which those who are more intimately tied to the violences of war and colonization are bound together.

Yanggongju Seven

tells her daughter "don't be like me when you grow up," but she does not explain what that means. She tells her daughter to stay away from nightclubs and bars. "Stay away from men." She tells her daughter to ask no questions about what came before America. "Just go to school and be a good girl. Go to school and study hard and you be anything you want to be, not like me." Seven does everything possible to change the course of her daughter's future so that history can be washed out of her blood.

As the story of *Fox Girl* unfolds, family lineages become more and more ambiguous, as characters speculate about which of them “share the same whorish blood,” and as memories of their American fathers fade away (Keller 2002, 111). In their uncertainty, the young people in *Fox Girl* become increasingly entangled in the nightmare of the American dream. One cannot help but wonder if this unraveling of an ambiguous family history born of U.S. military domination is also about the author’s own sense of trauma. In an interview in AsianWeek.com, Keller is asked “Do your characters haunt you?” She speaks to the ways in which she, too, became a part of that world she writes about. “I feel like I live a dual life. My waking life, which is my real life, is centered around my family... Then there’s my other life, my writing life, which usually takes place in the dark of night... I had trouble shaking that darkness when I got up in the morning... Towards the end of writing the book, I felt that parts of the characters were seeping into my own character...” (Dual Lives). In other interviews, Keller speaks of being the biracial child of a Korean mother and an American father, but she does not reveal any details about how her parents met. Perhaps like other biracial Korean American children, she may never have been told about her family history, or like the haunted in Abraham and Torok’s clinical casework, she may have been silenced by the “horror at violating a parent’s or family’s guarded secret, even though the secret’s text and content are inscribed within... The horror of transgression... is compounded by the risk of undermining the fictitious yet necessary integrity of the parental figure in question” (1994, 176). In either case, the ghosts of U.S. militarism in Korea and American-Korean intermarriage assert themselves in Keller’s text, as well as in her own unconscious.

The psychic dynamics that are elaborated in Keller's ostensibly fictional work often disappear in the sociological narrative of assimilation. The intermarriages that are taken for granted as measures of assimilation also serve an allegorical function in the interrelated projects of U.S.-Korea relations and of perpetuating the fantasy of America. The marriage attests to interracial harmony and international cooperation, and it is within this frame that the yanggongju as GI bride is an exemplar of assimilation whose progeny become "honorary whites." The notion of honorary whiteness depends on an exclusion of a violent relationship, an exclusion that is in itself violent. And what if one is of the "assimilated" and still has knowledge of the violent relationship that has been forgotten in public memory? What does it mean to be haunted by a history of division and destruction, and then to migrate and become assimilated into a country that had an active role in creating and maintaining that division? What is the cost of honorary whiteness?³⁰ Contrary to sociological theories that view assimilation as linear and progressive with each new generation, one of the unintended consequences of the project of assimilation is the passing down of ghosts.

³⁰ Not only are there psychic consequences of investing in honorary whiteness, but there are political costs as well. As Puar and Rai point out, certain Asian bodies have become "ambivalent tests of the model minority construct." Just as South Asians have slid from model minority to potential terrorist in post 9-11 America, the specter of the axis of evil and North Korean communism have also troubled honorary whiteness in that the scrutiny of Korean American and South Korean activists in the U.S. has intensified since 9-11. The New York-based pro-unification activist group Nodutdol, for example, held an anti-war event that was shut down by the Korean consulate and the Korean CIA for fear of Korean Americans appearing to be "anti-U.S." Those who still aspire to be "honorary whites" must play the role of the "good" and "grateful" Korean by constantly demonstrating loyalty to the U.S. and disavowing sympathy with North Korea, thereby underscoring how critique is much more dangerous for the non-white, and even for the "honorary white."

The progress tales of assimilation and the American dream, could not have been without the woman in the shadows. Once here, the yanggongju helped earn Asian Americans the title of honorary white because of her high incidence of marriage to white Americans, her birthing of biracial children who don't speak Korean, and her secrecy about her past life in Korea. But as much as she has been complicit with her own erasure, she also disturbs the dream. The transgenerational traumas that the yanggongju transmits to her presumed-to-be assimilated children, as well as the new traumas induced by assimilation itself, sully honorary whiteness and render the fantasy incoherent.

She inhabits the unconscious and disturbs the dream... yet I dream of her still... Images of her do not appear like so many snapshots of our lives. I cannot say at what age she first worked in the backbooths of GI clubs for I did not witness her transformation into a yanggongju. Some nights when I dream of her, she is just an outline colored in by my confusion, or she is more amorphous still, an energy that moves through me. There is only one image that is in perfect focus, and I see it more clearly than my eyes are capable of.

I am standing in shadows and the city looks like the New York of an apocalyptic future in which all that remains are the blackened bodies of buildings. They too are dead. A voice speaks to me from the air and leads me away from the tall buildings until I am walking on dirt paths through a barren landscape. I keep walking, walking, until I come to a small wooden house. The voice leads me inside, into the kitchen and my mother's sister is there, an old woman, as she is now. I enter the living room where I encounter my mother watching television. She is much

younger than me, almost still a child. There are other presences too, shadowy figures whose faces are blurred and gray, faces once captured in photographs that burned up along with everything else, even his body. But my mother could never call him "dead." Only, "disappeared." I am no longer in a future New York, but in a former Kyung Sang province. It is 1960 and I am not yet born. But there I am, an adult woman with my teenage mother, watching television. And I can see what she is. She is dressed in western clothing with her eyes rimmed in black. I did not witness her transformation because in my dreams she is already a yanggongju.

she disturbs the dream
 this dream to which she can never assimilate
 this dream that is a suspension of waking
 this dream that is a nightmare

5. the unassimilable of trauma

Yanggongju Seven

passes every test of assimilation. She married a white man, gave birth to half-white, English-speaking children, sent them to college, and now lives in an affluent white suburb (although not in a house of her own). She is well-assimilated in the sense that her neighbors do not see her otherness, because they do not see her. She has stopped going around in circles, moving from place to place. In fact, she hardly moves at all. Coded by the authorities as a "non-productive" and potentially dangerous member of society, she is kept under tight control—isolated and heavily medicated so as not to create a

disturbance. Seven wears the markings of her own erasure etched into her skin and bone, layers of unmaking and remaking, of covering over tracks, of fictionalizing a life that was ultimately deemed unfit to live anyway. But her han does not rest peacefully in her body...

The way in which the yanggongju has haunted Korean diaspora complicates the narrative of honorary whiteness on two levels. On one level, the aspects of experience that are erased from the official storyline come back to haunt in the form of other narratives that bring the yanggongju back to memory, such as the social work counternarrative and the cultural productions by biracial Koreans in which the yanggongju is central to the story. The yanggongju as GI bride is a figure brought into being by an overinvestment in the American dream whose ability to assimilate rests on making her life history unintelligible. She is a traumatized figure, but the radical potential of trauma is that it is force independent of the will of the subject of trauma. Her haunting gets distributed to all those who have tried to repress her and to those who have been complicit with or unaware of the erasures. But this is not just a matter of uncovering something that was previously unseen, but of how the haunting produces something new that was not there before. On another level, the yanggongju opens up new sites of resistance that go beyond the counter-narrative. This traumatic figure brings an inherent volatility to narrative because of the ways in which trauma often registers at the level of sensory perception but does not fully enter into consciousness.

The yanggongju's frustrated grief and rage, her *han*, is absorbed by both those who know about her but would rather forget and those who don't know but are afflicted by someone else's secret. Her *han* travels the paths along which yanggongju have been banished or resurrected, and creates new ones between disparate bodies and places. The ghosted secrets that have circulated with her have created gaps beneath the surface of narrative, rupturing what Michael Fischer calls "contemporary rhetorics of domination" (1986, 198). Eng and Kazanjian would argue that these ruptures are the "ghostly remains of an unrealized or idealized potential" (2002, 13).

The remains, the traces of trauma left by the yanggongju's *han*, are the excesses that cannot be assimilated, neither into a dominant narrative such as the story of Asian assimilation or honorary whiteness, nor into a counter-narrative about the struggles of Korean military brides in America. The yanggongju's trauma disrupts the discourse of assimilation because trauma is precisely that which cannot be assimilated. The ghostly presence of the yanggongju is that which the "...psychic apparatus can register but which cannot be integrated into an individual meaningful 'experience'..." (Johnston 1998, 45). It is the unassimilable always hovering around the "honorary white" but only made visible in flashes of memory that appear when the yanggongju is screen and screened. But the unassimilable of trauma is also a protective space against the potentially dangerous consequences of assimilation because to become fully assimilated, in this sense, means to assimilate that which is in excess of one's conceptual apparatus. To become fully assimilated, then, is to risk madness...

Interlude

Ten: the Reagan era

Oak tree was the first to welcome her home. Children were at school at the time of her release and Ok-hee, like husband, had become increasingly unreliable and would disappear for weeks at a time with no explanation. Neither had much to say after the event because both held her responsible, so she signed the discharge papers, entered the outside by herself, and walked across town in hospital bedclothes. When she arrived at the house, she noticed that Oak tree had changed position, its big arms sheltering mang-nei's window and smaller limbs opening outwards so that she could fall into its embrace.

You took care of children while I'm away, Oak tree?

Yes, nothing to worry about.

You tell them where I went?

No, Soon-Hee-ya, I keep your secrets.

They think I'm bad mother, don't they?

I promise them you come back.

Oak tree, I made big big mistake...Baby gone is my fault.

Baby too weak and don't belong here.

Baby too weak because I don't feed it enough?

Nothing you can do. Baby's fate to go away.

Maybe I don't understand what baby telling me because my English is bad.

Hal-soo up-ji... nothing you can do.

Why I didn't study English harder? Everything my fault, Oak tree.

She pressed her face and palms against the tree's bark and it responded to her touch, sprouted long fingertips and caressed the back of her heaving shoulders. *Ool-ji ma, Soon-Hee-ya...Hal-soo up-ji...*

The small grove of trees surrounding the house was a sign that her family was slightly more privileged in material wealth than was typical in this community of modest working people. She was grateful that what she lacked in cultural capital, she made up for in landscaping, but she was also indebted to the trees for more than this. They quieted her grief and shaded her most private moments, watched over her family at night, simultaneously kept her children from getting out and intruders from getting in, but most importantly, they were her most trusted source for classified information. Oak tree was the eldest, so urgent communiqués came through him. They had devised a non-verbal messaging system to protect against eavesdropping and she had learned at an early age to decode sound patterns. This unusual translation skill was the only reason she could think of to give thanks to the Japanese. So when Oak tree dropped a clatter of acorns onto the roof of her car as she sat inside waiting for the engine to warm up, she knew the meaning of it instantly. *He is watching you.*

Soon the trees extended their powers of communication to objects inside the house, with the dual intent of protecting her and increasing her efficiency. She was one of the first mothers in the neighborhood to invest in microwave technology, and the beeps emitted by the radar range reminded her that this investment had indeed paid off because she was now the chosen one who would guard all the secrets of technoscience. The radar range had one feature that facilitated her work above all—the digital clock. The red-light display of hours and minutes needed no interpretation of when forty-four turned into forty-five. With the pinpoint accuracy of digital microwave technology, the only thing required was her full attention and the use of her vocal chords at the crucial moments of january seventh, march nineteenth, july fifty, and september forty-five. Eight times a day she submitted to the clockvoice and let it speak through her to announce the time. This had been her daily practice for some years now and with the advent of the digital she hoped to finally achieve mastery, but without the slow churning of the minute hand in her gaze, she became less watchful and almost lazy.

Pabo-ya! 7:52 already!! You missed it again. You want more people to get hurt because you don't do your job? You want to ruin children's chance to go to good school?

She wasn't sure which voices were chastising her because the trees began sounding too much alike and although she knew the clockvoice could not speak without her assistance, it did sometimes transmit thoughts into her head using microwaves.

"Aigu! What I'm doing?" she said out loud. Her husband thought it was because she was pouring coffee into her cereal. "Why I have to do this job, anyway?"

"You call sitting on your ass all day a 'job'? All you ever do is waste my hard-earned money and you have the nerve to complain? I oughta send you and your good-for-nothing children back to that god-awful place so you can rot in hell with the rest of the gooks. I never should've brought you here in the first place..."

Her husband's voice faded under the chorus of the others and among them was her sister's.

Don't make any more mistakes, Soon-hee-ya.

Ok-hee, why they pick me to do this?

They know you worked for government back home.

How they know? You tell them?

Government keep hostess license on file for long time. Now military dictatorship know everything about us, and they are close friend of President Ronald Reagan.

I don't like that man, un-ni. He been bothering me and children for long time.

Be careful, Soon-hee-ya. It's not safe here any more. Maybe it's time to go.

Eleven: DMZ

The reasons for her actions were not always clear, and became less and less so as the years wore on. The one thing she was certain of was that she needed respite so she announced her resignation and cut down the trees, releasing their spirits into the air. Oak tree was too large for her axe, and was her elder besides, so he was left standing when she pulled out of the driveway with her children and belongings packed into the car.

Husband will sleep for another five hours. We get to Idaho before he wakes up.

She stopped only for gas and food. First son took her turn at the wheel while she slept according to her usual pattern, no more than four hours somewhere between 3:19 and 7:50. It was this cycle she wanted to break, to liberate herself from the confines of the clockvoice and the trees, her husband and the president, and live where there were no government officials forcing her to work, no military, no threat of danger. She picked a spot on the other end of the United States with a name that sounded like hope and prayed that she was right.

Twelve: occupation

They moved into a small one-bedroom apartment where the three of them slept on the floor Korean-style. First son got a job at Pathmark to help pay the rent, but she told mang-nei to never mind about working and keep studying so she could go to Harvard. For a moment she had found the peace she was longing for. All was quiet before the invasion.

Regret simmered about what she had done to the trees, but she wasn't sure if the mistake had been to let Oak tree live or to let the others die. Oak tree became rightly angered and unleashed his wrath by commanding the tree spirits to follow her, but when they arrived she could hardly recognize them. Multiplied and variously disguised, they moved in without warning. Another person might have shown indignation at their improper behavior, but her previous employment in diplomacy informed her that this was indeed a delicate matter. One of the things she remembered most from etiquette and good conduct training was to speak gently.

This is small apartment and already three of us. Isn't it better for you to go someplace where you be more comfortable?

But they insisted on staying and reassured her that they needed very little space because they liked to keep close together and swarm around her head. But soon the external noise began.

Thirteen: evacuation

Saturday 2:01: The sounding of an alarm that she cannot identify.

“Mang-nei? What’s that noise?”

“Don’t know. Not an ambulance, is it?”

Saturday 2:01: Spasms in her legs and lungs.

It resembles only one thing she has heard before.

What is that, Ok-Hee?

You remember, don’t you Soon-Hee-ya?

She sucks in breath but no air flows.

...Red army is coming.

Saturday 2:01: Voices buzzing caution in her ear.

Aigu! What we gonna do?

Don’t make same mistake this time.

Siren is too loud and I can’t hear what they telling us to do.

Why you listen to them? They don’t know what they’re talking about.

What we gonna do then, Ok-hee?

Stay inside.

Saturday 2:01: Yellow-haired soldier standing in the corner, ready to fire.

Is he the one? She approaches quietly.

Stay away from there! He gonna shoot if you’re not careful.

What if he start shooting, we gotta go outside?

Outside more dangerous. Bombs falling from sky.

What if house catch fire? How we are escaping?

Break the window, quick before soldier see you. If emergency inside, all we have to do is jump.

Saturday 2:01: First son shoveling the driveway.

His mother's fist crashes into the glass above and he looks at the dampened tinkering of shards falling on snow. He scoops up splinters of glass and wood and wonders what he will tell the landlord.

Saturday 2:01: Her wailing louder than the siren.

She kneels above him rocking and clutching her stomach.

Op-pa-ya-ah-ah... Op-pa-yaaa... mi-an-h-hae... aah-ha... aaaaah...

She wants to cover him up before her children come home but mang-nei is already there.

Saturday 2:01: Mang-nei standing in the doorway, hand over mouth.

She does not comprehend why her mother is curled up and sobbing in the middle of the living room floor, because she can't see the body of her twelve-year-old uncle bleeding into the carpet.

Saturday 2:01: Commander-in-Chief reminding her of her duty.

You were chosen to do a job, Soon-Hee-shi.

But I already quit from this job long time ago. Can't you find someone else?

If it were that simple, we would not have hired you. But your work has become careless.

What I'm doing wrong?

I can't give you the answers.

She can't recall anything special that had ever transpired at 2:01 but each time the signal comes, she tries a different permutation—February First, February 1901, February 2001 in the event that it stands for something that hasn't happened yet. But every error seems to yield graver consequences.

3 million are dead...

For weeks she has been trying to crack the code of 2:01, even though clockvoice has played no part in this. It's apparent that this call to action comes from a higher authority.

...No more mistakes, Soon-hee.

Fourteen: Homecoming

Night after night of dreamless sleep, she dreams only when awake. This time, the awakening arrives at the sound coming out of the television.

Connie Chung speaks:

Kim Soon-Hee has made a terrible mistake and must correct it immediately. It is time to put an end to the suffering she has brought to millions of innocent victims. Here to comment on the situation is her brother Kim Jae-Uk.

She searches the television for his face, but only the voice materializes:

Soon-Hee-ya, there is only one thing left for you to do. You must come home. It doesn't surprise me that you were the one to leave, but now you are forgiven. Come quickly. We are waiting.

Ok-Hee? What time is it?

Almost time. Your children are here waiting.

No, my children are here.

We are talking about the ones you left behind. They have been waiting patiently.

But my children over here, I can't leave them. Can they come with me?

No, they stay. Mang-nei is already older than you when first son was born. They are old enough to live by themselves.

Are all of you there, Ok-hee?

All of us, and op-pa is here too.

Does he remember me?

Of course. He is the one who called you back the first time.

He's mad at me for what I did to him?

No, Soon-hee. Nothing to feel guilty about...

What time is it?

9:44

Almost time to come home... Are you sure I'm doing right thing, Ok-hee?

We are sure.

Ok-hee...What time is it?

It is time.

Chapter Five
Diasporic Vision and Schizophrenic Multiplicity: Methods of Seeing Trauma

It's all over now.

Yes.

And you don't have to be afraid of Cholly coming at you anymore.

No.

That was horrible, wasn't it?

Yes.

The second time too?

Yes.

Really? The second time too?

Leave me alone! You better leave me alone.

Can't you take a joke? I was only funning.

I don't like to talk about dirty things.

Me neither. Let's talk about something else.

What? What will we talk about?

Why, your eyes.

Oh, yes. My eyes. My blue eyes...

--Toni Morrison (*The Bluest Eye*, 201)

In the concluding pages of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, the narrator tells us that "A little black girl yearns for the blue eyes of a little white girl, and the horror at the heart of her yearning is exceeded only by the evil of its fulfillment" (1970, 204). This is a story about a child's impossible wish, a wish that comes true alongside the character's destruction. Pecola Breedlove's mental breakdown at the end of the novel is a perfect example of the damaging effects of what Dubois called "double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (1903, 2) or of what Cheng describes as the "deep-seated, intangible, psychical complications for people living within a ruling episteme that privileges that which they can never be" (2000, 7). In Pecola's mind, she is granted not only the blue eyes

of her dreams, but also a split self that is the result of incorporating her experiences of sexual abuse and racial violence. Pecola believes that her blue eyes will protect her against further trauma because no one would dare hurt a child with pretty blue eyes, but the threat of an eye bluer than hers still lingers. The voice with whom Pecola discusses her concerns exists only in her mind, and it is this voice that allows Pecola's traumatic memories to be articulated.

Like the fictional child in Morrison's novel, the figure of the yanggongju also suffers from psychic collapse as a result of the violence of an impossible assimilation and a traumatic history that is erased in the service of one's assimilation. As discussed in chapter four, the works of diasporic Koreans demonstrate how escape from the camptown and "making it" in America are often at the expense of the yanggongju's well-being, and sometimes, her very life. If some things cannot be assimilated into the subject's experience without severe psychic consequences, then assimilation for the yanggongju and her kin propels them dangerously close to insanity. In this chapter, I want to address how the wish for America gives way to the tragedy of the wish's fulfillment, as well as how the notions of origin, destination, and return are haunted. Both the yanggongju's arrival/assimilation in America and her return home are impossible except within the framework of a fractured psyche. But I also want to think carefully about the productive capacities of what we have come to know as madness.

On one hand, it is important to recognize the real pain that comes with mental illness and to respond to the needs of those who are suffering, as have many social service providers working with Korean military brides and sex workers. On the other

hand, the discourse of social work is one of the forces that constructs the yanggongju as a body given to the immaterial excesses of trauma. The story about the yanggongju's descent into madness also needs to be understood within the context of cultural constructions of insanity that presume that the state of hallucination is always and only dangerous. Ivan Leudar and Philip Thomas's work on verbal hallucination is similarly concerned with examining the cultural and political understandings of "voice-hearing," which they claim is "caught between the rocks of mystification and pathologisation" (2000, 6). Leudar and Thomas note that the term "hallucination" comes from the language of contemporary psychology, which implies that hallucination is an "error in perception." Although Leudar and Thomas use the term "hallucination," they question the extent to which hearing voices is an "error." In the same spirit, I propose that we re-think hallucination as an important source of information that will allow us to see the traumas distributed across Korean diaspora by the yanggongju. I am particularly interested in the ways in which listening to the *voice* allows us to *see*, how seeing and speaking are inter-articulations, how the tongue and eyes are mutually important parts in an assemblage of trauma.

This capacity to see is a function of what Deleuze calls "distributed perception," or what John Johnston calls "machinic vision" in which "what is perceived is not located at any single place and moment in time, and the act by which this perception occurs is not the result of a single or isolated agency but of several working in concert or parallel." (1999, 44). In searching for bodies through which to speak, the ghost of the yanggongju is distributed across the time-space of diaspora in order to create another type of body, an assemblaged body whose purpose is to see

and speak the traumas that could not be seen and spoken by those who directly lived them. What happens in this process is that from the evacuated spaces of memory and narrative emerge alternate ways of listening to both the silences surrounding an unspeakable trauma and the “hallucinatory” voices that speak. The project of seeing and speaking trauma requires methodologies to facilitate new forms of perception that register the unassimilable of trauma, and writing forms that register the non-narrativizable. In other words, the form of this chapter is also an assemblage of trauma, a register of the breakdown and an attempt to “stage” the ghosts of a schizophrenic existence born of haunted histories.

The hallucinatory voices in this text speak to repetition and impossible return. The breakdown of a coherent narrative is signaled by a compulsive re-iteration of a date, “September forty-five,” a significant moment in Korean history, particularly the history of women’s militarized sexual labor. It is a moment that marks a shift from the militarized sexual slavery of Korean comfort women drafted by the Japanese to the camptown prostitution of the U.S. military. It is also a moment that has haunted my own unconscious since the first time I witnessed my mother’s speaking of the date. In the text, September 1945 is fantasmatically re-constructed as an originary moment, and thus the repetition is about a futile attempt to locate one’s origins. It is a moment that is also always present, and the repeated speaking of the words conjures the ghosts to materialize and multiply...

1. vision

***“...to bear the imperative to survive...
as the one who must tell what it means
to not see...”***

-Cathy Caruth (1996, 105)

Forgive me for not knowing about our history but even when I asked, you wouldn't tell me the truth about your life. Only once did I ask you why you were born in the country that was not the one you called home. But you did not answer me with words. You were quiet and stared straight ahead as if there were something else in the room, something I could not yet see. You never talked about the circumstances of your birth, or of mine, or about any of the events that took place before I could witness them. And I took for granted that things were as you said they were, and that the truth was even available for you to tell. Maybe you were too young to remember what had happened before you began your life in Korea, and too broken to remember what had happened after. But you see, I began recording these events that you do not talk about long before either of us knew what would happen at 9:45. And then the steady repetition of the date activated my memory. And I listened carefully to your speaking, and the gaps in between, and the patterns of noise and silence. Always at the same time everyday, your voice sounding with the clock told me that something happened at that time, or that something was about to happen. It is only now that I have the capacity to read the information I've had stored all these years. I am beginning to see these images of you sailing on the water, not knowing that you were moving towards a future that would silence you. Slowly I am beginning to see what you could not.

I began searching for a history. My own history. Because I had known all along that the stories I had heard were not true, and parts had been left out. I remember having this feeling growing up that I was haunted by something, that I was living within a family full of ghosts... There was this place that they knew about. I had never been there yet I had a memory for it. I could remember a time of great sadness before I was born. We had been moved. Uprooted... She tells the story of what she does not remember...³¹ (Tajiri 1991)

August 24, 1945, 5:20 P.M: A Japanese naval vessel carrying 10,000 Korean passengers sails through calm waters off the coast of Japan. There is an explosion from the front half of the ship, which becomes engulfed in flames. Pieces of ship and bodies of passengers are propelled into the ocean by the force of the explosion. A few bodies cling to the deck but eventually fall away into the water as the vessel splits in two, each half descending into the ocean. The passengers locked below panic as the lower decks of the ship fill with water. Two lovers search for each other even as their bodies are carried against their will by currents that are stronger than their desperation. Only after the split ship is fully submerged, there is calm once more, the water flecked with dead bodies and debris. It is silent at first, but then there are rumblings of life. A child's sobbing becomes audible. He is perched atop a floating fragment of the ship and nearby a hand emerges from the water and reaches upward. It is the hand of the man who searched years for his lover, from whom he was separated after having been conscripted into the labor camps. He finally finds her

³¹ From the script of Rea Tajiri's film *History and Memory* in which the narrator recounts her mother's experiences in a Japanese American internment camp during WWII. These are experiences that the mother never speaks of, and perhaps cannot even remember, yet the daughter inherits the memories through dreams, screen images, and affects of feeling haunted.

aboard this ship, until they are separated once again by the disaster. The man and the little boy are the sole survivors of this tale, sometimes called “the Korean Titanic.”³²

The North Korean film *Soul's Protest* melodramatically re-enacts the story of the first shipload of Korean slaves that set sail for Korea from Japan on August 22, 1945. The film dramatizes the actual incident of August 24, 1945 when the Ukishima Maru, the Japanese naval vessel full of thousands of newly liberated Korean slaves, exploded off the coast of Maizuru, Japan just nine days after the end of WWII. Weaving together memories of working in Japanese labor camps with the mundane occurrences of life on the ship as it sails towards Pusan harbor, the film not only narrates the atrocities of Japanese slavery made even more tragic by the deaths of thousands of Koreans on board the ship, but also expresses the Koreans' frustrated longing for freedom and homeland. The film's depiction of a vessel that is split in two, rendering its passengers dead or separated from their loved ones, symbolizes the Koreans' return to a country already divided and occupied by external forces and soon to be decimated by war. The return home, however, is made impossible in the most literal sense.

It was the fate of those on board the Ukishima Maru to never arrive in Korea. It must have been fate also that decided that you would not be on that first ship. The Japanese officials would wait until September to put you and your mother on the second ship, or maybe it was the third.³³ But in any case, not the first. You would not die that day in 1945...

³² In the semi-fictional film version of the Ukishima Maru incident, we see only two survivors. At least 80 people have come forward as survivors of the actual incident however.

³³ The Ukishima Maru was the first of a series of Japanese naval ships that would return the conscripted Koreans, many of whom were comfort women, to Korea.

Much of *Soul's Protest* takes place over two days in August 1945 as the ship circles the waters between Korea and Japan, while the Koreans on board grow restless anticipating the freedom that awaits them in Korea. The ship circles the waters never reaching its purported destination, never returning the Koreans to their homeland. Instead, we learn that the Japanese ship crew plans to blow up the vessel with the Koreans on board.³⁴ One Korean character does witness this scheme, but because his tongue had been cut out during his days as a slave, he fails to speak at the very moment in which speaking becomes most urgent. He must inform the others without the use of his tongue, through wild bodily gestures, grunts, and panicked eyes that warn of danger. Through his movements and sounds, the passengers decipher that the ship is about to explode, but it is too late to prevent the tragedy. The ship full of Koreans goes nowhere and eventually explodes. There are survivors of this disaster, however, like the little boy in the film who is too young to understand anything that has happened, who perhaps does not see anything, yet returns to the site of the sinking ship years later to tell the story.

While *Soul's Protest* focuses on the personal memories of the survivors, as well as the unrecorded memories of the dead, the film not only resurrects these memories for viewers who lived during August 1945, it also creates new memories for those who were not eyewitnesses of the event. "The dreamwork...the unconscious aspects of looking" belong not only to Korean colonized subjects, but are distributed across the diaspora, across bodies and generations (Eng 2001, 37).

³⁴ While the historical accuracy of *Soul's Protest* is debatable, the story is based on the survivors' eyewitness accounts of the Ukishima Maru incident in which they testified that some of the Japanese crew members evacuated the ship shortly before the explosion.

Soul's Protest offers an example of a distributed perception because equally important to the telling of its story are both the man who sees but cannot speak, and the child narrator who does not see the event but returns to tell the story years later. It is as if the mechanism for remembering were not an individual at the site of the tragedy, but an assemblage of eyes, tongues, and other parts distributed in time.

She tells the story of what she does not remember. But remembers one thing: why she forgot to remember... (Tajiri 1991)

This assemblage extends beyond the boundaries of the semi-fictional story to include the eyes of those watching the *Ukushima Maru* fifty-six years after its sinking. Drawing from Deleuze's notion of decoded perception and deterritorialized organs, Johnston calls this type of seeing "machinic vision," one that is not merely a function of a passive sense organ, the eye, but is an assemblage of eyes distributed and working in concert with heterogeneous terms in an environment. "Within the social space of these assemblages (which amount to a new form of collective psychic apparatus), the viewing or absorption of images constitutes a general form of machinic vision..." (1999, 46).

If, as Johnston suggests, machinic assemblages are a "a new form of collective psychic apparatus," then we might consider transgenerational haunting as an example of machinic vision, and of distributed perception more generally. In response to an inability of the subject to see the trauma that takes place before her very eyes, her eyes are distributed across bodies and generations. The paradox of trauma is that the closest encounter with a trauma often results in a "belatedness" of seeing or in not seeing at all, so that the imperative of witnessing is passed along to another as

trauma's legacy (Caruth 1996). These events are transmitted through images, words, affects, and performances, and are folded into the body along with traces of their contexts (Massumi 2002).

**There are things which have happened for which there have been
no observers, except for the spirits of the dead. (Tajiri 1991)**

A diasporic machinic vision is perhaps the only means by which haunted histories can be seen, through a distribution of the senses that at once resides in the film images of the *Ukishima Maru* exploding, in the eyes of the viewers of the film, in the silences of those who remember the incident but never speak about it, in the grief of survivors, in the bodies of those who absorbed their grief, in the remains of the disaster itself.

Diasporic machinic vision is an assemblage of the body memory of transgenerational haunting and the haunted subjects' own cultural productions disseminated through technological apparatuses that make visible the trauma that ones own eyes could not see in time.

April 14, 2002: *Soul's Protest* is screened in New York City at what the organizers believe is the first ever North Korean film festival in the U.S., although no one can be certain. The screening room is packed, with standing room only. The mostly Korean American audience watches horrific scenes of forced laborers being humiliated and beaten, body parts severed. The Korean body is subjected to direct control, to an exacting punishment that removes the disobedient tongue, dismembers the legs that try to run. At times, the viewers gasp in disbelief, but the film draws

them in closer and closer until they too are living in 1945, as if the image is no mere representation, as if the moment is now. There is a clear political urgency in watching this movie. After the screening there is a discussion about how much of the film is historically accurate and the extent to which Korean Americans and Koreans living in the U.S. can identify with this film. My identification comes most at the end when I am watching the little boy who survived, floating among the dead. And I am left thinking about fate.

It was the fate of those on board the first ship, to never arrive in Korea, to never return. It must have been fate also that decided that my mother would not be on that first ship. The Japanese officials would wait to put her and her mother on the second ship, or maybe it was the third.³⁵ But in any case, not the first. My mother would not die that day. The little boy in the film, who was about the same age as my mother was in 1945, also did not die that day. The little boy who survives the sinking of the ship, he is my mother, because she too survived the sinking of the ship by virtue of being on the next one. But what does it mean to survive to the kind of life from which you want desperately to be relieved?

...in 1946, the year I turned 24, a ship came to take us back home. I didn't want to return, but I had to get on board as all Koreans had been ordered by the government to return home. The ship was filled with comfort women. I had no family, no relatives and no home to go to. I thought it would be better to drown than to return to my country, but I didn't have the courage to throw myself overboard.³⁶ (Howard 1995)

³⁵ The Ukishima Maru was the first of a series of Japanese naval ships that would return the conscripted Koreans, many of whom were comfort women, to Korea.

³⁶ From an interview with Yi Yong-Suk, a former comfort woman. For the full transcript, see Howard (1995)

Do you consider throwing your body into the ocean so that you can be spared the fate of living? My mother was too young in 1945 to be tempted by such ideas, or to know that she would wish for death later. She was four years old then, moving towards...

2. voice

“The voice acquires a spectral autonomy, it never quite belongs to the body we see, so that even when we see a living person talking, there is always some degree of ventriloquism at work...”

- Slavoj Žižek

...the steady repetition of the date activated my memory. September forty-five. And I listened carefully to your speaking, and the gaps in between, and the patterns of noise and silence. Always at the same time everyday, your voice sounding with the clock told me that something happened at that time, or that something was about to happen. And so I was your witness. My eyes were already there when you were born into the labor camp. To labor in the same way as your mother, only for another country's army...

**She tells the story of what she does not remember...
a beautiful woman who lost her mind... (Tajiri 1991)**

When writing a history of the yanggongju, when indeed this history is written at all, one is often “caught between the rocks of mystification and pathologisation” (Leudar and Thomas 2000, 6). She is mystified by the gaping holes in her history, created by both an inability to remember and an enforced silence. She is

pathologized by efforts to expose her suffering. In both the fiction and film of diasporic Koreans and the social work literature on Korean sex workers and battered military brides, there is a narrative pattern that is now familiar in the yanggongju's life history. It begins in rural poverty and ends in psychosis. Take the story of Kyung Richards, for example.³⁷ As a young teenager she migrates to the city to look for employment, and begins working as a prostitute near a U.S. military base. She marries one of her clients and moves to the U.S. with him and settles in a white community. They have two children together but then the husband becomes abusive and she ends up alone with two children support. She is imprisoned for the accidental death of one of her children (and this is perhaps the only aspect of her narrative that is unusual). Years later she is released from prison, but never regains custody of the other child. By the end of this story, we are told, she is a homeless schizophrenic who is "obliged to 'choose' between militarized prostitution and hunger, between domestic violence and homelessness, between police raids and violent clients, between mental illness and psychotropic drugs" (Suh 2000, 157).

Like Kyung Richards, the figure of trauma in the Korean diasporic imaginary is often the young woman whose body has been sexually violated—raped or coerced into sexual labor by the forces of militarism and imperialism—whose voice is ultimately incapacitated. In *Soul's Protest*, there are two characters who literally can't speak. One is the tongueless man who belatedly warns that the ship is about to explode. Despite the fact that his speaking organ was removed, he nonetheless has

³⁷ In her essay "Military Prostitution in Asia and the United States," Alexandra Suh tells the readers about "Kyung Richards," whose name has been changed to protect her anonymity although her story has been highly publicized. In chapter 4 of this dissertation, I also tell a story about this same woman whom I call "yanggongju six."

the ability to translate his ideas into meaningful language, and thus communicate crucial information. The other character in the film who has lost her voice is the young comfort woman who embodies the unspeakable word “wianbu,”³⁸ who cannot speak the horror of being “wianbu,” who ultimately cannot speak at all. Instead of speaking, she laughs while her body hangs limp, “an emptied-out body” as Chungmoo Choi would say, that must be moved along by the force of others (1997).³⁹ At the precise moment when the word “wianbu” is uttered to explain her unusual condition, a hush falls over the other women in her company who cast their eyes downward at the sound of “wianbu.”

Does the character’s inability to speak point to a “contested historiography” as Kyung Hyun Kim has argued about figures in “post-traumatic Korean cinema” who have lost both their language and their sanity? In his reading of *A Petal*, a film that depicts the 1980 Kwangju massacre,⁴⁰ Kim posits the character of a mentally disturbed homeless teenage girl as the ghostly embodiment of Kwangju itself—“a specter that resides on street corners and in everyday life” (2002,109). She endures the double trauma of having witnessed the massacre of her family members and then having been raped after being left homeless and orphaned. Her inability to speak

³⁸ “Comfort woman” in Korean

³⁹ See Chungmoo Choi’s introduction to the special issue *the comfort women: colonialism, war, and sex in positions east asia cultures critique*, for a discussion of psychological effects of forced sexual labor on surviving comfort women.

⁴⁰ More than two-hundred peaceful protesters were killed by the Korean military police in Kwangju on May 22, 1980, an incident that is sometimes called “Korea’s Tiananmen Square.” The contested historiography refers to differing accounts on the extent to which the U.S. was involved in the massacre. Many believe that the Korean police fired under orders of the U.S. military, and more broadly, that the Korean military dictatorship was propped by the U.S. government.

intelligibly of her own traumatic memories parallels the obscure and fragmented narratives of the Kwangju massacre as a larger historical event. Kim points out that “If language, according to Lacan, is the crucial means for the child to free him or herself from the preoedipal crisis, then the girl’s identity will forever be impaired without the return of language. However, she remains hysterical: narration is ruptured, and her ability to recount history and to translate scattered images into verbal discourse is denied” (2002,109).

When her own voice becomes incapacitated, who or what speaks for her? Who or what speaks to her? Korean films such as *Soul’s Protest* and *a Petal*, as well as writings about militarized sex work, depict a fragmented diasporic history through the woman who loses her mind and her place in the symbolic order. Wianbu and yanggongju are both placed on a trajectory towards madness. This is a madness that is marked not only by one’s own voice being silenced, but of the hearing of other voices. According to Žižek, “the moment we enter the symbolic order, an unbridgeable gap separates forever a human body from ‘its’ voice. The voice acquires a spectral autonomy, it never quite belongs to the body we see ... (1996, 92). When one loses her place in the symbolic order, she is then bridging the gap between body and spectral voice, so that ghost voices are in and of the body. In Žižek’s terms, what takes place is a coming undone of the exclusion of the Real. In the case of the woman who hears but cannot speak, silence resonates with the voices of a haunted history.

I began searching for a history. My own history. Because I had known all along that the stories I had heard were not true, and parts had been left out... I felt lost. Ungrounded. Like I was a ghost watching others live their lives without one of my own... (Tajiri 1991)

1941: Born in Japan, under what exact circumstances, I do not know. Born in Japan, of whose body I am uncertain. Of a woman conscripted for what purpose? Born to what father?

1945: Returned to Korea, shortly after liberation. "Returned," let us say, even though she had never been there before. The exact date of the return is undocumented. Maybe it was in September, shortly after liberation. "Liberation," let us say, even though she would find no freedom in her homeland either. "Homeland," let us say, even though she had never lived there. Returned to her homeland in 1945 shortly after liberation, maybe in September.

June 25, 1950: A few days before her birthday, not quite nine-years old. Years later she would tell no stories to her children about what she did on that day or on the next thousand days. She would tell no stories about stepping over severed limbs and discarded babies, or about eating the Americans' garbage full of napkins and toothpicks, or about watching bombs fall from the sky.⁴¹

⁴¹ The stories that she does not tell are told elsewhere. See Ramsay Liem's work on oral histories of Korean War survivors.

1971: Married an American, a high-ranking officer 25 years her elder. Maybe the other women with whom she worked reassured her that older men know how to take care of a woman. But I cannot be sure of this either.

1975: Moved to America with her children and never returned...

3. synesthesia: seeing through the other's voice

When the subject cannot speak her own history, when history is unintelligible or made unintelligible, who or what speaks for her? The thing that cannot directly be spoken is a "phantom" that "works like a ventriloquist, like a stranger within the subject's own mental topography" (Abraham and Torok 1994, 173). As discussed in chapter four, the phantom is passed down and across bodies, and the voice finds expression by distributing itself through different speakers. Alisa Lebow (2003) calls this phenomenon "memory once removed," when the memories of one generation are displaced onto another, or when the memories of a time/place are projected into the future and take up residence in the seeming here and now of the everyday. One of the things produced by an unconscious in which the voices of another generation speak is a writing form that Lebow refers to as "transitive autobiography," (see chapter one) a story not of the original event, but of something new that bears the traces of past lives, that in effect, renders the original fantasmatic.

Both the theory of transgenerational haunting and theories about verbal hallucination suggest a kind of transitivity. If "voices are impulsive actions stemming from one's dissociated past experiences," as Pierre Janet theorizes (discussed in

Leudar and Thomas 2000, 2), and being haunted transgenerationally is a condition in which “the voices of one generation living in the unconscious of another” as Abraham and Torok (1994, 166) suggest, then which past is the past of dissociated experience ? Are the voice-hearer’s voices of her own past, or of the past of her past? And what of those who are haunted transgenerationally and who are listening to another’s voices? “The phantom which returns to haunt bears witness to the existence of the dead buried within the other,” thus, one is haunted by the ghost of the other’s dead, and possibly the ghost of the other’s ghost (Abraham and Torok 1994, 175). The notions of the transitive and the transgenerational open up the possibility of memory being not just once removed, but many times removed. One’s mother’s voices could be one’s grandmother’s memories. The yanggongju’s dissociated past is not just her own, but also the comfort woman’s, also the future generation’s.

...I remember having this feeling growing up that I was haunted by something, that I was living within a family full of ghosts... There was this place that they knew about. I had never been there yet I had a memory for it. I could remember a time of great sadness before I was born. We had been moved. Uprooted... She tells the story of what she does not remember... (Tajiri 1991)

You went to great lengths to make this history inaccessible to me, but some secrets have already exposed themselves, as if my eyes were there in 1941 when you were born into the labor camp. To labor in the same way as your mother. My eyes were already there when your mother’s body was forcibly moved from her home in Kyung-Sang province to Osaka where it was her duty to serve the Japanese empire, where to speak Korean was to risk having one’s tongue cut out.

But sometimes seeing one's own trauma silences. "...the observing mechanisms of the human mind are temporarily knocked out" resulting in the subject's inability to see a trauma directly, and therefore the responsibility of witnessing gets distributed beyond the subject of trauma (Felman and Laub 1992, 57). A distributed perception of traumatic memory is not only transitive, it is also synesthetic. Or put another way, synesthesia and transitivity are articulations of one another. The sensation belonging to one sense organ reverberates through the others, such as when the sound of the speaking voice fills in what the eye cannot see, or when one generation's experiences are lived through another's. According to Žižek, "the reverberating sound itself provides the ground that renders *visible* the figure of *silence*... voice does not simply persist at a different level with regard to what we see, it rather points toward a gap in the field of the visible, toward the dimension of what eludes our gaze" (my italics, Žižek 1996, 93). When seeing too much leads to a foreclosure of the image, or when history is made invisible through erasure, the image is transmuted into the other's voice, a voice that gives body to what the subject of trauma cannot see in time. Ultimately, seeing trauma is made possible by listening.

...and I listened carefully to your speaking... your voice sounding with the clock told me that something happened at that time, or that something was about to happen. And so I was your witness. My eyes were already there in September 1945, when it was time for your return home, but you didn't know what that meant. How could you have known what future you were coming home to? You were four years old then, moving towards...

4. a staging of words: the voice that sees

In the unconscious of the other, the transgenerational phantom lives and breeds. The ghost is born of silence and is nourished by secrecy, yet at the same time it acts in ways that are contrary to its own existence. It speaks secreted words through the body it inhabits as if to release the secret from the unconscious by vocalizing the things that were too traumatic for the subject who experienced the trauma to speak directly, so this voice does not fully belong to the person that appears to be speaking. "...when people say 'I,' they might in fact be referring to something quite different from their own identity as recorded in their identification papers" (Abraham and Torok 1994, 179). Instead, the 'I' might be a spectral voice of transgenerational unconscious, a voice that has *seen* things that the hearer has not and that bears witness to the other's past and to the past of her past.

**She tells the story of what she does not remember...
a beautiful woman who lost her mind... (Tajiri 1991)**

August 22, 1945: The Ukishima Maru sets sail for Pusan harbor, returning an estimated 10,000 Koreans to their homeland. It was the fate of those on board the first ship, to never arrive in Korea, to never return. It must have been fate also that decided that my then four-year-old mother would not be on that first ship. The Japanese officials would wait until September to send my mother and her mother back to Korea.

Before that, she must have been a subject of the Japanese empire, though I do not know for sure. I have seen no records to prove that she was ever Japanese. The only evidence is her own admission of guilt – that her birthplace is Osaka, that her first tongue was Japanese, and not Korean. Documents later re-constructed her as a Korean national, daughter of a Korean mother and a Korean father.

...you did not know what future you were returning to, but my eyes were already there in September 1945 when the migoon soldiers arrived on foreign soil to occupy this land that you would later call home... you were four years old then, moving towards...

September 1945: U.S. forces arrive in Korea just 18 days after liberation from Japan, installing an occupation government. In response to the Japanese colonial system of sexual slavery, the U.S. officially outlaws prostitution in Korea, but unofficially transfers the comfort stations from Japanese to U.S. control. By 1953, there would be an estimated 350,000 women working as prostitutes in Korea, 60% of whom would service the U.S. military. *My eyes were already there...*

staged words, shared ghosts

I have never heard the word “wianbu” spoken in my family. Nor have I heard “yanggongju.” These are the unspeakable words never spoken in my family. Words wrapped in silence. Words that Abraham and Torok would call “phantomogenic,” “secreted...words giving sustenance to the phantom... These are often the very words that rule an entire family’s history...” (1994, 176). Words mapped in blood.

But I had no memory of them. Perhaps the sounds of these words never entered consciousness and therefore could not be remembered, but traces of “wianbu” and “yanggongju” were folded in and stored in the “resonating vessel” of brain and skin (Massumi 2002).

I had not yet been planted into your womb when it happened, but parts of me were already assembled and set into motion. My eyes were already there when you dropped out of school to look for work in the city and I saw how she wanted to keep you safe from the “maengsu” American soldiers. I witnessed you walk willingly, naively, into the camptown. She wished she could have given her own life so that yours could have been different. She took the blame for your fall, like any Korean mother would do, but her blame also carried the weight of history. Had she not been a wianbu, you might have had the will to walk away. But you were also pulled by your desire for an American man, by your desire for America.

“Wianbu,” the word used to refer to the “comfort women” who were forced sexual laborers for the Japanese military, was also used to describe the women who were sexual laborers for the U.S. military. That is, until another word replaced “wianbu” in order to connote a different kind of shame. “Yanggongju” would draw the line between the violated virgins and the willing whores. “Yanggongju,” literally meaning “western princess” and commonly translated as “yankee whore” replaced “wianbu” as the popular name for women who are prostitutes for the U.S. military. “Yanggongju,” when translated as “GI bride” is extended to those women who date or marry American men. Although my mother fit this definition, I have never heard the word “yanggongju” spoken in my family.

In an unconscious haunted by an unspeakable trauma, there is a constant tension between speaking and not speaking. When a secreted word remains secret, it will be passed down through several generations but eventually the “phantom effect” will wear off as long as the words remain unspoken. The individual’s unconscious attempts to speak secreted words, do not make the ghosts disappear. Rather, “...shared or complementary phantoms find a way of being established as social practices along the lines of *staged words*” (Abraham and Torok 1994, 176). The act of speaking secreted words sets the ghosts free, and the ones that have something in common find each other, like wianbu and yanggongju. These ghosts have an agency of their own in that silence shows itself to be inherently unstable as it becomes the background against which secreted words become audible, often to one who is a witness.

Put another way, a ghost can express itself in the form of a voice that comes through the wound, as Cathy Caruth discusses. Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata* provides such an example of a voice speaking from the wound. The protagonist Tancred unknowingly kills his lover Clorinda, and then wounds her spirit a second time because he does not recognize her. “He slashes with his sword at a tall tree; but blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again.” (Freud as cited in Caruth 1996, 2). In this scenario, the voice appears to be alien, but it is actually the voice of a familiar, disembodied and transformed, “a voice that witnesses a truth that Tancred himself cannot fully know” (Caruth 1996, 3). It is a voice that has *seen*, and that demands to be listened to. “We can also read the

address of the voice here ...as the story of the way in which one's own trauma is tied up in the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound" (Caruth 1996, 8). Together the listener and the voice speaking from the wound constitute a kind of story-telling machine, an assemblage of seeing, speaking and listening components.

5. schizophrenic multiplicity: madness as method

There was a voice that came out of the oak tree... I don't know if this was the voice of a familiar whose spirit was imprisoned inside the trunk, if this voice was trying to tell you about something that you could not see, or that your mother could not speak, if this was the voice of a silenced history. You encountered this voice from the tree, another's wound, and set it free into the world by speaking its secreted words. But your speaking of the words released the ghost and multiplied the voices...

In Abraham and Torok's discussion of ghosts, there are two alternatives for relieving the familial unconscious from being haunted – to remain silent and allow the ghosts to wither away after several generations, or to speak and set the ghosts free. But speaking the ghost's secrets implies exposing them, not only to the world, but to one another, and to allow them to find each other and multiply on their own to create new families of ghosts that wander looking for bodies through which to speak. Abraham and Torok's prescription for exorcising ghosts yields not only and always a final

burial of the other's dead, but also sometimes the unpredictable effect of multiplication.

How are we to understand this multiplicity of voices? Leudar and Thomas argue that "...hearing voices in itself does not indicate mental illness any more than do thinking, remembering or any other ordinary psychological functions, even though *some* modes of thinking can indicate schizophrenia and *some* modes of memory imply trauma and abuse" (2000, 209). As a mode of memory, voice-hearing is one component of a diasporic machinic vision that allows us to see the traumatic events of history that traumatized subjects themselves could not. Just as Lacanian psychoanalysis moved trauma out of the realm of the pathological and reconceived of it as the normal condition for human subjectivity, I want to suggest that schizophrenia is a normal condition for a diasporic unconscious that is in constant displacement, and that reverberates with the voices of haunted histories. The voices, too, are displaced, speaking from the pasts of pasts and casting origins in the shadows of uncertainty.

Even to the extent that voice-hearing is pathological, there are ways of developing productive methods of listening to the voices, rather than medicating or otherwise disappearing them. Psychosis, for example, is usually thought of in terms of lack, of what's missing from normalcy, but for Žižek (reading Lacan), psychosis is a result of excess. "Lacan pointed out that the consistency of our 'experience of reality' depends on the exclusion of what he calls the *objet petit a* from it: in order for us to have normal 'access to reality,' something must be excluded, 'primordially repressed.' In psychosis, this exclusion is undone...: the outcome of which, of course, is the disintegration of our 'sense of reality'..." (Žižek 1996, 91).

In Soul's Protest, there are two characters who literally cannot speak—the tongueless man and the wianbu. The wianbu's ability to create intelligible speech has broken down, but unlike the tongueless man, the breakdown is not because of speaking parts having been removed, but because of an excess, of the Real no longer being excluded. If trauma is that which exceeds one's frames of reference for understanding, and it is assimilated into the subject, then her system becomes overloaded. But this excess also has the potential to create new methods of seeing, recording and transmitting trauma.

There are things which have happened in the world while there were cameras watching, things that we have images for.

There are other things which have happened while there were no cameras watching which we restage in front of cameras to have images of.

There are things which have happened for which the only images that exist are in the minds of the observers present at the time...

There are things which have happened for which there have been no observers, except for the spirits of the dead. (Tajiri 1991)

A method of engaging the excess that escapes symbolization would involve new forms of writing that are an assemblage of different media and temporalities, which, according to Johnston "...constitute a heterogeneous and non-narrativizable realm reflecting the sudden and immense expansion of late 20th-century America's media storage capacities, and consequently the expansion of its realm of the dead" (1998, 224). This writing form makes a shift from a "molar narrative" to one that registers what Johnston describes as "gaseous, molecular or fractal perceptions that are peripheral or only immanent to the narrative" (1998, 230) or what Deleuze and

Guattari (1987) call “microperceptions” or pure perception. With new technologies for reading, storing and transmitting trauma, the ghosts are multiplied, and these ghosts are not just figures of persons, but also the ghosts of sub-individual forces such as that of a multiplicity of disembodied voices.

There were voices that came out of the oak tree in front of the house, others that came out of images on television, newsprint, clocks...

In schizophrenia, the voices multiply not only in quantity, but also in form. Judge Daniel Paul Schreber, for example, wrote in his memoirs about his self-described “nervous illness” in which he not only heard voices, but also experienced “silent nerve language” and “sub-vocal speech” that was emitted by “divine rays” that inserted themselves directly into his nerves. Schreber also reported hearing birds that emitted “rote phrases” but were for the most part, not recognizable as human speech. Schreber categorized these perceptions as encounters with “souls” or “supernatural agencies.”

Sometimes they spoke in verbal language, to her, about her. In other moments, their communication took the form of non-verbal, non-human sounds... The voice of technology often spoke as the oak tree, sometimes disguised as a small dog. The messengers even took the form of her own voice from time to time, speaking to her, through her.⁴²

Contemporary psychology, on the other hand would describe experiences like Schreber’s as “errors in perception,” one such error being a confusion between what is perceived and what is remembered. The distinction between perceived and

⁴² The spectral autonomy of the voice is such that... “it is as if the speaker’s own voice hollows him out and in a sense speaks ‘by itself’ through him” (zizek 92)

remembered , however, discounts the possibility of affective memory in which “pure perception” triggers memory that is stored in the body, as is often the case with trauma. Is the hallucination a state in which what is perceived is not real, or does it require a different kind of technology to translate it, one that is based on a molecular understanding of perception? This is particularly relevant when the traumatized subject cannot remember and recount her history in narrative form. When the yanggongju cannot speak, who or what gets implicated in not speaking? When her voice becomes incapacitated, who or what speaks for her? Who or what speaks to her? Her trauma is expressed in the form of voices from dissociated pasts, voices from the wounds of history...

There were voices that came out of the oak tree in front of the house, others that came out of images on television, newsprint, clocks...

They gave her directives: “Kill yourself tonight. Do it while your children are sleeping.” But usually their orders were far more mundane: “Stop fermenting the dwenjang. It has been long enough.” and “Get chocolate cake for mangnei’s birthday.” Sometimes they spoke in verbal language, to her, about her. In other moments, their communication took the form of non-verbal, non-human sounds...

The pattering of acorns falling on the roof of her car signaled her involvement in government conspiracies. The kitchen timer ringing meant that Ronald Reagan set up surveillance equipment in her house. Eventually, many of the communicators stopped speaking from their original sources so that she always questioned whether or not to believe what she was hearing. The voice of technology often spoke as the oak tree, sometimes disguised as a small dog. The messengers even took the form of her own voice from time to time,

*speaking to her, through her.*⁴³ Every twelve hours at 9:45, the clock would borrow her voice to announce the time, but in the form of a date. **September forty-five.** Maybe it was a voice from another time speaking through the clockvoice speaking through her voice. But she could not hear the clockvoice when it spoke, otherwise she might have noticed that this date was significant for her too. But maybe she was not even old enough to have remembered what happened in September 1945. She was four years old then, moving towards...moving towards...

Hallucinatory perceptions offer potential spaces of resistance because “a schizophrenic multiplicity of views [is] implicitly suggestive of the limits of the human, and necessarily of the limits of human control” (Johnston 1998, 230). When matters of a traumatic history are inarticulable in human language, when some tongues are unable or unwilling to speak, then a multiplicity of voices and communication patterns allow history to be told in ways that transcend the confines of language and narrative. An apparatus for reading the non-narrativized is created through an assemblage of seeing, speaking, and listening components, through a distribution of ghosts across diasporic spaces. They are “lines of flight” or “escape routes,” offering another way out...

6. an ethics of entanglement

Some critics of poststructuralism have charged that theories in which the breakdown of the self is the basis for a new paradigm of social thought romanticize

⁴³ This is reminiscent of the memoir of Judge Daniel Paul Schreber in which he writes of his uncontrollable bellowing: “the muscles which serve respiration (the lung and thorax muscles) were by divine miracle set in motion with such violence that I am compelled to let out the bellow or cry...” (Schreber as quoted in Leudar and Thomas, 64)

mental illness and ignore the suffering of those who are afflicted (Glass 1995). But the project of re-thinking schizophrenia for its productive possibilities is not exclusive of recognizing the painful consequences of illness. In fact, I have been arguing just the opposite, that allowing multiple voices to speak, “polyvocality” as Ella Shohat calls it, can allow us both to listen to trauma and to speak against the dominant voice of western regulative norms.⁴⁴ Rather than espousing a romanticized view of schizophrenia as liberation, I want to re-think schizophrenia in relationship to a Korean diaspora haunted by U.S. militarism and Japanese colonialism in order to confront the “nameless and undisclosed suffering” of others (Abraham and Torok 1994, 167).

The paradox I am working within, however, is that the hallucinatory voices of schizophrenia defy categories of meaning and do not always translate into intelligible speech, and thus, must be engaged by modes of thinking that are non-narrative. At the same time, I am required to render the affective into some form of narrative. Schizophrenic multiplicity and diasporic vision are methods of accessing that which escapes narrative, that which registers at the level of affect and microperception but never makes its way into the realm of the symbolic. I want to engage the non-narrativizable, while still preserving a capacity for intelligible speech so that I can tell a story about the yanggongju and Korean diaspora. This paradox clearly speaks to the limitations of language as well as the limitations of the method, but the method is a move towards shifting one’s frames of perception so that we can capture the

⁴⁴ According to Shohat, polyvocality is one of the goals of transnational feminism. See introduction to *Talking Visions*.

“contours of molecular unconscious” as opposed to the “molar” unconscious of the oedipal narrative (Johnston 1998, 231).

But the paradox I have described is precisely why these methods lend themselves to the work of trauma, and particularly to transgenerational haunting. Both trauma that is foreclosed from consciousness but stored in the body, and the unspeakable secret of transgenerational haunting are elements of experience that are not fully narrativizable and therefore require different methods to allow them to be expressed. Undoubtedly, there is plenty that still escapes the multiple narratives I have constructed here, but I have attempted to create a kind of text in which the effects of trauma are felt rather than explained in a rational argument. As Brian Massumi puts it, “The question is not, Is it true? But, Does it work? What new thoughts does it make possible to think? What new emotions does it make possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body?” (1992, 8). In other words, how does one create a text that registers loss without knowing the content of that loss? This is the challenge of writing about trauma, as well as the challenge of trying to know another’s trauma, because it cannot truly be known. As Felman and Laub point out, the work of confronting trauma begins with “a listener who can precisely recognize, and meet, ‘the gaping, vertiginous black hole’ of the experience of trauma”(1992, 64). This act of listening is not about excavating the content beneath the silence, but about confronting the gap on its own terms.

Meeting the black hole of trauma, particularly when it is transgenerational, raises important implications for ethics. The critical issue is not knowing what happened, but about being able to recognize trauma through its effects and thereby to

be compassionate towards another's wound despite not knowing the truth behind it. In the spirit of Lacanian psychoanalysis, which places trauma at the heart of subjectivity, encountering the other's trauma is an encounter with the other herself, and a possibility of opening up new sites of connectedness and identification. To add another angle to this ethic, Jacqueline Rose's aim is to make a shift from identity politics to a politics of identification in which one can begin to soften boundaries between self and other (1993). In her work on Melanie Klein, Rose discusses notions of identification in terms of black holes in space. She points out that black holes test the limits of human knowledge. If one is too far away, the black hole cannot be observed because it appears to not be there, and since it cannot be read by our observational apparatuses it gets ignored. Getting too close, on the other hand, runs the risk of destroying the observer. The challenge then, is that in order to meet another's trauma, one must come as close as possible without getting too close, without getting sucked into the black hole of madness.

This dilemma is precisely what is at the heart of the yanggongju's haunting of Korean diaspora. When one cannot know the content of the other's tomb, when violent histories are subjected to serial erasures, methods of observing trauma are produced from these very gaps. These methods at once allow the witness to see yet provide a protective space against madness. A schizophrenic multiplicity of voices emerges as a mode of diasporic memory through which the wounds of history speak, and diasporic vision distributes the perception of trauma so that the information can be processed without the threat of psychic overload. Yet even as the yanggongju's

traumas are registered through these methods, the content of those traumas remain uncertain.

I want to be clear, however, that my project is not to reveal the contents of the secrets and unspoken traumas, because there's as much power in uncertainty as in knowing the truth, and because secrets have a way of revealing themselves even when the subject who carries the secret never speaks it, and that's precisely what the study of transgenerational haunting looks at. Rather than making people speak about their experiences, I am more interested in asking how an unspoken trauma circulates and creates networks of affect in which that trauma becomes shared. Yanggongju's *han*, her frustrated grief and rage, creates such a network of affect, a form of kinship that is based not on blood relations or on the family of the nation, but rather on a dynamic of trauma and its uncertainties.

Uncertainty as a haunting force changes one's relationship to responsibility so that it becomes almost irrelevant whose family member is a yanggongju, for example. What does become relevant is that one is entangled with others through trauma (Ramadanovic 1998). Transgenerational haunting demonstrates how the boundaries between self and other are porous, that we do carry other bodies and histories around with us, and that we also have an ethical relationship to those bodies and histories. One of the things produced by trauma is an ethics of entanglement. This ethic is about recognizing one's complicity with violence, and one's connection to other sites of trauma. It's about making urgent a sense of responsibility that goes beyond the boundaries of self and nation.

**Post Script on the Gaps in the Dissertation
or "What about the Men?"**

Since I began researching militarized prostitution in Korea, I have been asked repeatedly to comment upon the role of the men who are the consumers of sexual services. Initially, I responded to this line of inquiry by focusing on the asymmetrical power dynamics between the U.S. military and the population of poor and undereducated women who make up the corps of 27,000 military sex workers, rather than on the individuals engaged in commercial sex. I acknowledged that although the U.S. military is the most powerful institution in the world, the men who are recruited into it often come from disempowered socio-economic positions that are similar to those of the Korean women who are hired to entertain them. Like the yanggongju, the soldier is another kind of body in service of national security whose life is sacrificed for the fantasy of America. By virtue of their affiliation with the U.S. military and their immersion in a culture of militarized masculine aggression, however, male soldiers still occupy very different positions of institutional power vis-à-vis the women.

But as my thinking moved beyond the binary of individual and institution towards an analysis of trauma at the level of sub-individual and assemblage, it became more obvious that the men were also caught in the same entanglements as the yanggongju and her children. The veterans of the Korean War, for example, were also subjected to the traumas of being tortured and injured, or bearing witness to the massive loss of lives, even if they were more on the side of killer than killed. I have tried to hint at this by offering examples of veterans who suffer from post-traumatic

stress disorder, particularly those who have been traumatized by relentless visions of the civilians they killed, as if the passing of time were non-existent. These men are part of the same monstrous family. They, too, have an ethical relationship to the trauma of Korean diaspora, and it is often the veterans who have struggled to rescue the Korean War from the archives of forgotten memory. Yet the traumas of U.S. servicemen in Korea are not the subject of this dissertation. The men are different ghosts who make occasional appearances in the text, but for the most part remain beneath the multiple narratives I've unfolded about the yanggongju.

I opened chapter one by talking about the significance of June 25, 1950 for the making of the yanggongju, and the arriving traumas that would bind Korean diaspora. As a child, even though no one in my family spoke to me about the events of the Korean War, I always felt a deep sense of tragedy on June 25th and I thought it curious that we were also celebrating my father's birthday on that day. I tell a story in the first chapter about what I imagined my father's birthday to have been like on the day the Korean War broke out as a way of setting up a sense of being drawn into the future by an entanglement with trauma. I had initially thought that I would include other vignettes about my father throughout the text, but in the end, the spectral force of my mother as yanggongju proved to overshadow the figure of my father.

Perhaps my father's willingness to talk about his life meant that I did not inherit his secrets as ghosts, but this does not mean that my father's history has not also haunted me. This is the story my father used to tell me about himself. He was

born and raised in a farming community and grew up as a child of the Great Depression. Not only was he a poor child in an economically devastated country, he was a fatherless child during a time when single-parent families were rare. He had no memory of his father other than an image from a photograph taken shortly before his father disappeared. It is inscribed with the words "to my beloved wife and son."

When my father was a young man, he became a farmer and took great pride in raising pigs, many of which won awards in state fairs. He wanted nothing other than to continue raising these animals, but he was poor, and then the war came. He joined the navy during WWII, did his tour of duty and went back to the farm. But as much as he loved his work, he could not make a living, so during the 1960s he became a merchant marine, traveled to all the major port cities in Asia, and enjoyed the privileges given to U.S. military personnel. This is how he met my mother.

Korea was very much a third world country in the late sixties when my parents met, and this fact served to draw my father further into the rescue fantasy he created about himself and my mother. She was a working Korean woman with a half-American child whose father was absent, and his own wife could not have children, so his desire for my mother was also about wanting to be a father for a fatherless child, about wanting to provide financially for a struggling family, about wanting to fill in his own lack. My father's story is rooted in a trauma of a time and place very distinct from my mother's, yet their being drawn together is a positive test of the theory that disparate sites of trauma haunt one another. The story of my father's romance with my mother is also a story of love and domination, of the ways in which

the intimate violence of the U.S.-Korea relationship plays itself out in the dynamic of a family.

And so I am bound affectively to both my parents through transgenerational haunting. Although my father told me stories about himself, I am certain that there are plenty of unspeakable traumas I have psychically inherited from him, but have not yet been able to access. The tangling together of my parents' histories surfaces sometimes in my unconscious, most remarkably in the form of recurring dreams. There is one in particular that speaks to how my father, even in his absence, still haunts the text of my unconscious.

There is nothing out of the ordinary at the start. This dream begins with a routine. The setting is my mother's home in suburban New Jersey on a sunny mid-summer afternoon. I am preparing a meal for her, because this is something she can no longer do for herself. Then I realize that I must first butcher the meat, so I go out to the yard. I dread being responsible for taking the life of another, but since it is my obligation, I proceed almost mechanically. Blood-soaked, I am slaughtering my father's pigs, and then the animals I kill morph into the bodies of Korean women massacred by U.S. soldiers. I flee the scene and walk what seems a very long distance. I walk to a place that was once fertile farmland, but has turned barren and dry, burnt by the sun or by chemical warfare. It is 1950 in some small farming community, in Kyung Sang province, or in rural America. I have arrived at the home of my mother and my father.

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