# The Poetics of Trauma Narratives and Asian American Women Writers

by

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## Abstract

**The Poetics of Trauma Narratives and Asian American Women Writers**

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This dissertation focuses on Japanese American/Canadian and Korean American women writers, such as Monica Sone, Hisaye Yamamoto, Joy Kogawa, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, and Nora Okja Keller. These writers explore, mainly through the mother and daughter relationship, traumatic events that emerge out of transnational histories: the Japanese internment during WWII in the U. S. and Canada, the Japanese occupation of Korea, and the issue of "comfort women" who were drafted and forced into prostitution for the Japanese military during WWII. My dissertation argues that these traumatic events ultimately destroy the object relationships of the Japanese or Korean American subjects, whether the object be a loved person, language, homeland, or ideals of assimilation, by forcing them to acquire a new counterpart as their love object; thus, losing their love objects renders them melancholic and leaves them with indelible psychic wounds. The psychological struggles and wounds of the Asian American subjects get much more complicated as they undergo the psychic contradictions of American assimilation in the country where they now reside as the displaced, dislocated subjects. Paying close attention to the historical specificities of the traumatic events represented by these women writers, I draw on psychoanalysis and trauma studies in order to examine

the complex psychological dynamics in which the diasporic mothers and daughters in their works play with their love objects, both lost and newly imposed.

This dissertation is built around several thematic anchors such as the collective silence of the transnational subjects concerning their traumatic experience, the tension between the mothers' forgetting and their daughters' remembering, and the reconciling/healing process with the traumatic past and between the mothers and the daughters. With these themes, this dissertation explores how traumatic repression is evoked and how the passage of traumatic memories is made from ghostly haunting to healing: how these writers treat silence and forgetting and remembering and reconciliation in multiple ways: and how the process of trauma correlates the aesthetic structures of trauma narratives. In so doing, I investigate diverse implications and discursive power of their collective silence. Beyond the hierarchical order between speech and silence, I explore their silence as the psychological site where their traumatic memories are dammed and reserved as the residue or remnants of the past. Thus, listening to their silence I attempt to bring testimony to the psychological dynamics Asian Americans have shown in encounters with diverse constraints such as racism, partition, war, mass rape, colonialism/postcolonialism, and immigration. This task of listening to their silence is to remember what has been unacknowledged, unrecorded, and unclaimed and in so doing, to shed light on the hidden phases of official history.

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# Dedication

사랑하고 존경하는 부모님과 가족에게 이 논문을 바칩니다.

# Table of Contents

Chapter 1. The Structures and Themes of Trauma Narratives …………………………....1

Chapter 2. The Collective Silence of Japanese Internees: Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* and Hisaye Yamamoto's "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara" ………………………….34

Chapter 3. "Mother, I am listening. Assist me to hear you": Remembering Traumatic Memories in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* ..……………………………………………..81

Chapter 4. Melancholic Identification and Traumatic Memories in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* …..……………………………………………………..……117

Chapter 5. Mourning Unmourned Deaths in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman* ..…154

Chapter 6. Silence, Traumatic Memories, and History …………………..…………192

Works Cited …………...……………………………………………….………200

## Chapter 1. The Structures and Themes of Trauma Narratives

### The Mother and Daughter Frame in Trauma Narratives

This dissertation examines the poetics of trauma narratives by exploring mother-daughter relationships in the works of Japanese American/Canadian and Korean American women writers: Monica Sone's autobiography *Nisei Daughter,* Hisaye Yamamoto's short story "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara," Joy Kogawa's novel *Obasan,* Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's experimental text *Dictee,* and Nora Okja Keller's novel *Comfort Woman*. These writers offer literary treatments of the traumatic memories belonging either to themselves or to their mothers, memories that emerge out of historical events such as war, partition, colonialism, institutionalized displacement and dislocation, and systemic mass rape of "comfort women"[1] for the period preceding, during, and following World War II.

Sone, Yamamoto, and Kogawa address the experiences of Japanese internees in the United States and Canada during World War II. The Japanese internment was the legitimate, political, and material manifestation of the racism the American and Canadian governments inflicted on Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians. It uprooted their economic, social, and cultural foundations by compulsorily displacing and dislocating more than 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast first in sixteen assembly centers over four states and later in ten internment camps over nine states of America[2]; and 22,000 people of Japanese ancestry in the British Columbia Interior and

[1] Hereafter, I will omit the quotations around "comfort women" for sake of readability.

[2] These assembly centers were as follows: Marysville, Sacramento, Tanforan, Stockton, Turlock, Salinas, Merced, Pinedale, Fresno, Tulare, Santa Anita, Pomona, and Manzanar in California; Puyallup in Washington; Portland in Oregon; and Mayer in Arizona. The

Alberta in Canada.[3] The Japanese internment ultimately broke not only Japanese communities but also familial bonds that the first generation of Japanese immigrants had deliberately built and valued. In addition, the internment was also an unforgettable historical event for the second generation Japanese Americans/Canadians as it proved that their citizenships were invalid and their national identities were not defined by their birth certificates and residencies. Sone, Yamamoto, and Kogawa, who all spent several years in the internment camps either in their teens or early twenties, explore through the mother and daughter relationship, the first and second generations of Japanese immigrants who undergo the internment and live with the physical, psychical, economic, social, and cultural wounds inscribed by the internment, an institutionalized form of racism.

Meanwhile, Cha and Keller mainly focus on Korean women's colonial experiences under the rule of Japanese colonialism over Korea and their diasporic experiences as Korean Americans. More specifically, Cha brings together issues of Japanese colonialism in Korea and Korean American immigrants undergoing the difficult processes of assimilation and naturalization. Paralleling her mother's exile experience during colonialism and their shared immigrant experience, Cha attempts to delineate the traumatic wounds that these compulsory or voluntary displacements and dislocations bring about to the postcolonial subjects. Keller particularly investigates the history of

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Manzanar assembly center later functioned as a relocation center. The ten internment camps are Manzanar and Tule Lake in California, Amache in Colorado, Gila River and Poston in Arizona, Heart Mountain in Wyoming, Jerome and Rohwer in Arkansas, Minidoka in Idaho, and Topaz in Utah.

[3] Refer to *Concentration Camps North America: Japanese in the United States and Canada during World War II* by Roger Daniels and *Japanese American Internment during World War II* by Wendy L. Ng.

Korean comfort women who were abducted or drafted by deception, imprisoned in the comfort camps scattered in the frontlines of Japanese-occupied territories, and forced into prostitution for the Japanese military during the Asia Pacific War. The number of comfort women is estimated as many as 200,000 and Korean colonial women occupy eighty percent of the number.[4] They suffered mass rape by the Japanese soldiers and the rape was systematically controlled by the Japanese government during the war. Inventing a fictionalized former Korean comfort woman in her novel, Keller shows how the character's body and soul become appropriated and split open as she undergoes objectification for men's sexual pleasure.

As such, the Japanese American and Korean American ethnic groups have distinctive sociopolitical, cultural, and historical specificities and backgrounds. In other words, the experiences of Japanese/Japanese American and Canadian women during the internment are rooted in specific historicities such as the institutionalized racism of the United States as well as the international relations between the United States and Japan during World War II. The Korean comfort women issue also has its distinctive historical background in the colonial, postcolonial, and postwar conditions of Korea. Therefore, in investigating the traumatic memories of women who walk through the whirlpool of the historical events, we cannot homogenize these women's sufferings and wounds with "a homogeneous notion of the oppression of women as a group" (Mohanty 22). The collective nomenclature of "women's oppression" blurs differences in Japanese

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[4] Refer to *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military during World War II* by Yoshiaki Yoshimi and *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* by George Hicks.

American/Canadian and Korean American women's sufferings and pain; thus, it fails to signify the distinctive specificities in their histories, cultures, and societies.

What makes these women's sufferings more complex is that their historical, sociopolitical, and cultural differences are entwined with the similarities and commonalities between these two ethnic groups as immigrants and colonial/postcolonial subjects. The Japanese internees' experience has analogies with what Korean colonial people underwent under the rule of Japan. Even though these two ethnic groups were in the adverse relation as the colonizer and the colonized in their home countries, their status as immigrants in the United States causes us to view the similarities not only in their immigration experiences as Asian Americans but also in their colonial and internment experiences. Japan was the colonial power that ruled Korea from 1910 to 1945, but Japanese descendants in the United States and Canada were victimized by the internment during World War II just for being Japanese. Japanese descendants as a marginalized ethnic group were treated by the neocolonial power of the United States in a similar way in which Korean colonial people were treated by the Japanese colonial power. The enemy becomes the companion in the third territory, America. It is not simply ethnicity but the complex entanglement of ethnic, ideological, national, and geographical politics that makes two groups antagonistic or amicable at war or colonialism.

In offering literary representations of these historical events and illuminating the traumatic wounds on the Asian American subjects' mind and soul inscribed by the historical catastrophes, the Japanese American/Canadian and Korean American women writers I have chosen primarily rely on the mother-daughter frame. The mother and

daughter relationships in each of the texts by these five women are composed of generational conflict, telling, tension, and reconciliation that are formulated and resolved in relation to the violence of the internment, colonialism, abduction, rape, displacement, dislocation, and immigration. The mothers in the texts are those who undergo and endure these historical events that remain crucial in the historical composition of the Japanese American/Canadian and Korean American subjects. The mothers live with unrevealed secrets concerning their physical or psychological death or suffering caused by the historical catastrophes; the mother's death in *Obasan* caused by the atomic bombing in Nagasaki is veiled from her children by another mother figure Obasan (aunt in Japanese), and the mother, Akiko, in *Comfort Woman* secures her past as a comfort woman from her daughter, Beccah. The mother in *Dictee* is suffering from the deprivation of her Korean name, language, and culture, as well as her displacement as an exile during colonialism. She is also inflicted by the politically chaotic national condition as Korean national leaders take the place of the colonizers after their independence.

Colonial/postcolonial subjects, as well as migrants, the mothers are degraded and deprived of their voice and agency. The poorer migrants are, as Arjun Appadurai points out in "Archive and Aspiration," the more frequently they "end up as undocumented citizens, objects of racist laws and sentiments" (19-20). However, in these trauma narratives, the female characters who live with indelible and irrevocable historical wounds do document their lives by writing or tape-recording, casually or professionally. The title character in Yamamoto's "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara" writes poems about her internment life with her father while she is incarcerated in the internment camp. The mother in *Nisei Daughter* writes tanka, the oldest traditional Japanese poetry form, in

order to overcome the bitterness of anti-Japanese reality before and during World War II. The mother in *Comfort Woman* records on to cassette tapes the names of the people to whom she loses her connection as she is sold to the Japanese military—she is further disconnected as she later migrates to America. The female characters in *Obasan* write letters and conference papers. The mother in *Dictee* also writes "[t]o scatter the words" (48) as if the words are seeds of a message that when planted, would fruit her stories.

The mothers' casual and personal writings potentially bear what Shoshana Felman calls "life testimony" which "is not simply a testimony to a private life, but a point of conflation between text and life, a textual testimony which can *penetrate us like an actual life*" (2). Through these personal and private writing activities, the mothers bear witness to their traumas and build their own archives. Each mother's archive not only contains stories of losses, deaths, and separation triggered by the violent history, but also conveys "the Motherline," which is mothers' and grandmothers' coming-of-age stories including birth, childhood, puberty, marriage, pregnancy, lactation, menopause, death, etc. (Lowinsky 227). The life stories of these women who are considered to be marginalized in society exist as the unrecognized reality of the past. However, their life stories are historical layers of their existence in the past, personal genealogies that trace back and prove their presence in the historical time and place. Missed and unacknowledged in the official historiography, their life stories are not easily revealed to, or discovered by others, but just dammed and reserved inside their own archives. Their traumatic memories remain silent or hidden for several decades.

Critical analysis of these mothers' experiences and their silence about their traumatic past in colonial and postcolonial conditions leads directly into questions of

gender and nation. Exploring how historical violence affects the formation of women's subjectivity, Veena Das writes, "The violations inscribed on the female body (both literally and figuratively) and the discursive formations around these violations made visible the imagination of the nation as a *masculine* nation" ("The Act" 205). Even though Das focuses on Indian women who underwent the violence of the Partition of India in 1947, her comment also applies to Korean comfort women. The national discourse of Korea was reinforced with the anti-colonial sentiments during Japanese occupation, and later with the discourse of modernity during Korea's postcolonial period. Korean nationalism in conjunction with the discourses of modernity and progressivism considered the national development a top priority and subordinated comfort women's experiences and issues for the sake of Korean modernization and national development. As a result, Korean comfort women lived in shame and silence for half a century.

As such, the intersection of gender and nation in Asian American literature involves an ideological subordination of feminist issues under national ones, which results in the continued erasure of alternative discourses from women. This dominance of nationalist discourse has been criticized by Asian American feminist critics, such as Elaine Kim, Lisa Lowe, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, Rey Chow, and Lydia Liu. Lydia Liu comments in "The Female Body and Nationalist Discourse" that "gender, class, and national identities" in Asian American literature "clash rather than conjoin, resulting in woman's loss of one identity or another and in her fractured subjectivity with regard to the nation" (50). At the same time, however, Asian American women cannot be understood apart from their fraught transnational identities. As Kim writes, an Asian American woman "never [ceases] to be both her racial and her gender

self' ("Such Opposite Creatures" 80); critics like Leslie Bow, Patricia Chu, Laura Hyun Yi Kang, and Rachel Lee are invested in a feminist examination of the intersecting area between gender and nationalism.

The entangled relations between gender and nation are embodied in almost all of the works I read in this dissertation. In *Comfort Woman*, for example, the body of Akiko, a former Korean comfort woman, mirrors the territorial body of the Korean nation exploited by Japanese colonialism. Similarly, the narrator of *Dictee* infuses the concept of nation into the word *mother* when she evokes her mother. Again, in "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara" by Yamamoto, Miss Sasagawara's body is explored by the hands of hospital doctors in the concentration camp. Positioned at the center of traumatic historical events, these women are situated at a complex nexus of claims on gender, selfhood, and national identity. It is within the gaps that open up in the uneven processes of historical and ideological interpellation of woman (wife/daughter), American ethnic subject (Japanese/Korean), and racialized U. S. immigrant (minority class), as well as in the temporal complications of traumatic events, that the narratives of trauma based on the historical oppression get more complicated.

It is the daughters who fill out their mothers' silence or secret that remains as a gap, vacuum, or hole in their relationship. To fill the rift or to listen to the silence means to understand what happened to their mothers in the past and to build their lost mother-daughter bond. Temporally and emotionally distanced from their mothers' traumas, the daughters in the women writers' texts are more accessible to their mothers' pasts and listen to their unraveled stories with empathy rather than feeling shame and/or guilt. Encountering the hidden stories of their mothers, the daughters gradually understand the

meaning of the poem the mother writes (*Nisei Daughter*); learns to feel the mother's presence out of her absence (*Obasan*); writes back to the mother and writing with "particles bits of sound and noise," she is trying to fill out "the invisible distance that this line connects the void and space surrounding entering and exiting" (Cha, *Dictee* 56); and mourns the mother by obiturizing the mother's death (*Comfort Woman*).

Through their understanding, writing, and mourning of their mothers, the daughters remember and retrace their mothers' unacknowledged lives. This act is, in the end, to acknowledge the alternative narratives or phases of the history that has been seen as a finished story or entity. Thus, the remembering of Asian American women's life stories which have been excluded in history and historiography will result in "a much more substantial intervention into those justifications of modernity—progress, homogeneity, cultural organism, the deep nation, the long past—that rationalizes the authoritarian, 'normalizing' tendencies within cultures in the name of the national interest or the ethnic prerogative" (Bhabha, "Introduction" 4). The daughters' remembering and reconciling with their mothers' traumatic pasts also signify the transmission of the mothers' genealogies. Inheriting their mothers' genealogies, the daughters are responsible for witnessing their mothers' unacknowledged lives and deaths. They also come to refashion their own identity; as bearers of "the Motherline," they are now able to understand how their lives are connected to their mothers and foremothers and prepare their own archive as their mothers did for them.

**Traumatic Memories and Racial Melancholia**

These mother and daughter relationships play a pivotal role in representing the traumatic memories of the Japanese American/Canadian and Korean American subjects

that spin around the historical violence. The suffering and traumatic memories of the displaced subjects reveal their form and content through belated repetition of the past and fractured narratives. Cha's *Dictee* consists of bits and pieces of the subjects' haunting memories, and its fragmented narrative based on temporal belatedness and spatial displacement of memory is in opposition to the chronological, linear, progressive order of narrative. In Kogawa's *Obasan*, the narrator Naomi journeys back into her childhood through flashbacks while she deals with her uncle's death at the present time of the story. Keller's *Comfort Woman* also revolves around the mother's past in the comfort camps that remains unresolved and unacknowledged and continually affects her present life including her relationship with her daughter Beccah.

As Sigmund Freud states in his "Second Lecture," memory is sometimes remembered, and at other times, especially when too traumatic and painful, repressed down and hidden deep in our unconsciousness. When a painful event happens and is repressed, it is partially forgotten and slipped out of the mind, and as a result, becomes fragmented and disintegrated. Yet, memories about the event are not entirely erased from our mind. Although partially forgotten and fractured, such repressed memories still exist in the unconscious and continually threaten to return to consciousness. Ultimately, these repressed memories surface into consciousness as belated and unexpected flashbacks of fragmented memories.[5]

The unexpected flashbacks of repressed, traumatic memories are significant because as Cathy Caruth elucidates in *Unclaimed Experience*, they expose the crying

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[5] This essential characteristic of memory is well visualized when Tony Morrison states in "The Site of Memory" how the Mississippi river remembers the places which had been river but straightened out for houses and livable acreage.

voices of wounds which have not been assimilated into our language or understanding of the reality as they occur. According to Caruth, trauma "addresses . . . a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth . . . cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language" (*Unclaimed Experience* 4). It is the reality or truth that remains unrealized and unacknowledged but is still conveyed through the unexpected repetitions and haunting wounds, where traumatic memories emerge.

This nature of traumatic memories—fragmentation, belatedness, displacement, and haunting—reflects the narrative style of trauma narratives of the five women writers. The works of Kogawa, Cha, and Keller are composed of non-chronological and non-lineal narrative structures reflecting the subjects' fragmented and fractured memories and flashbacks to the past. Their works also ramify the temporal and spatial displacement and merging while depicting traumatic memories that belatedly and unwittingly haunt the victims and are transmitted from one generation to the other generation. Traumatic memories in their texts are not fixed in specific historical times and spaces. They are neither finished nor completed in the past to be observed or appreciated. Rather, they function as what Raymond Williams calls "the residual":

> The residual . . . has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present. Thus certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless

> lived and practiced on the basis of the residue . . . of some previous social and cultural institution or formation. (122)

Having occurred in the past, their memories continue to be effective in the present. Thus, the present is the temporal space in which the subjects live with the haunting memories, or the residual, emerging from the past. In short, representing indelible wounds that the oppressive events left on the psyche of the Asian American subjects, the narrative structure and style of the prose fiction and autobiography explicitly contribute to portraying the nature of traumatic memories.

In addition to these aesthetic forms, these narratives of trauma reflect the psychological process of trauma, which ranges from repression to healing through flashbacks of fragmented, traumatic memories. I pay close attention to this process for it offers critical insight into examining the narrative patterns and themes that are recurring in each of the five women's works. Undergoing colonial/postcolonial events, the transnational subjects in the texts reveal diverse modes of reaction towards their social sufferings: the mothers submerge into the collective silence, attempt to forget or revive their past, live in tensions between forgetting and remembering, and/or reconcile with their trauma and with their daughters. Considering the analogies between the process of trauma and the recurring patterns and themes of the trauma narratives, I take the tropes of silence or forgetting, remembering, and reconciliation delineated through the mother and daughter relationship as thematic anchors in my exploration of the five women's trauma narratives.

The narratives of trauma by the Japanese American/Canadian and Korean American women writers embody the dynamics operating in the psyche of the Asian American subjects as they encounter racist events, colonial/postcolonial oppression, conflicts of American assimilation, separation, and losses of their homeland, mother tongue, ideals, and loved people. In order to explore the psychical constructs of the displaced, dislocated subjects in the face of historical, ideological, national, cultural, and social constraints, I draw on the concepts of mourning and melancholia, the psychological states that are triggered by the loss of a love object. In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud distinguishes these two psychological states in terms of whether one who lost his/her love object succeeds in detaching the cathexis that was originally attached to the lost object and transfers it to a new substitute that replaces the lost love object. If she succeeds, her grief for the loss will be over; if she fails, she falls into melancholia, the interminable state of grief. While mourning means a psychological state of grief that is overcome and ends with the emergence of a substitute for the lost love object, melancholia is considered as a pathological condition in psychoanalysis on account of its state of endless grieving for the loss of the love object. In explicating the concept of melancholia, Freud writes:

> An object-choice, an attachment of the libido to a particular person, had at one time existed; then, owing to a real slight or disappointment coming from this loved person, the object-relationship was shattered. The result was not the normal one of a withdrawal of the libido from this object and a displacement of it on to a new one, but something different . . . the free libido was not displaced on to another object; it was withdrawn into the

> ego . . . to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object. (248-49)

Freud's melancholia is defined through the "*identification* of the ego with the abandoned object." Whether the lost object be a beloved person or some abstractions such as "one's country, liberty, [and] an ideal" (243), the lost object is not dead or forsaken but alive in the ego by being incorporated into the ego. As noted in deconstructionist readings of Freud's melancholia by critics like Judith Butler, Anne Anlin Cheng, David L. Eng and Shinhee Han, the melancholic ego disavows the death or loss of its love object and keeps it alive by swallowing "the shadow of the object" into the ego. This melancholic identification or incorporation changes and alters the ego. Therefore, in the psyche of the melancholic, the ego is transformed into the lost object and "an object-loss" is transformed into "an ego-loss" (249).

However, the melancholic ego does not lose its ultimate agency since it is divided into two parts as it is overshadowed with and transformed into the lost object; "one part of the ego sets itself over against the other, judges it critically, and, as it were, takes it as its object" (249). The ego is now composed of the critical agency like conscience and the rest of the ego that identifies with the shadow of the lost object. In melancholia, "the conflicts between the ego and the loved person" is therefore transformed into "a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification" (249). This transformation of the ego into "a psychic object" or the "melancholic turn of the object to the ego" foregrounds the ego development (Butler 168). Even though it is

unclear in Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia," Butler argues that melancholic identification (Freud) or the "melancholic turn from object to ego" (Butler) opens up the psychical space where "something figured as 'internal'" is instituted and produced (168). In other words, the loss of the love object results in the formation and emergence of the ego and subjectivity.[6]

The concepts of mourning and melancholia have been introduced during the last decade to the Asian American literary tradition by critics like Eng, Han, and Cheng.[7] It is these critics who examine how Asian Americans internalize white ideals as their own in the process of assimilation and fall into the state of melancholia when they experience contradictions of American assimilation because of their racial and ethnic differences. Assimilation is the primary and representative ideal for Asian immigrants and their descendants to live up to. However, American assimilation becomes the ideal that is constantly suspended for Asian immigrants' different race and ethnicity and thus calls a halt to Asian Americans' incorporation into mainstream society. Focusing on how their ideals of American assimilation are constantly "suspended, conflicted, and unresolved" in the processes of immigration and racialization, Eng and Han write:

> The irresolution of this [assimilation] process places the concept of assimilation within a melancholic framework. Put otherwise, mourning describes a finite process that might be reasonably aligned with the

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[6] In *The Acoustic Mirror*, Kaja Silverman also explains that the child develops its subjectivity as it undergoes separation and loss of objects: "Indeed, it could almost be said that to the degree that the object has been lost, the subject has been found" (7).

[7] Eng and Han's "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia" was originally published in *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* in 2000 and Anne Anlin Cheng's *The Melancholy of Ra*ce in 2001.

> popular American myth of immigration, assimilation, and the melting pot for dominant white ethnic groups. In contrast, melancholia delineates an unresolved process that might usefully describe the unstable immigration and suspended assimilation of Asian Americans into the national fabric. This suspended assimilation—this inability to blend into the "melting pot" of America—suggests that, for Asian Americans, ideals of whiteness are continually estranged. They remain at an unattainable distance, at once a compelling fantasy and a lost ideal. (345)

To be sure, that contradictions and conflicts of American assimilation destroy the dream of assimilation into mainstream society for many Asian Americans. Their failed object relationships with assimilation lead the subjects to fall into a state of grieving.

However, the internal world of the subjects is not composed of the singular failed object relationship with assimilation. Eng and Han acknowledge that the lost ideals and objects of Asian Americans are withdrawn or reinstated into the Asian Americans' psyche, and the lost but not entirely lost ideals and objects recompose and reshape the Asian Americans' ego and subjectivity. Acknowledging the relation between loss and the composition of identity, Eng and Han stress, "The crucial point to investigate, then, is the social and psychic status of that lost object, idealized or devalued, and the ways in which that lost object can or cannot be reinstated into the psychic life of the individual in order to rebuild an internal world" (363). However, even though Eng and Han emphasize the importance of investigating the valued and devalued lost objects that compose the psyche of Asian Americans, they hardly account for what Asian Americans must give up in the process of assimilation and acculturation. The internal worlds of the subjects or their

identities are built on diverse losses of love objects other than assimilation. Indebted much to the critical theory on racial melancholia by Eng, Han, and Cheng, my dissertation expands their research scope by paying special attention to what the critics have neglected in their works—various love objects or ideals such as homeland, mother tongue, loved people, etc. that the diasporic Asian American subjects have to leave as they are displaced, dislocated, and migrated, as well as ideals of assimilation that they live up to as immigrants in the United States.

In the case of the texts I read in this dissertation, it is not only cultural, linguistic, and ideological barriers but also the traumatic historical events that make it difficult for the Asian Americans to achieve American assimilation. I argue that it is the oppressive events like the internment, colonialism, and systemized sexual enslavement that ultimately threaten and destroy the subjects' relationships with their love objects. In other words, the historical disruptions force the characters to abandon their objects, whether it be a loved person, language, nation, or ideals of assimilation, and acquire a new counterpart as their love object. Undergoing the historical events, the Asian American subjects lose their ideals and loved objects and acquire new counterparts for the lost love objects. However, this compulsory and forced replacement or transference does not mean the death of their old love objects. Rather, the subjects deny the death or loss of their homeland, language, culture, ideals of assimilation, etc. and securely keep them alive in their own psyche. The diasporic and transnational subjects' psyche is the place that preserves multiple layers of their lost objects whose deaths are not properly grieved and mourned by the subjects. And the subjects' libidinal attachment and detachment to their old and newly imposed objects appear on the surface as they display the tropes of

collective silence, forgetting, remembering, and reconciliation in the texts. Therefore, exploring the traumatic memories in the trauma narratives, I pay special attention to multiple layers of the lost but not entirely lost love objects and the ways they are literarily represented and narrativized.

Reading psychic conditions of Asian Americans through clinical cases or literary texts, Eng, Han, and Cheng view melancholia not as a pathology but as "a depathologized structure of feeling" and as a metaphoric term that reflects their "conflicts and struggles with experiences of immigration, assimilation, and racialization" (Eng and Han 344). Appropriating the psychical state of melancholia as a foundational theoretical framework in this dissertation, I also depathologize melancholia in the same manner as do these literary critics and understand it as a metaphoric space that mirrors the psychological topography the Asian American subjects have mapped with various objects—old (lost but not entirely lost) and newly imposed. Looking at the melancholic psyche of the subjects, I trace their psychological conflicts, struggles, and responses in encounters with the historical events. This is also the place where I seek the mothers' traumatic memories as genealogy preserved to be transmitted to their daughters. In this sense, my psychoanalytic reading is not ahistorical. It is possible to tease out the multifaceted layers and palimpsests of the subjects' emotional and psychological entanglements and complexity only when we explore the very juncture where psyche meets history.

**Thematic Anchors of Trauma Narratives**

Exploring silence, one of the thematic anchors of the trauma narratives, I intend to delineate its discursive power by exploring its multiple implications—social, cultural, and psychological. Considered inferior in the oppositional pair with speech in Western

philosophy, silence has been regarded as negative and passive. This notion is reinforced when it encounters the stereotypes of Asian Americans. King-Kok Cheung writes in *Articulate Silences* that the silence of Asian Americans functions to intensify the stereotypical images of Asians "either as devious, timid, shrewd, and, above all, 'inscrutable' . . . or as docile, submissive, and obedient" (2). However, as Cheung further writes, silence does not exist for Asian Americans as a thing that has no significance of its own and only needs to be broken and spoken out. Rather, their silence needs to be explored with respect to their sociopolitical, historical, and cultural specificities.

In *Articulate Silences*, Cheung emphasizes the trope of silence as a common point of interest in Asian American literature and examines the use of silence as a strategic tool for Asian American survival in the United States. Subsequently, many critics including Stan Yogi, Lien Chao, and Patti Duncan have interpreted silence in constructive and strategic ways. However, they have hardly taken into account the way psychological factors like their desire for assimilation, feelings of shame and self-disregard in relation to gender identity and the female body, as well as historical repression, are correlated with a long-term collective silence in the victims of trauma; nor have such scholars sufficiently investigated how ideological discourses—nationalist and patriarchal—reinforce the silence.

Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok's concept of incorporation is a useful tool to understand the traumatic memories preserved in the Asian American subjects' silence. In their theory, the term *incorporation* is defined in relation to the other term *introjection*.[8]

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[8] Even though Freud equates the term *introjection* with identification or incorporation in expounding his theory on the grieving processes, Abraham and Torok distinguish these

Although introjection and incorporation connote a similar image like casting and taking inside, they are at odds in Abraham and Torok's theories. They define introjection as a process that develops and broadens the ego, a theoretical entity that has nothing to do with melancholic identification or incorporation in Freud's theory. They comment:

> Like transference (that is, like its mode of action in therapy), introjection is defined as the process of including the Unconscious in the ego through objectal contacts. The loss of the object will halt this process. Introjection does not tend toward compensation, but growth. By broadening and enriching the ego, introjection seeks to introduce into it the unconscious, nameless, or repressed libido. Thus, it is not at all a matter of "introjecting" the object, as is all too commonly stated, but of introjecting the sum total of the drives, and their vicissitudes as occasioned and mediated by the object. (113)

As the ego's life-long process of accommodation, assimilation, and expansion toward maturation and growth, introjection "operates like a genuine instinct" without having the loss of love object as its cause (113). The ego extends and broadens itself by the continual process of "introjecting" various drives, desires, and interests through objectal contacts; "puts an end to objectal dependency" (114); and creates smooth transferential love. If the ego introjects the loss of the love object, the mourning for the loss will be over and the ego will be enriched and broadened by the introjection. However, when the loss of the love object is not ingested and appropriated by and for the ego, introjection is halted, and as a result, the ego cannot be modified, assimilated, nourished, and expanded.

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terms by restoring the original concept of introjection used by Sandor Ferenczi and differentiating it from their concept of incorporation.

Abraham and Torok call what prohibits the process of introjection incorporation. Echoing the melancholic identification or incorporation in Freud's theory that denies the loss or death of love object, Abraham and Torok's incorporation refuses to introject the loss or death of love object and "creates or reinforces imaginal ties and hence dependency" (114) to the lost object. Abraham and Torok's incorporation is distinctive in that the lost love object is swallowed in the process of incorporation and preserved as a tomb, crypt, or secret inside the subject: "The words that cannot be uttered, the scenes that cannot be recalled, the tears that cannot be shed—everything will be swallowed along with the trauma that led to the loss . . . Reconstituted from the memories of words, scenes, and affects, the objectal correlative of the loss is buried alive in the crypt as a full-fledged person" (130).

One salient contribution that Abraham and Torok made to Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" is that they shed light on "the meaning of the fantasy life bound up with incorporation and so-called manic-depressive psychosis" (134). The entombed, secretive life is created as the loss of the love object undergoes melancholic incorporation or identification. Therefore, the crypt built in the ego reveals the psychical space that preserves traumatic memories tied with the loss of love object, in the form of silence or "its varied forms—the untold or unsayable secret, the feeling unfelt, the pain denied, the unspeakable and concealed shame of families, the cover-up of political crimes, the collective disregard for painful historical realities" (Rand 21). It is Abraham and Torok who lead us out of the processes of grief to the psychical enclave that contains unspoken and unrealized traumatic memories.

Silence as the "inherent latency" and "inherent forgetting" of trauma (Caruth 17) is represented in the form of the collective amnesia and silence of the historical victims in these narratives. Both the Japanese internees—mostly the first and second generations of Japanese immigrants—and Korean comfort women had kept silent about their unbearable but unforgettable experiences for several decades until their descendants brought up the issues in the mid-1970s and the late 1980s respectively.[9] Even though their collective silence and amnesia as a defense mechanism of trauma have originated as a result of war, racism, or colonialism, their silence contains entombed stories and feelings accompanying diverse losses of the Japanese Americans'/Canadians' and Korean Americans' love objects, dreams, or ideals. Therefore, their collective silence reflects the psychological site where we can probe into the psychological dynamism the Asian American subjects have shown with their love objects like assimilation, economic success, the country of their ancestors, etc., which are lost by the historical oppression but not entirely lost because they are kept alive in the subjects' psyche.

The tension and conflicts between forgetting and remembering is another key element of the trauma narratives, and it is often registered through the mother and daughter relationship, in particular through the tension between the forgetting of mothers and the remembering of daughters. The mothers in each of the texts I examine are the victims of trauma and exhibit a tendency to forget or hide their traumatic memories, whereas their daughters strive to discover and expose the histories of their mothers. For

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[9] Anthologies of Asian American literary works published in the 1970s such as *Asian-American Authors*, *Aiiieeeee!*, and *Asian American Heritage* include many Japanese American writers. Many of these authors are the second-generation of Japanese immigrants, who were relocated to concentration camps during the war. They occasionally describe the concentration camps as a setting for their works. However, they rarely engage in active criticism of the racial logic in the relocation policy.

example, the title character of *Obasan*, the narrator's aunt, is described as a very reticent woman and "silence within her small body has grown large and powerful" (Kogawa, *Obasan* 17). Similarly, Akiko in *Comfort Woman* intentionally hides her past of being a comfort woman from her daughter. The narrator in "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara" also does not have any authentic information about Miss Sasagawara, who has been surrounded by numerous rumors and gossip. These characters' pasts have remained veiled as a result of their deliberate forgetting and silence. Naomi in *Obasan* does not know why her mother and grandmother did not come back from visiting their family in Japan, and Beccah in *Comfort Woman* does not learn that her mother was a comfort woman until her mother dies.

These generational tensions are based on the different positions of mothers and daughters towards the traumatic events. Despite their being the recipients of the transmission of traumatic memories, the daughters nevertheless remain much more distanced, both temporally and emotionally. It is easier for them, than for their mothers, to examine what has happened in the past and how the past still affects their present lives. The act of remembering signifies more than its literal meaning, that is "to recall something that had been forgotten to mind." The daughters' remembering in the trauma narratives is to draw attention to the reality which occurred but was not realized in the past moment and in so doing, to reconcile with the unresolved contests and conflicts that loom through their relationships either with their mothers or with the historical events in the past. Therefore, the collective silence and amnesia start to fall apart when the daughters attempt to remember and accept the excruciating experiences of their mothers as their own histories.

The reconciliation of the daughters with their secretive mothers and their hidden pasts is achieved when the daughters relate their mothers' haunting memories to the present and the future. According to Trinh T. Minh-ha, History is "unrelated to the Present and the Future . . . waiting to be revealed and related" like knowledge sanctioned as truth (*Woman* 120). However, she explains, stories and histories are not accumulated factual knowledge but stories full of living words that connect together the past, the present, and the future. The mothers' traumatic experiences are stories that are unmarked by and thus not fossilized under the sealed vault of History. Rather, they are living stories that are handed down from one generation to the next without being dammed in the past; rather, they bridge the past, the present, and the future together. It is when the mothers' life stories are inherited and acknowledged by their daughters that reconciliation between the mothers and the daughters, or between the subjects and their traumatic past, begins. With the help of their daughters, the mothers in the narratives of trauma take one step further to reconciliation by unraveling their stories and experiences encrypted in their psyches. The reconciliation of the mothers with their daughters and with their traumatic past also becomes a way to fill up the hole or vacuum in history that neglects to record their sufferings and wounds.

The tension between the mother Akiko and her daughter Beccah in *Comfort Woman* resolves when Beccah finally comes to know the mother's secret history as a comfort woman, that her mother is socially and psychologically dead since her existence is rejected and unacknowledged. Beccah's mother mostly dwells in her shamanic world,

lacking kin support or proper mourning for her social death.[10] Later in the novel, Beccah actively participates in saving her mother from disappearing into oblivion with no acknowledgment and restores her mother's lost name, Soon Hyo, and her identity by offering a mourning ritual for her dead mother. Her mourning ritual does not save only her mother's straying sprit but also restores their lost bond as mother and daughter. Similarly, *Obasan* is also based on the mother's death in Nagasaki and her daughter Naomi's journey into the past surrounding her disappeared mother. The seamless relationship between the mother and the daughter is broken as the mother does not come back from her visit in Japan. They are reconciled as Naomi feels her mother's presence by feeling and sharing her mother's suffering and pain which have been dammed in order to protect her children.

For the mothers and the daughters in these texts, reconciliation with the traumatic past also means the restoration of their lost bond and unity as mother and daughter. Melanie Klein's theory of manic-depression offers useful insight into understanding the mother and daughter relationship in the narratives of trauma. Klein's departure from Freud, in understanding mourning and melancholia, fundamentally lies in the internalization of love objects during early childhood, which Klein postulates becomes "the bedrock of all future psychic responses and interactions" (Kurzwell 46). According to Klein, the primary objects are internalized into the ego of the child, at first as partial objects like the mother's breasts and face and later as a whole person, even before the ego is completely developed. The internalized objects are, on one hand, the objects of love, satisfaction, hope, and care, all of which stand for the good (like the feeding mother). On

[10] For the social death of abducted Indian women, see "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain" by Veena Das.

the other hand, they are also the objects of lack, hate, hostility, anxiety, and persecution, all of which stand for the bad (like the mother being outside the self). So, the inside of the child is not a safe place, rather "to be a dangerous and poisonous place" in which the good internalized objects could be lost by the persecution and hostility of the bad objects (Klein, "The Contribution" 265).

In Klein's theory, the loss of the love object means the situation "when the ego becomes fully identified with its good internalized objects, and at the same time becomes aware of its own incapacity to protect and preserve them against the internalized persecuting objects and the id" (265). When the persecution or anxiety of bad objects sadistically devours the good objects, the ego falls into a depressive condition. These primary objects internalized during childhood are reawakened and reinforced as the child goes through diverse object relationships in various stages to maturation. The external objects are tied with the internalized objects in terms of their values, affects, or feelings. Therefore, the loss of love object means not only the loss of the external object but also the loss of the internal object that is associated with the external one. In this context, Klein argues that the depressive condition caused by the loss of the love object will be over as one "[reinstates] that object as well as all his loved *internal* objects which he feels he has lost" ("Mourning" 362). For Klein, the mourning process is over as one recovers the good objects that have been already internalized and installed in the ego. Therefore, the restored mother-daughter bond in all five of the works implies that each of the mothers as an internalized object is restored and reinstated after having been lost and absent for a while; and through their restoration, the daughters are able to take a step forward out of their melancholia.

The process of reconciliation as well as the restoration of the mother-daughter bond does not mean the regressive return to the past with a sense of nostalgia. It is rather to remember and recognize what has happened in the past but been excluded and marginalized in history or the historiography of the society. Acknowledging the haunting memories of the mothers in the present is, therefore, to fill up the historical vacuum in which the marginalized subjects are situated. The daughters in *Obasan*, *Dictee*, and *Comfort Woman* begin to reform and reshape their present identity by ingesting their mothers' raw wounds and binding shame; as bearers of the inherited and transmitted knowledge from their mothers, they struggle to stand balanced between the past and the present in order to move into the future. Reconciling with the past and with their mothers, Beccah in *Comfort Woman* and Naomi in *Obasan* are no longer who they were; they are "waiting to be born" at the end of the novels (Keller, *Comfort Woman* 213).

I read these trauma narratives as a form of what Michel Foucault calls subjugated knowledge. He defines this notion as follows: "the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemization" and as "a whole set of knowledge that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated" (*Power/Knowledge* 81-2). Therefore, I argue that the revisiting and remembering by the daughters allows them to relive and remember the unrecognized, repressed experiences of their mothers in the present historical time and space. This analytic remembering of a hidden, buried reality then shows us how trauma narratives function as residues of a previous reality and as a counter-memory resisting official versions of historical continuity. Such a remembering "opposes history as knowledge" and unmasks "knowledge as perspective" (160). The daughters' remembering opposes

History as a master narrative and provides alternative stories coming from the encrypted secrets and silences.

Although I have attempted to identify these themes separately, they certainly do not exist in isolation from one another in the trauma narratives. In fact, they are entwined, continually affecting one another. For instance, forgetting and silence are entangled with the feeling of shame and incessantly contested by remembering and revisiting. Feeling shame is a strong device of repression and also related to healing in that one cannot be healed without revisiting and re-exposing the psychic and physical wounds, which in return renews the feeling of shame at the moment. Healing initiates first with remembering and then leads to the reconciliation between generations or with the traumatic past. Exploring the ways traumatic repression is evoked and the passage of traumatic memories from ghostly haunting to healing, my dissertation revolves around my main concerns of how these women writers treat silence and forgetting and remembering and reconciliation; how the processes of grieving such as mourning and melancholia come into play when the writers explore the historical events; as well as how the structures of their trauma narratives manifest the process and nature of trauma.

My second chapter, "The Collective Silence of Japanese Internees: Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* and Hisaye Yamamoto's 'The Legend of Miss Sasagawara,'" concentrates on the psychological textuality of the collective silence and amnesia of the Japanese internees. Reviewing the few fictional narratives about the Japanese internment that occurred from the Second World War to the 1970's, I shed light on the collective silence and amnesia of the Japanese American writers about their internment experiences.

I approach their silence and amnesia not simply as a heritage of Japanese culture but as a discursive site that discloses their untold stories and feelings that are bound with diverse losses of their ideals, wishes, and loved people, as well as with their compulsory spatial displacement and dislocation during World War II.

The main focus in my reading of Sone's *Nisei Daughter* is on the psychological impact of the internment on Japanese internees, that is, their collective silence. Examining the psychological interactions of the internees to their incarceration, American racism, and their failed ideals of assimilation, I attempt to tease out the ways the psychical entanglements of various components contribute to the formation of the collective silence of the internees. Paying special attention to the growth of a young female narrator Kazuko, I also trace her psychoracial development as she becomes aware of her position in relation to ethnic, racial, class, and gender hierarchies in mainstream society. Whereas I concentrate on the psychical significance and composition of the collective silence of the internees in Sone's *Nisei Daughter*, my reading of Yamamoto's "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara" illuminates the way Yamamoto implants the covert plot containing unraveled stories and feelings under the overt plot, making parallel double plots.

Following the claims established in the second chapter, the third chapter explores the contrasting attitudes of nisei (second generation Japanese American)[11] mothers and their daughters towards the internment of Japanese Canadians by focusing on Kogawa's

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[11] Many writers handle Japanese words like "issei (first-generation Japanese Americans)," "nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans)," and "sansei (third-generation Japanese Americans)" differently: some have them capitalized, and others have them italicized. When these words are included in quotations, I quote them as they appear in the original texts. Otherwise, these words will appear in lowercase throughout this dissertation.

*Obasan*. Entitled "'Mother, I am listening. Assist me to hear you': Remembering Traumatic Memories in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*," this chapter examines the generational tension between the mother's forgetting and the daughter's remembering that convolutes the decades-long hushed secret concerning the mother's disappearance. A key part of this text involves the journey that the sansei (third generation Japanese Canadian) narrator Naomi takes to redress the traumatic experience of Japanese Canadian internment and the ensuing dispersal policy of the internees that has affected her entire household. My exploration of this narrative focuses on Naomi's urgent task to fill out the space of memory left empty by the collective silence of the nisei characters. Examining the confrontation between these two generations in terms of speech and silence, I also challenge the oppositional, hierarchical relation between the two. The narrator's journey delineates a psychological path, passing through the dialectic negotiations with speech and silence into her unbearable but inescapable past and ultimately into the reconciliation with her unresolved, traumatic losses.

What does it mean for postcolonial subjects who have endured oppressive histories to remember the painful past? Kogawa offers us this insight: "All our ordinary stories are changed in time, altered as much by the present as the present is shaped by the past. . . . Our attics and living rooms encroach on each other, deep into their invisible places" (*Obasan* 30). In the novel, the attic is a place where all unforgettable, unspeakable memories have been stored, while the living room symbolizes the present, which has historical gaps that can never be filled or explained. Even though Naomi shows some reluctance to discover what has been covered over, it is inevitable that she pursues the search. Without knowing the past, her present identity can only be unstable,

unsettled, and drifting. Naomi's recollecting and remembering is thus explored in relation to her reconciliation with the traumatic past, and I examine how this traumatic past serves as the place from which questions of her present identity arise.

In the fourth chapter, "Melancholic Identification and Traumatic Memories in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*," I look in tandem at Japanese colonialism of Korea and at the assimilation of immigrants in the United States as the two main causes of trauma. Traumatic repression occurs when the mother in Cha's *Dictee* undergoes the deprivation of her mother tongue, customs, and culture during the Japanese occupation and similarly when the mother and her daughter, the narrator, endure suffering through the process of adaptation in the United States. Exploring their traumatic memories, I am particularly interested in the diverse processes of compulsory or voluntary identification. During the Japanese occupation of Korea, the colonial subjects are forced to abandon their names, language, and culture, and to be reborn as Japanese by accepting Japanese counterparts as their own. Cha's title *Dictee* (dictation in French) implies in itself the linguistic identification process that relies on the equivalent identification between the oral and the written. The religious identification is also explored in the process of catechistic practices in which the catechumen internalizes Catholic doctrine. In addition to this colonial, linguistic, and religious identification processes, I will also look at the assimilation and acculturation of the immigrant subjects in terms of identification process.

This chapter first explores the psychological violence of the identification processes, which force the subjects to accept the colonizer's culture, target language, Catholic doctrine, and/or American culture as new objects. Examining the way the female

subjects deal with their love objects, both lost and newly imposed, in the state of melancholy, I will illuminate how they respond to the historical and cultural demands as they cross the border between incompatible love objects and ideals such as language, culture, nationality, etc. This chapter further investigates the significance of the imaginary homeland to the displaced, transnational subjects in order to examine the functions of the "lost but not entirely lost" old love objects, as well as newly imposed ones, in the identity formation of the diasporic subjects.

In the fifth chapter, "Mourning Unmourned Deaths in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*," I read Keller's *Comfort Woman* with emphasis on the mother and daughter relationship. The novel restructures past and present through two intertwining narratives, one narrated by the mother Akiko, a former Korean comfort woman, and the other by her daughter Beccah. Exploring the mother's sufferings and consequent social death in the past, I trace how the mother undergoes sexual objectification not only for the Japanese military during the Asia Pacific War but also for her American husband. Deprived of the ownership of her female body, let alone her own identity and agency, she becomes split, physically and psychically. Tracing her traumatic memories, I argue that her shamanism represents her social death in that she loses almost all connections to everyday life except to her daughter Beccah and is occupied with spirits from the past. Approaching the mother's shamanism as a psychological space in which she encounters the remnants, residue, and ghosts from the past, I claim that Akiko's shamanism functions to offer mourning rituals for the unacknowledged lives and deaths like those of the comfort women during the war.

The tension between the mother and the daughter is intensified as the daughter feels constantly lacking and missing something in her life because she barely possesses her mother, who constantly slips into the world of spirits. Living with her mother who is her love object but lost whenever she is claimed by spirits, the daughter falls into a state of melancholia. The tension between them is mainly based on the mother's secret of being a former comfort woman and her constant sliding away into the spiritual world. Reading these characters as melancholic subjects, this chapter investigates how the daughter resolves her conflicts and tension with her mother and restores her lost mother, psychically and psychologically, from death and hell by offering mourning rituals for her mother's wandering spirit and unacknowledged death.

## Chapter 2. The Collective Silence of Japanese Internees: Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* and Hisaye Yamamoto's "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara"

### Nisei Writers as the Silent Generation

Many nisei (second generation Japanese American) writers who underwent internment either in their teens or early twenties are often described as "the silent generation." From the start of World War II to the mid-1970s, literary works written by nisei writers reflected no critical voice concerning the internment camps of Japanese Americans. Despite the relatively prolific literature of Japanese Americans,[1] as Stan Yogi states, there was a silence about the internment until the mid-1970s, when the possibility of the monetary redress movement was estimated by sansei (third generation Japanese American) activist writers. Even though the redress movement functioned as a catalyst for niseis to revisit and "break decades-long silences about those years" (Yogi, "Japanese" 137), before the mid-1970s there were a few literary texts concerning the traumatic historical event. The list of the internment literature published until the mid-1970s includes Mine Okubo's graphic memoir *Citizen 13660* (1946), Hisaye

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[1] According to Elaine Kim, Japanese immigrants became more inclined to settle in America after they realized they could not go back to Japan and catch up with the rapid development of its industrialization. In addition, that they were able to start families in America by legally inviting their "picture brides" from Japan, which had been prohibited to Chinese Americans by the Exclusion Act since 1882, contributed to their stable settlements and, in the end, to the production of their own literature (*Asian American* 73).

Besides this stable and settled climate with family, diverse publishing sources like community newspapers, literary magazines, periodicals, and journals helped them write and share their literary works. The mostly popularized traditional poetry forms like haiku, tanka, and senrye, as well as numerous poetry circles and contests widespread over the West Coast, functioned to engage them in creative writing. Refer to the introduction of Lucille M. Nixon's *Sounds from the Unknown: A Collection of Japanese-American Tanka*, for these poetry forms and circles in the early twentieth century. For the genealogy of Japanese American literature since the first generation of Japanese immigrants, refer to Stan Yogi's "Japanese American Literature" and Kim's *Asian American Literature*.

Yamamoto's short story "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara" (1950),[2] Monica Sone's autobiography *Nisei Daughter* (1953), John Okada's novel *No-No Boy* (1957), Daniel Okimoto's autobiography *American in Disguise* (1971), Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar* (1973), and Mitsuye Yamada's *Camp Notes and Other Writings* (1976). All these works do sketch the camp life of the internees, but seldom protest the internment policy in an explicit way.

These nisei writers commonly maintain aloofness, a lack of bitterness, and an emotional distance toward the camp experience when dealing with it in their works. Okubo takes the participant observer perspective as if she were an anthropologist and the camps were the object in question[3]; Sone pays less attention to the sociopolitical situation of the moment by looking through the eyes of an immature young girl, Kazuko, who has a cheerful manner, at the series of historical regulations imposed upon Japanese Americans; Sone, Okada, and Okimoto display a reluctance to deeply investigate the anti-Japanese racism that was reified through the internment. Rather, their strong assimilationist attitudes offset their spirit of protest, and this lack of critical voice causes many sanseis to accuse nisei writers of having been silent about their camp experiences.

Their penchant for avoiding the traumatic past gives birth to the tag of "the silent generation" for the nisei people, and their reluctance and resistance to revisit and revive their internment past is often verified by nisei writers themselves. Wakako Yamauchi writes in response to the accusation of being aloof and distanced as follows:

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[2] Yamamoto also wrote a mystery serial "Death Rides the Rails to Poston" (1942) and published it in the *Poston Chronicle*, the camp newspaper in Poston, Arizona.

[3] As stated in the preface of *Citizen 13660*, Okubo views the internment as "the opportunity to study the human race from the cradle to the grave, and to see what happens to people when reduced to one status and condition" (ix).

> The sansei accuse us of not wanting to talk about the evacuation. And it's true. I speak for hundreds of Nisei like myself. . . . Sure, the times affected us, moved us here or there, shaped our attitudes, our destinies, but how many of us know why or how? . . . When we do see those old photographs of the mass evacuation. . . . Few of us can hold back those tears. We know that this is the event that changed the course of our lives, and though there were those among us who had more insight, more courage, whatever path we chose, we have survived—whole. Maybe that's why so many of us remain silent about our camp experience. Maybe in our silence we ask you to honor us for that—survival. . . . The fact of our survival is proof of our valor. And that is enough. ("The Poetry" lxxi)

Mary Matsuda Gruenewald, who was seventeen years old when interned, kept "those self-imposed 'barbed-wire fences' built around [her] experiences in the camps" (x) for sixty years until she broke her silence with her autobiography *Looking like the Enemy* in 2005. In "Is There a Just Cause?" Joy Kogawa bears the same sentiment: "Many Nisei, like myself, who suffered the drawn out trauma of racial prejudice during our formative and young adult years have a deep timidity burned into our psyches with the injunction that we must never again risk the visibility of community" (20). It was not only impossible for them to articulate their painful experience because of their unhealed wounds but also necessary for them to remain silent in order to survive in the anti-Japanese society. The impossibility of articulation and the necessity of silence are therefore closely related to their survival.

David Mura, a sansei poet, describes in his memoir *When the Body Meets Memory* how the incarceration experiences are elided on account of the silence of the nisei internees. Reading an article written by his father about his teacher who taught him how to behave outside the camp, Mura speculates, "It's like the whole complexity of the camps has been reduced to the fact that this woman showed him how to shake hands. . . . There's nothing here about the losses the Issei suffered, nothing about the fights between the Kibei and the JACLers and the No-No Boys[4]. It just sounds like a public relations campaign for the camps" (4-5). Like many other nisei writers, his father did not write about his inner feelings or concerns caused by the internment, but about an episode in which his teacher taught him about a way to assimilate into the society when he was sent out. This reduction of "the whole complexity of the camps" ultimately results in the abortion of the complex and contested construction of the internment literature based on the ways the internees wrestled with anti-Japanese racism.

The collective silence of Japanese Americans began to get complicated as the internees lived with the desire to be accepted into mainstream society, yet encountered its constant refusal. According to Elaine Kim, postwar nisei writers who stand on the assimilationist approach are much inclined to the self-negation of their ethnic cultural traits: "The more complete the process of self-negation, the more likely that the autobiography will be hailed as a 'success story.' No doubt this is because the distinction

[4] Issei means the first generation of Japanese immigrants; Kibei means nisei who were born in America and spent some years in their childhood for education in Japan. Nikkei indicates anyone Japanese. JACL stands for Japanese American Citizens League: JACLers cooperated and supported the policies of War Relocation Authority (WRA) during the war. No-No boys indicate nisei internees who said no-no to two loyalty questions given by the WRA, questions requiring them to state their willingness to serve in the U.S. armed forces and repudiate their loyalty to Japan.

between ‘success’ and ‘disappearance’ or ‘assimilation’ has not been made any clearer than the distinction between cultural pluralism and ‘melting pot’ notions” (*Asian* 81). Even though Kim points out self-negation or self-contempt as a common factor of Japanese American autobiography published until the 1970s, she does not go further to investigate how the psychological dynamics between assimilation and self-negation play a role in the formation of their collective silence. To consider their self-hatred only to be their abandonment or betrayal of their ethnic and cultural inheritance is to overlook the psychological entanglements of discursive assimilation and other repressive components caused by the internment.

However, their silence is often read either as the consequence of their Japanese cultural traits or as their assimilationist attitude. Many critics including Stan Yogi and King-Kok Cheung point out cultural relevance to the collective silence of the internees. Japanese cultural traits such as *enryo* and *gaman* are often associated with the silence of Japanese Americans. *Enryo* is “translated as ‘reserve,’ ‘deference,’ or ‘diffidence’” (Cheung, “Double-Telling” 279). And “One of the main manifestations of *enryo* was the conscious use of silence as a safe or neutral response to an embarrassing or ambiguous situation” (Kikumura and Kitano, qtd. in Cheung, “Double-Telling” 280). *Gaman* also means the “internalization of, and suppression of, anger and emotion” (Kitano, qtd. in Yogi, “Rebels” 135) and is further associated with “dogged perseverance” (Cheung, “Double” 280). As these critics comment, there are apparent similarities and analogies between Japanese Americans’ cultural values on *enryo* and *gaman* and their collective silence about their sufferings in the camps. While I am clearly aware of these analogies and similarities, I think that considering their collective silence only in terms of Japanese

Americans' cultural inheritance is also to ignore other factors that are engaged in the formation of the collective silence.

In exploring the nature of their collective silence, I am more interested, in this chapter, in the other psychological and/or ideological factors other than the cultural values. Drawing on psychoanalysis and trauma studies, I argue that their silence, as well as their self-hatred or self-negation, comes into play as a consequence of the internees' psychological struggles and interactions both with their American racism and assimilation and with their country of origin whose culture has been constantly devalued. And the complexity of the silence in its processes of formation and repression will be adumbrated as I explore Sone's autobiography *Nisei Daughter* and Yamamoto's short story "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara" (henceforth "The Legend").

I will first focus in Sone's *Nisei Daughter* on the process of psychoracial development, which is disclosed as the young female narrator grows up and confronts not only racial prejudice against Japanese Americans but also the internment, the institutionalized form of racism imposed on them. I modify Sigmund Freud's term *psychosexual development* to *psychoracial development* in order to signify the process in which the young narrator opens her eyes on the racialized society and becomes aware of her racial, ethnic, and class position as a Japanese American in the society. Psychological, historical, and social factors will be considered in exploring the process in which the narrator develops her awareness of race or racial difference. Tracing the narrator's psychoracial development will ultimately provide insights into the psychic topography in which the internees' collective silence is formulated.

Second, I will examine Yamamoto's "The Legend" with focus on the aesthetic use of narrative silence. While *Nisei Daughter* delineates the collective silence as the consequence of the sociopolitical repression as well as the desire to be accepted into mainstream society, Yamamoto's short story exhibits how the collective silence is aesthetically embodied as a covert narrative. The double plot in "The Legend" functions as a crucial device for the author to metonymically portray the relations between the Japanese internees and mainstream society depending on unreliable rumors, prejudice, and war hysteria. Examining the double plot reflecting the social condition of the internment period, I argue that the covert plot in the short story is a new form of narrative emerging out of the internees' collective silence.

**Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* and Psychoracial Development**

Critics of *Nisei Daughter*, the first autobiography written by a Japanese American in 1953, "fall into one of two camps: (1) those who chastise Sone for her seeming espousal of white America and her championing of American assimilation; and (2) those who read the text as a subtle yet valiant protest against Americanization, a struggle that subverts a hegemonic understanding of literature, history, and memory" (Hoffman 230). On one hand, critics like Jeffery Paul Chan, George J. Leonard, and David Shih criticize Sone's autobiography for having less interest in social criticism, and more desire to be assimilated as best as possible even in the anti-Japanese atmosphere during and after World War II. In addition, Shirley Goek-Lin Lim in "Twelve Asian American Writers: In Search of Self-Definition" reads *Nisei Daughter* as a text that shows how the narrator abandons her Japanese mother, culture, and racial identity in the process of assimilation.

On the other hand, Hoffman and Stephen H. Sumida argue that Sone's work should be read in the historical context in which forthright protest must have been virtually impossible and "terms whatever it is that opposes accommodation were not yet devised except in ways considered most derogatory" (Sumida 222). Sone deals in her autobiography with several historical events that distinguish the history of Japanese Americans from the experiences of other ethnic groups, such as the anti-alien land laws, the Asian Exclusion Act in 1924, picture brides, and Executive Order 9066, which led to the Japanese American internment in 1942. Referring to these historical events in *Nisei Daughter*, Sumida argues that "This historicity helps to substantiate her pluralistic recognition of the differing historical origin of America's peoples" (227). However, it is not apparent that Sone provides ample analyses of these distinctive historical materials. Two chapters in *Nisei Daughter* describing the internment experience predominantly focus on how the internees try to adjust to the camp life and create a new community, reducing the complexity of the historical event into joyous events like the wedding preparation and wedding party for Henry, the narrator's brother.

Sone's autobiography is controversial in terms of its attitude towards the internment. However, unlike those critics who treat her work in terms of her social response to the internment and judge whether it is conformist or resistant, my analysis primarily concentrates on the psychological responses of the characters both to the anti-Japanese racism of American society and to the country of their ancestors. It is worth exploring the emotional aloofness of the characters, or the nisei writers, in the midst of the bitter state of the internment, since it implicates the psychological defense mechanism

the Japanese internees develop as they confront the anti-Japanese racist sentiments, as well as their psychological struggles to maintain their ideals.

Sone unravels her life story in her autobiography *Nisei Daughter*, ranging from her childhood at the old Carrollton Hotel in Seattle to her return to society after her internment in the camp in Minidoka, Idaho. The first five years of Kazuko Monica Itoi, (Kazuko is Sone's childhood name), are described as "amoebic bliss," which refers to the cognitive state in which she does not know "whether [she] was a plant or animal" (Sone 3). Her early childhood is like the preoedipal stage in her psychoracial development, since she has seen herself as whole and lived with no sense of any lack. When it comes to racial awareness, she has no sense of being an ethnic and racial person, neither Japanese nor American, let alone of realizing the differences between the two. She thinks, "the whole world consisted of two or three old hotels on every block. And that its population consisted of families like mine who lived in a corner of the hotels. And its other inhabitants were customers" (14-5). This quotation reveals the way Kazuko recognizes herself and the reality around her. It is as if she were in the mirror stage before her racial awareness is "objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject" ("The Mirror" 4), to borrow Jacques Lacan's terms.

However, it does not take long before her blissful "compact little world" (Sone 15) is broken by the "sudden intrusion of [her] blood into [her] affairs"—her parents want to send her and her brother, Henry, to "Japanese school after grammar school every day" (4). Kazuko remembers this as the "shattering moment" that signals the intrusion of her being Japanese not only into the afternoon play hours, but also into her primordial view

of the world. It shatters her all-encompassing world and forces her to open her eyes to the real world, racially complicated. This is the moment when she psychically enters the racialized symbolic order by departing from the compact preoedipal stage. Opening her eyes upon the racial world requires her to perceive reality, which gradually destroys her blissfully condensed small world. Kazuko's enchanting world is about to be replaced with the reality. And this is the moment when Kazuko gives birth to herself as a culturally and racially hybrid monster, "a despised, pathetic two-headed freak, a Japanese and an American"[5] (158), which results from the impossibility to coexist. Even though her ideal world is destroyed and, thus, her social status is denigrated into the state of being "a despised, pathetic two-headed freak," Kazuko who "had always thought [she] was a Yankee" (18) still holds the shadow of her ideal Yankee self.

Freud explains in "Mourning and Melancholia" that if the transference of cathexis from the lost original to a new substitute occurs smoothly, mourning of the loss will be over. However, if one cannot replace his or her loss with a new object, he or she becomes melancholic, the state of permanent grieving. Dealing with the concept of melancholia, Freud pays attention to the libido returned to the ego from the love object when the object relationship fails.

> An object-choice, an attachment of the libido to a particular person, had at one time existed; then, owing to a real slight or disappointment coming from this loved person, the object-relationship was shattered. The result was not the normal one of a withdrawal of the libido from this object and a displacement of it on to a new one, but something different . . . the free

[5] The imagery of "being born with two heads" comes into play throughout the autobiography and insinuates Kazuko's journey for her hybrid identity.

> libido was not displaced on to another object; it was withdrawn into the ego . . . to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object. (“Mourning” 248-49)

The failed object or ideal, according to Freud, is not entirely lost, since “the shadow of the object fell upon the ego” and, thus, overlaps and identifies with the ego when the libido that was originally attached to the object is withdrawn to the ego. Therefore, developing the concept of racial melancholia, Anne Anlin Cheng emphasizes that the ideal object in a state of melancholia is lost but not entirely lost. Cheng says, “melancholia alludes not to loss per se but to the entangled relationship with loss” (8). “[T]he loss-but-not-loss” that is now reflective on the ego includes not only the shadow of the object, but also the “feelings of guilt, rage, and punishment . . . originally attached to the initial object of loss and disappointment” (8). Incorporating various feelings that had entangled with the loved object in the process of the object relationship, the ego is now in the love and hate relationship towards the lost but not lost object.

Kazuko’s object relationship with her racial ideal of being a Yankee first fails because of the intrusion of Japanese blood. Kazuko says:

> And now Mother was telling us we were Japanese. I had always thought I was a Yankee, because after all I had been born on Occidental and Main Street. Montana, a wall-shaking mountain of a man who lived at our hotel, called me a Yankee. I didn’t see how I could be a Yankee and Japanese at

> the same time. It was like being born with two heads. It sounded freakish and a lot of trouble. (Sone 18-19)

Kazuko's perception of herself as a Yankee is not completely destroyed even if the racial boundary of being Japanese trespasses her compact world where racial issues have never been raised. Encountering her Japanese race and ethnicity, she still holds the Yankee ideal as her love object in aspects of her psychoracial development and reluctantly adds a portion of Japanese to her understanding of her racial self, creating, ultimately, a hybrid monster of two ethnicities.

According to Freud, a love object is desired because it is lacked. In her "amoebic bliss," Kazuko does not separate herself from Yankees—she does not recognize the racial and ethnic differences. After being exposed to the knowledge of her being Japanese, she chooses Yankee, her previous state of wholeness, as her ideal, which is impossible to realize in the racially divided society outside of her little Japanese community. Conversely, the issei people of the community, including Kazuko's parents, constantly compel their children to learn and practice Japanese customs and culture. They impose upon their nisei children their Japanese identity as an ideal to live up to in America where it is easy to lose one's ethnic heritage. The Yankee ideal is welling up from Kazuko's inner self, while Japanese culture is imposed on her from the outside by her parents and by the elderly members of the Japanese community. However, these two ideals are neither compatible, nor do they substitute each other. Growing up with these two incompatible ethnic ideals, Kazuko faces a series of conflicts. Racial oppressions, like the internment, ultimately lead her to fail in the object relationships both with the Yankee ideal and with the Japanese ideal.

Kazuko's first realization of racial difference happens when she and her mother attempt to find a summer cottage in Alki for the health of Sumiko, Kazuko's younger sister. Everyone turns them down, and they cannot find any place because they are Japanese. When Kazuko hears a woman say "I'm sorry but we don't want Japs around here," she feels it "like a sharp, stinging slap" (114). Going beyond the boundaries of her own community in Skidrow, where "being Oriental had never been an urgent problem" (113), causes Kazuko to finally confront anti-Japanese racism for the first time. This initial wound inscribed by the realization of racial prejudice against Japanese Americans is reopened with Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. The confrontation between the country of her ancestors and the country where she now resides aggravates the incompatibility of the two ethnicities, and Kazuko "found [herself] shrinking inwardly from [her] Japanese blood, the blood of an enemy" (146).

As a matter of fact, two thirds of the internees of the internment were nisei who were born and raised in America. However, as Kazuko narrates, the fact that they are Americans by birthright does not "help [them] escape the consequences of this unhappy war" (146). In spite of this unlawful treatment, their response to the denial of their citizenship is not violent. Instead, the more the anti-Japanese sentiments of the society increase, the more the nisei Japanese say, "We're not Japs. We're American citizens" (119). Confronting American racism despite their citizenship, second-generation Japanese Americans, the nisei, are required to prove that they are not Japanese but American, and this ultimately generates self-negation and self-hatred.

In *Asian American Literature*, Elaine Kim delineates the distinctions between first-generation and second-generation Asian immigrant writers in terms of their

treatment of racial identity. According to her, "No matter how excluded from the society the first-generation Asian immigrants felt, they knew that they should not have to reject their racial identity in order to be acceptable in America" (58). However, second-generation writers, who have been born, raised, and educated in America, "could not so easily identify with Asia" (58). They become both sympathetic to and critical of Asia. During the period around the war, the writers focus on what would be accepted by both publishers and readership, both predominantly white, such as "Bitterness against Asian [American] cultures and values," and "expressions of self-contempt and self-negation on the part of members of racial minorities" than criticisms of American society (59)[6].

The nisei writers' self-effacement or self-negation has originated from the fear of being accused of being the enemy. In the dichotomy of race, "white vs. non-white," the self-negation of "Japaneseness" is an alternative to asserting their Americanness. The concept of multiethnic identity was not yet established. This lowering of self-regard of Japanese Americans, to an extent which "finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings" (Freud, "Mourning" 246), results from their melancholic status caused by their failure of assimilation.

As immigrants, they have lived up to their ideals of assimilation—that is, to be well accepted into mainstream society, regardless of their race. Also, they have learned to cherish their Japanese cultural heritage passed down from their parents. However, their love towards Japanese culture and heritage ironically provokes the racial worries and

[6] Traise Yamamoto comments on the reception of Sone's book: "Sone's autobiography was favorably reviewed when it was published, receiving praise for its straightforwardness, humor, and absence of bitterness. . . . Reviews declared Sone's book to be 'heartening' (Rev. of *Nisei Daughter*), a story told with 'frankness but without bitterness' (Scoggin) and 'an encouraging reminder of the melting pot at work' (Oka)" ("*Nisei Daughter*" 152).

suspicions and, eventually, risks their assimilation. The internment revoking the citizenship of Japanese Americans signals the failure of the object relationship of Japanese Americans with assimilation. They lose their self-respect based on both their Japanese and American identities.

When Executive Order 9066 was announced in 1942, the life Japanese Americans had successfully constructed was uprooted and their social status was demoted from U.S. citizen to a potential enemy of America. The internment represents the forced delegitimation of their citizenship and the denial of the legitimacy of Japanese cultural practices in the United States. The anti-Japanese condition of society caused Japanese Americans to abandon their ethnic heritage. All Japanese Americans had to abandon everything related to Japan. Kazuko's family also piles up and destroys "well-worn Japanese language schoolbooks," "translated Japanese volumes of philosophy and religion," and a "private collection of old Japanese classic literature" (Sone 155-56). Confronting the violent racism, this is the only way that they can prove their loyalty to America; to gainsay their connection to Japan and deny their ethnic heritage. Kazuko confesses, "Wearily we closed our eyes, filled with an indescribable sense of guilt for having destroyed the things we loved. This night of ravage was to haunt us for years" (156). This destruction and erasure of their Japaneseness represents, in a way, their desire to be accepted into mainstream, American society. However, their racial identity is not entirely eliminated and brings out further conflicts.

The psychological dynamics between assimilation and the internment became apparent as Kazuko's family was interned in the Puyallup camp and later in Camp

Minidoka, Idaho. Her confusion about her citizenship is consummate in the following lines:

> What was I doing behind a fence like a criminal? If there were accusations to be made, why hadn't I been given a fair trial? Maybe I wasn't considered an American anymore. My citizenship wasn't real, after all. Then what was I? I was certainly not a citizen of Japan as my parents were. . . . Of one thing I was sure. The wire fence was real. I no longer had the right to walk out of it. It was because I had Japanese ancestors. (177)

Incarcerated, Kazuko does not complain directly about the racist policy of the internment. Her anger is aimed at their being imprisoned at the camps because they are Japanese. She attributes these unfair treatments to their being Japanese, and being Japanese is loaded with the sense of guilt.

Her reproaches and reviling of her Japanese identity are worth analyzing with respect to the loss of her ideal as a well-assimilated immigrant in her psychoracial development. Freud explains, one's "self-reproaches are reproaches against a loved object which have been shifted away from it on to the patient's own ego" ("Mourning" 248). Even though one's self-reproaches are, seemingly, targeting the self, they are, at a deeper level, directed at the once-loved object that is reflected in the ego through the shadow of the object. In this context, Kazuko's hatred towards being Japanese could be examined as consequential to the entangled relationships she holds with the loss of her ideals. When the object relationship with the Yankee ideal fails on account of the internment, the free libido returning from the object to the ego comes with a variety of psychological responses, emotional feelings, and affects originally entangled in the object

relationship. Identifying with the ego, the lost object remains under the guise of the ego; therefore, Kazuko's self-reproaches originating from the loss of her ideal are also directed to the failure of her object relationship with the Yankee ideal.

"[A] loss in regard to an object" becomes "a loss in regard to his ego" when the shadow of the loved object identifies with the ego (Freud, "Mourning" 247). The state of melancholia empties the ego "until it is totally impoverished" by filling it with the remnants of the loved object (253). What is it like to live with the shadows of the objects, with the emptied ego? In my exploration of Kazuko's psychoracial development, I see her ethnicity as part of her ego and the Yankee ideal as her love object that should be achieved and gained since it is not in her. The fact that Japanese Americans are suspected as the potential enemy makes the internees sharply confront their failure to live up to their ideal as assimilated immigrants. Having lost their ideals, they empty themselves and filled their ego with the shadows of their loved objects. The shadow of the object, however, is not the same as the failed and thus lost object. Their living with the shadow of the object means living with the ghostly object that has occupied the place of their ego.

Therefore, the failure of assimilation does not mean the loss of assimilation. The shadow of the object still demands Kazuko to adjust herself into the new setting, creating a new community where she could dream again of the lost object. She cheers up herself while going to the internment camp:

> We were excited at the thought of going to unknown territory, and we liked the Indian flavor of the name "Idaho." I remembered a series of bright, hot pictures of Idaho in the National Geographic magazine, the sun-baked terrain, dried-up waterholes, runty-looking sagebrush and ugly

> nests of rattlesnakes. I knew it wasn't going to be a comfortable experience, but it would be a change. (Sone 189)

Greatly imbued with American expansionism, this cheery tone describes them as if they were frontier explorers or going on an excursion, rather than being displaced to Camp Minidoka. The internees still dream of assimilation even in the relocation camp. They need to survive, and survival at the time means assimilation, despite what the society has done to them. To survive within the anti-Japanese society and not to lose what they have accomplished since their arrival in the United States, they revive their love object by denying its loss or death.

The relocation camps become the site where Kazuko creates an early sense of hybrid identity. The incarcerated internees maintain both the desire to be assimilated through the shadow of the object and the remnants of their Japanese culture that they once attempted to eliminate. The internees enter the camps, nearly stripped of their ethnic traits and with their failed love object. However, they not only relive the lost dream of their assimilation or the Yankee ideal but also practice their Japanese culture and religion in the camps. The camps become the site where they could learn how to strike a balance between the two ideals that have not been compatible outside the camps. Therefore, it is not sudden when Kazuko learns at the end of the autobiography how to live as a two-headed freak and as a multiethnic hybrid.

> It wasn't such a tragedy. I don't resent my Japanese blood anymore. I'm proud of it, in fact, because of you and the Issei who've struggled so much for us. It's really nice to be born into two cultures, like getting a real

> bargain in life, two for the price of one. . . . I used to feel like a two-headed monstrosity, but now I find that two heads are better than one. . . . I was going back into its main stream, still with my Oriental eyes, but with an entirely different outlook, for now I felt more like a whole person instead of a sadly split personality. The Japanese and the American parts of me were now blended into one. (236-38)

Many critics including Lim who point out the conformist tendency of Sone have interpreted this ending as Kazuko finally abandoning her Japanese heritage by going back to the society from the camp.[7] However, my examination of the ending is different. Undergoing the internment, Kazuko attempts to make "a whole person" out of the "two-headed monstrosity": the nisei daughter has learned a lesson that "an exclusively Japanese or American affiliation is doomed to fail" (Hoffman 237). In other words, rather than abandoning everything related to Japan, Kazuko chooses to learn how to live both as a Japanese and as an American, that is, as a Japanese American.

The use of tanka,[8] a traditional Japanese poetry form, by Kazuko's mother reveals the way Japanese Americans deal with American racism. The mother's tanka does not deliver anger or other negative feelings; it is not a subversive tool to resist the given situation. Rather, it is a tool to repress their sorrow and anger that might cause more conflicts with white society when released. For instance, when Kazuko and her mother come back home from the futile journey in search of a room for Sumiko, Kazuko's

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[7] Refer to Lim's "Japanese American Women's Life Stories: Maternality in Monica Sone's 'Nisei Daughter' and Joy Kogawa's 'Obasan'" and "Twelve Asian American Writers: In Search of Self-Definition."

[8] Tanka is the oldest traditional poetry form in Japan and composed of five thought-parts in the syllabic pattern 5-7-5-7-7.

mother writes a tanka and reads it to Kazuko. In the frustrating situation, Kazuko's mother seeks beauty rather than anger and resistance, and sublimates her sadness and the injustice of the world into a beautiful and peaceful poem. Kazuko says, after listening to her mother read her tanka:

> there was something in tanka, the way mother used it. With it, she gathered together all the beauty she saw and heard and felt through that window and pulled it into our little apartment for us to enjoy. . . .
>
> On such evenings I felt suddenly old, wondering that I could like such a melancholy poem. It reminded me of the way I had come to feel about my summer experience, half sad and half at peace with the world. (Sone 117-18).

Kazuko says that her mother gathers "all the beauty she saw and heard and felt" in spite of the world that is full of the anti-Japanese atmosphere. Her mother does not draw realistic pictures of reality but has a tendency of romanticizing the given situation in her poem. Even though Kazuko says she has not understood her mother's poetic sentiment, she suddenly realizes that she has grown up enough to appreciate the sadness and the need to be at peace with the world by listening to her mother's tanka.

The writing of Kazuko's mother continues even in the relocation camp. Scolding her children for pulling out dandelions in front of their barrack, she says, "They're the only beautiful things around here. We could have a garden right in here" (174). Kazuko's mother still seeks beauty even in the internment camp, a beauty with which to get through the harsh situations. This is the only thing the mother could do in order to continue to live her life. The mother's tanka also functions as a device to defer the confrontation with

reality, i.e., their failed object relationship. Through this writing practice, the mother creates both a cryptic shelter where she could be free from reality and find some power to confront the reality.

The internees' desire for assimilation is reversely appropriated by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) in order to control the internees. The internment of Japanese, alien or citizen, becomes a simple test for loyalty. Executive Order 9066 is contrived out of a deceitful trick; "any Japanese willing to go to a concentration camp was a patriot; therefore it followed that unwillingness to go was a proof of disloyalty to the United States" (Daniels 47). Utilizing the desire for assimilation, the internment entraps Japanese Americans. The WRA tests Japanese fidelity to the country by testing their obedience to the law that is, ironically, against Constitutional civil rights and liberties. Obey or disobey, however, they are destined to be the people who have been suspected most as "the Fifth Column" and "the enemy within."

The internees were further tested for their loyalty through the form of the questionnaire of "Application for Leave Clearance" in 1943, almost a year after the evacuation. This questionnaire is primarily designed to "recruit an all-Nisei combat team of about 5,000 men" and, therefore, to distinguish the loyal from the disloyal (Daniels 112). Given to all internees over seventeen years of age, regardless of sex or nationality, the questionnaire becomes a simple tool to measure their loyalty. The most controversial questions of the questionnaire both for the issei and the nisei are the questions numbered 27 and 28. Question 27 is about the duty of military service as citizens: "Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?" This question is very confusing to the nisei since their incarceration already proves the

failure of their citizenship. The next question, the so-called “loyalty question,” is even worse: “Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization?” (Ng 57). Since both questions are originally intended for nisei of military age, they are not appropriate for issei, most of whom are not American citizens. Even though question 28 was later rewritten for issei,[9] “Some contended that question 28 was a trap and that to forswear allegiance to Japan was to confess that such allegiance had once existed” (Daniels 114).

These two questions measuring the loyalty of the internees are as deceiving as the racial logic justifying the internment law. Like Executive Order 9066, these loyalty questions are constructed by using the internees’ desire to be accepted as a lure. However, trapped in an impasse and having no other choices to prove their loyalty, the majority of the internees have no way but to answer “yes” to both questions. For those who say no-no,[10] the WRA prepares a segregated internment center at Tule Lake, California. As a whole, this selective process of separating the loyal from the disloyal takes advantage of the desire of the internees to assimilate, and their being displaced and evacuated ironically becomes the only way to demonstrate their Americanness and rekindle their desire for assimilation.

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[9] The revised question reads: “Will you swear to abide by the laws of the United States and to take no action which would in any way interfere with the war effort of the United States?” (Daniels 113).

[10] The title of John Okada’s novel *No-No Boy* (1957) comes from the answer “No-No” of the internees to the two loyalty questions.

*Nisei Daughter* also reflects the situation of the war recruitment order. An officer from the WRA comes to the camp and reads the order to the internees:

> No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of his citizenship, regardless of his ancestry. The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and the heart. Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry. (Sone 198-99)

This is the most ironic scene in *Nisei Daughter* since the internees have been disfranchised because of their racial and ethnic difference. This quotation reveals a way to manipulate the internees by temporarily making visible their lost but not lost American identity. Allowing the internees to dream the lost ideal from the shadow of the lost object, the War Recruitment Order attempts to control the internees. Thus, the loyalty questionnaires are the culminating symbol of the manipulative citizenship and furthermore, the ambivalent national identity of Japanese Americans.[11] The internment provides an opportunity for Japanese Americans, especially the nisei who are American by law, to think about their national identity for the first time.

Encountering the racial injustice, Dick, a nisei character in *Nisei Daughter*, says, "In the privacy of our hearts, we had raged, we had cried against the injustices, but in the end, we had swallowed our pride and learned to endure" (124). Swallowing their anger

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[11] The sense of nationality is very subtle for Asian Americans, even though the nisei affirmed their nationality as American. Patti Duncan uses the term "national belonging" rather than nationality "to draw attention to the fact that an individual may identify with a particular nationality . . . yet he or she may not feel a sense of belonging" (note 1, 227). As implied, nationality and national belonging could be not necessarily the same thing to Asian Americans.

and pride, they silently endure powerlessness that comes from their position as a minority group, a position that triggers silence and forgetting. As mentioned in Cheng's book, swallowing is a crucial image for understanding the creation of the ego in the melancholic status. It implies not only an image of taking "the shadow of the object" onto the ego without explicit resistance or opposition, but also an image of suppressing one's own emotions and doubts, and thus creating an internal repression.

The representative scene of swallowing in relation to racism could be from "Battle Royal" (1947) by Ralph Ellison, which later became the first chapter of *Invisible Man*. The nameless narrator is invited to a gathering of the town's leading white citizens to deliver the same speech that he gave on his graduation day. However, before he delivers the speech, he is forced to fight other Negroes at the battle royal. When he finally makes his speech in the aftermath of the humiliating and exhausting boxing match fought for the fun of the white leaders, he is interrupted and forced to repeat the seemingly high-level words, "social responsibility." Repeating these big words at the request of the leaders, the narrator utters "social equality" instead of "social responsibility" (Ellison 25). As he then apologizes to the angry audience for the slip of his tongue, he has to literally swallow the blood and the pain welling up in his mouth. In this scene, swallowing metaphorically means not only taking the object inside the subject but also holding back resistance and anger arising from inside. The nameless narrator in "Battle Royal," like Kazuko, is racially marginalized and stands within a failed object relationship, but denies the loss of his love object through the performance of swallowing. In terms of assimilation and racial equality, they both realize the loss of their ideal and fall into a state of melancholia. However, as melancholic subjects they carry the remnants of their

ideals by swallowing and incorporating the lost objects into themselves. Therefore, living in the failed object relations, they still live up to their lost but not lost ideal.

The internees in *Nisei Daughter* perform a trick of "not seeing things," as well as swallowing. Kazuko says, "I knew a true Japanese had a unique device of 'not seeing things' if the social situation called for 'not seeing things,' even if the object was right in front of his eyeballs. I had seen this technique in practice time and time again" (Sone 100-01). "Not seeing things" is to pretend that nothing happened, whereas swallowing implies the act of incorporation per se, especially in relation to the lost but not lost object. Even though "not seeing things" does not have the process of incorporation into the ego, it represses the memory of what happened from consciousness and pretends like the internees have never lost their ideal in the object relationship. Thus, both swallowing and "not seeing things" implicate the conscious or unconscious repression or forgetting of reality. Through the trick of "not seeing things," Japanese internees could attempt to maintain their lost ideal, their assimilated self in their failed object relationships.

Japanese Americans who have performed the trick of "not seeing things" also have the desire to be invisible. They want not to be seen by others as much as they pretend not to see others. When she is finally released from the camp because she has gotten a job in the Midwest, Kazuko is warned over and over again "that once I was outside, I must behave as inconspicuously as possible so as not to offend the sensitive public eye. [Therefore,] I made up my mind to make myself scarce and invisible" (220). Visibility based on racial difference has ultimately functioned as an impediment in the process of assimilation, as their Japanese identity causes them to be interned. The internment causes them to live invisibly within society as it breaks down the social

solidarity of the Japanese American community by uprooting and incarcerating, and later, by dispersing them into the middle states. Likewise, not risking the visibility of the racial difference of the individuals or the community is also deeply implied in the desire of "not seeing things." All these performances are the bodily tropes of their collective silence, which the internees develop in the process of their psychoracial development.

Beside these repressive components that contribute to the formation of the collective silence, the internees also come to face the sense of shame by witnessing themselves going through all these hurdles. Shame is a powerful device of conscious repression, which ultimately produces individual and collective silence. The wounds left on their bodies and minds evoke from the survivors a sense of shame because they lost their dignity and pride going through the painful events. As Eve Sedgwick and Sara Ahmed indicate based on Silvan Tomkin's affect theory, shame is related to the loss, absence, or failure of genuine relationships with others, such as social isolation, estrangement, or broken gaze/conversation, rather than prohibition and repression. Explaining the Australian government's past wrongdoings against indigenous people, Ahmed says, "shame requires a witness, one who 'catches out' the failure of the individual to live up to an ego ideal" (108). In shame, one could be the object as well as the subject of that feeling since she feels shame about the wrongdoings or failure not only done by others but also done by herself. If one feels shame of oneself, it means that she sees herself failing to live up to her ideal, and her failure is witnessed by herself. Shame or guilt as the emotional or psychological effects of repression comes from the inside of the victims responding to the entangled relations between their ego and ideal.

Migration, dislocation, and cultural translation, forced or volunteered, incur losses of a variety of ideal objects. Japanese Americans think the Pearl Harbor attack would bring shame to all of Japanese Americans living in the United States since they would be regarded as standing on the side of Japan on account of their ethnicity. Many issei people like Kazuko's parents still feel connected to Japan on account of their ethnicity, and are prevented from naturalization by law even after several decades of their life in America. However, nisei who think of themselves as American, neither Japanese nor Japanese American, feel ashamed of themselves, too. The shame felt by issei is different from that felt by nisei. Nisei feel ashamed and humiliated because they were interned despite their citizenship. This repression leads them to regret that they have been immersed in the Japanese values and tradition that cherish the filial duty and obligation within their family, community, and nation. It is the moment when the sense of shame meets the sense of self-denial and self-hatred toward their cultural heritage.

David Mura, a sansei writer, speculates on the shame he thinks his nisei parents feel:

> Shame says that the very core of your being, your whole self is wrong, inferior, tainted. . . . They couldn't speak of this. *The nature of shame is silence*. Besides, they were still partially Japanese by culture, they shared with their parents strong impulses toward leaving things unspoken. At the end of the war, my parents left the camps wanting to prove to America that they were 'true' Americans, whiter than the whites. Any mention of color would have spoiled that illusion, challenged their sense of acceptance. (my italics 243-44).

This quotation simply implies the complicated entanglements of a sense of shame, silence, desire to be accepted, and self-negation. The desire to become "whiter than the whites" requires the internees, like Mura's parents, to deny their ethnic and cultural identity. In so doing, they attempt to revive their lost but not lost ideal and try to swallow and pretend "not seeing things" in order not to risk their visibility.

All these reactions with which Japanese Americans endure the internment are their psychological responses to the internment. These psychological tropes of silence, performing at the center of the traumatic event, are profoundly related to the latency period of trauma. Freud compares, in *Moses and Monotheism*, a survivor from a train collision who has no knowledge of what happened to him and the Jews who lived on, forgetting their monotheistic idea after the disappearance of Moses. Freud explains this unharmed, untraumatized period in which the survivor and the Jews live with the term "latency." However, this latency of trauma is not begotten by conscious forgetting. According to Caruth, it is "inherent latency" or "inherent forgetting" (17) within traumatic experience itself that is not possibly accessed and known in the time and space as it occurs. Thus, traumatic memories have temporal and spatial discrepancies since they are not realized as they occur and repeat in belated time and space.

In this context, the collective silence of Japanese Americans about their internment experience could be considered the literary latency about the internment. After the internment camps were closed with the end of the Second World War, the internment had been buried and silenced until the redress movement led by sansei activists excavated the traumatic event decades later and demanded the government to compensate the internees. The silence of the internees about their internment experience

until the mid-1970s represents the period of latency in Japanese internment literature. However, the collective silence of the internees does not mean nothingness or forgetting. As latency does not mean being erased or forgotten, not all nisei writers have forgotten about the internment. As Yamauchi comments, "Extreme trauma may force us to block out or deny, but the imprint of an experience remains, whether we know it or not" ("A MELUS Interview" 110).

This remaining trace of the traumatic past is alluded to in Hisaye Yamamoto's short story "The Legend" in a new form of narrative style. In the short story, which is set in the internment camp in Arizona, Yamamoto embeds a silent, covert narrative into its explicit, overt narrative and through the silent, implied narrative Yamamoto speaks for the female characters' unclaimed and unacknowledged experiences. When referring to the cultural implication of *enryo*, Yogi mentions, "The *enryo* dynamic is a potential cultural equivalent to a literary buried plot" in Yamamoto's short stories ("Legacies" 180). Agreeing with his comment, I further argue that Yamamoto's embedded plot in "The Legend" also alludes to the internees' collective silence. Therefore, my exploration of "The Legend" will focus on the narrative silence that is implied in, and at the same time parallel with, the explicit plot of the story. I will explore how Yamamoto sublimates the inherent latency of trauma as an aesthetic form to reveal the psychological domain of the internees.

**Narrative Silence in Hisaye Yamamoto's "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara"**

Even though she is not a prolific writer, Hisaye Yamamoto has steadily maintained her reputation as a writer of fiction since she was "one of the few Nisei to gain recognition beyond the Japanese American community" (Yogi, "Legacies" 170)

during the 1950s. As Dorothy Ritsuko McDonald and Katharine Newman note, Yamamoto's short stories have been represented in at least twenty anthologies (24). The best-known of her stories include "Seventeen Syllables" (1949), "The Legend" (1950), "Yoneko's Earthquake" (1951), "The Brown House" (1951), and "Las Vegas Charley" (1961).[12] Her works have been analyzed by a set of themes: intergenerational conflicts represented by the mother and daughter relationship; "the subordination of Japanese American women within patriarchal family structures; and the impact of racism—in its institutionalized and informal manifestations" (Higashida 31).

It is Stan Yogi and King-Kok Cheung who first draw attention on silence in Yamamoto's works. Focusing on the silences of minor characters, especially issei and nisei female characters, in Yamamoto's works, these two critics explore how Yamamoto develops a secretive way of evoking the silences of the characters. Yogi and Cheung refer to the secret narrative submerged under the surface of the story with the terms like "buried plot" or "double-telling." By "buried plot" Yogi indicates "veiled means of conveying stories," especially of female characters ("Legacies" 170). Similarly, analyzing the "rhetorical silence" in Yamamoto's short stories, King-Kok Cheung explains that Yamamoto uses the technique of "double-telling" that "[conveys] two tales in the guise of one" (*Articulate* 29). In other words, under the surface, external story presented by an unreliable narrator, or by the limited point of view of the narrator, exists a sub-plot (parallel plot, or dual plot) that often delivers the stories of female characters.[13]

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[12] The collection of Yamamoto's short stories *Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories* was first published in 1988 by Kitchen Table and later revised and expanded in 1998 by Rutgers University Press.

[13] In *Articulate Silences* (1993), Cheung offers a new way of understanding silence in Asian American literature by reading Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, and

Subsequently, critics like Cheryl Higashida and Naoko Sugiyama deal with the themes of silence; the subversive power of silence and the meanings of silence in the mother and daughter relationship, respectively. On the one hand, I owe much to these critics who have worked on multilayered silence in Yamamoto's fiction, since my emphasis is on listening to the implicit, hidden narrative in "The Legend." My exploration, on the other hand, departs from theirs by looking into the furtive plot of the internment narrative as an aesthetic framework that reveals the psychological dynamics of racism and assimilation and represents a small world that reflects the relationship between the internees and mainstream society. Hence, my exploration will disclose the way Yamamoto appropriates the collective silence of the internees and creates from the appropriation a new form of narrative style.

Originally published in the *Kenyon Review* in 1950, "The Legend" is based on Yamamoto's internment experience in Poston, Arizona, which lasted for three years when she was in her early twenties.[14] Even though the story takes place in an internment camp during World War II and, therefore, is often regarded as dealing with the internment in an explicit way, messages about the internment and its inhabitants are delivered through a silent narrative voice embedded within the inner, implicit structure of the story. In the explicit narrative of "The Legend," Yamamoto seems aloof and detached

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Joy Kogawa. Emphasizing the trope of silence as a common point of interest within Asian American women's fiction, Cheung examines the use of silence as a strategic tool for Asian American survival in the United States.

[14] The title character of "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara" is modeled on a real woman Yamamoto encountered in the camp. Yamamoto says, the woman "later died at the age of 58 in a nursing home in Los Angeles. And I found that she really was a writer, which I didn't know when I wrote the story, that she had written a lot of poetry when she was younger, for the same Japanese newspapers, but I had never seen the ones that she wrote . . . I guess she wrote a little before I started writing" ("A MELUS Interview" 80).

in narrating the internment policy. Her characters who have been interned do not express any complaints or difficulties living in the internment camp in Arizona. They create a small, self-sustaining community in the camp by participating in jobs as waitresses or cooks at mess halls and as orderlies, nurses, or doctors at the camp hospital. The way they work, gossip, and have parties does not distinguish the story as an internment narrative unless we take into consideration that all these happen to the internees in the camp.

On the surface level of narration, Yamamoto, like many nisei writers belonging to "the silent generation," "provides no explanation for the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans which is the key to the break-down suffered by her title character" (Tajiri 256). The explicit, superficial story of "The Legend" rarely discloses a critical viewpoint on the violent internment or its impact on the life of the internees. However, within the surface level is a hidden narrative embedded through various literary techniques. Even though Yamamoto does not "deliberately try to inject [her politics]" into her writing, she notes in an interview with Cheung, that her "politics are radical" (352). Her political obligations as a writer are rather embodied through her implicit story that is based on narrative silence.

Narrative silence by way of technical uses of allusion and omission breaks narrative coherence and, as a result, brings out gaps and slippage in the narrative. Narrative silence, ultimately, is a nonverbal way of storytelling, which requires the active role of readers to interpret what is only alluded to and what remains unclaimed in the story. Cryptic, silent narrative can be adumbrated through actions, reactions, and relationships among characters of the story. As critics recognize, Yamamoto's stories

often revolve around silent or implicit narratives relying on characters or conditions that are not fully developed or clearly delineated. Yogi comments, "This elliptical character development in Yamamoto's stories relates to Annett Kolodny's identification of 'reflexive perception,'" which is "a typical stylistic feature of female fiction and occurs when a character 'discover[s] herself or find[s] some part of herself in activities she had not planned or in situation she cannot fully comprehend'" ("Legacies" 179-80).

However, the character of Miss Sasagawara is not fully developed by either her activities or the situations in which she has been involved. Miss Sasagawara, the title character of the story, comes to live with her father in the Block (No. 33) in the Poston camp in Arizona where the story takes place. She is described by Kiku, the first person narrator of the story. Kiku is a young and innocent female narrator, who is nearing twenty and works as a waitress in the mess hall, and later as a receptionist at the camp hospital. Even though Kiku's narrative centers on Miss Sasagawara, she does not develop any close relationship with Miss Sasagawara throughout the story. Kiku rarely speaks to Miss Sasagawara but learns about her as Kiku's friend Elsie or neighbors in the Block speak of Miss Sasagawara's eccentricity and mental derangement. Miss Sasagawara is mainly characterized in the story as Kiku listens to others gossiping about her. However, Kiku's narrative about Miss Sasagwara contains many gaps that are not clearly developed and elaborated because of Kiku's limited point of view as well as fragmented information gleaned from the rumors and gossip.[15] Kiku's limited point of view is a device used to maintain distance, or create a hole, from the title character so that it is often impossible to

[15] "The Legend" has more gaps and holes in comparison to Yamamoto's other stories like "Seventeen Syllables" and "Yoneko's Earthquake." For this reason, "Seventeen Syllables" and "Yoneko's Earthquake" have drawn much attention from literary critics in terms of hidden narrative.

make a coherent narrative of Miss Sasagawara's life. Thus, readers should piece together, in order to understand the title character, what Kiku learns from people around her.

The descriptions of Miss Sasagawara are rarely delivered by what Kiku witnesses, but mainly by the rumors and gossip Kiku collects from others. The sources of these rumors and gossip are Kiku's friend Elsie and other neighbors like the Sasakis and Joe Yoshinaga. Hearing from Elsie all about Miss Sasagawara and her father moving into their Block, she wonders "Where had [Elsie] accumulated all her items?" and thinks, "Probably a morsel here and a morsel there." In the end, Kiku does not ask this since "the picture [Elsie] painted was so distracting" (Yamamoto, "The Legend" 20).

At the end of the story, Kiku finally doubts the authenticity or truthfulness of all rumors and gossip about Miss Sasagawara when she points out the sources of the rumor that Miss Sasagawara was caught, one night, looking at Joe Yoshinaga who was sleeping in his bed:

> I was impressed, although Elsie's sources were not what I would ordinarily pay much attention to, Mrs. Sasaki, that plump and giggling young woman who always felt called upon to explain that she was childless by choice, and Joe Yoshinaga, who had a knack of blowing up, in his drawling voice, any incident in which he personally played even a small part. (32)

Like Elsie, Mrs. Sasaki and Joe Yoshinaga, the sources of the rumor, are not reliable at all. They are rather "childless," "blowing up," and "distracting." Acknowledging this, Kiku does not completely believe in the rumor or the gossip. However, even though Kiku calls into question the reliability of the sources, Kiku's narrative shows that Miss

Sasagawara who has no voice in the story is ultimately defined by the unsubstantiated rumors and gossips.

Kiku is the first person to attempt to look at the psychic dimension of Miss Sasagawara. Having been exposed to a college education, she now tries to interpret psychoanalytically the rumor of Miss Sasagawara that she watched over the sleeping child, Joe Yoshinaga:

> Elsie puzzled aloud over the cause of Miss Sasagawara's derangement and I, who had so newly had some contact with the recorded explorations into the virgin territory of the human mind, sagely explained that Miss Sasagawara had no doubt looked upon Joe Yoshinaga as the image of either the lost lover or the lost son. But my words made me uneasy by their glibness, and I began to wonder seriously about Miss Sasagawara for the first time. (32)

Kiku has been awoken to the world of psychoanalysis and interpreted the loss of ideals or love objects as the motives for the derangement of Miss Sasagawara. Kiku might not be mature enough to solve or fully understand Miss Sasagawara' enigmatic behavior. Kiku tells us that she stopped herself from analyzing Miss Sasagawara any further as she heard herself speaking. However, this is a significant moment when Yamamoto gives us a hint that the sense of loss plays a crucial role in the character of Miss Sasagawara.

Yamamoto's narrative style grounded upon gaps and omissions represents well the psychic dimension of the internees. As Amy Iwasaki Mass notes, the "pain and trauma of the camp experience is not available to" the internees "at a conscious level, and thus they are unaware of any effect it has on their current lives" (qtd. in Usui 6). For this

reason, the explicit narrative of “The Legend” cannot convey the psychological wounds inscribed on the internees. The wounds are metaphorically represented through the fragmented, elliptical, and hidden modes of narrative silence, which exhibit the repressive process of trauma occurring on the level of unconsciousness. Therefore, dealing with the traumatic internment experience and its impact on their psyche, Yamamoto discloses the function of narrative silence like the hole or gap in the story as a means that represents the inaccessible psychic wounds of the internees. In this sense, the narrative silence in “The Legend” reveals, in particular, the status quo of the wounded psyche of the internees through the character of Miss Sasagawara.

Miss Sasagawara ends her career as a ballerina once she is interned. We learn that she had traveled “all over the country a couple of times, dancing in the ballet” (Yamamoto, “The Legend” 21). She is now thirty-nine years old, and not sorry she never married since she fulfilled her creative talent through dancing. She can enjoy her life and her creative sensitivity through dancing as a ballerina. Dancing has been a medium for her to travel the country and fulfill her ideal. However, the mass internment stops her career and she loses her medium to express and explore her creativity. The internment confines not only her physical body but also her own dream and ideal as a ballerina. Therefore, the internment symbolizes to her the end of her professional career as an ideal she lives up to.

Since she was imprisoned, Miss Sasagawara has lost not only her career as a dancer but also her mother. Her mother dies before Miss Sasagawara and her father, a Buddhist minister, move into the camp in Arizona. After her mother’s death, Miss Sasagawara and Rev. Sasagawara get the permission to join the family of Rev.

Sasagawara's brother in the camp in Arizona. But because of "some trouble between them," "the immigrant pair" leaves the brother's Block and moves over to Block 33, where the story takes place (20). The readers are not given enough information about what happened to the family members to examine the relationship between Miss Sasagawara and her father. All we are told is that her father brings food from the mess hall to their barrack for her since she does not like to go to the mess hall. We never witness them talking to each other. However, we can assume, when we piece together the enigmatic information that Kiku gains about the Sasagawaras, that the relationship between Miss Sasagawara and her father is odd and eccentric.

Rev. Sasagawara, a Buddhist minister, has changed since he was interned. In the camp, he is not depicted like a person living in reality. Kiku describes him as he walks by:

> he always seemed to be wandering lostly. This may have been because he walked so slowly, with such negligible steps, or because he wore perpetually an air of bemusement, never talking directly to a person, as though, being what he was, he could not stop for an instant his meditation on the higher life. (22)

He has become too religious to be realistic and care for people around him. His life in the camp is well epitomized in the poem that is written by Miss Sasagawara during her incarceration in the camp and published in a small poetry magazine, but the poem is found years later by accident when Kiku, relocated in Philadelphia, is doing her research for a paper.

The poem, entitled "a tour de force," is about a man, her father, "whose lifelong aim had been to achieve Nirvana, that saintly state of moral purity and universal wisdom" (32). The poem reads:

> This man had in his way certain handicaps, all stemming from his having acquired, when young and unaware, a family for which he must provide. The day came at last, however, when his wife died and other circumstances made it unnecessary for him to earn a competitive living. These circumstances were considered by those about him as sheer imprisonment, but he had felt free for the first time in his long life. It became possible for him to extinguish within all unworthy desire and consequently all evil, to concentrate on that serene, eight-fold path of highest understanding, highest mindedness, highest speech, highest action, highest livelihood, highest recollectedness, highest endeavor, and highest meditation. (32-33)

Rev. Sasagawara has become so detached from reality. The mass evacuation ironically makes it possible for him to be free from everyday irksome duties and responsibilities. Not paying any attention to the passions of his daughter, not intervening or participating in everyday life, and being selfish by living in his own purist and serene hermit life, Rev. Sasagawara looks almost dead and invisible to his daughter Miss Sasagawara. Even when she is in extreme stomach pain and all the way she goes to and comes from the hospital, she has been alone.

As many rumors and much gossip around her indicate, she has undergone several hardships concerning her career, and her personality changes. Her ideal life as a ballerina

is suspended, and she has lost her mother. Later, she is sexually abused by the doctors in the hospital. She has gotten no protection from her citizenship, parents, and community members. Nothing works to her benefit; rather, she suffers due to many unsubstantiated rumors and misunderstandings. She must have gone through various emotions like loneliness, desperation, and frustration. However, her father who is so bent on reaching Nirvana has been deaf and blind to her passions "rising, subsiding, and again rising, perhaps in anguished silence, within the selfsame room" (33). The father who is present is at the same time absent.

It is an irony that the camp gives Rev. Sasagawara freedom while it means terrible imprisonment and "the colonization of the mind" (Yamamoto and Yamauchi 356) to other internees including his daughter. As Daniels indicates, historically speaking, the internment means "the first 'break' in a life of almost unremitting toil" for some issei (90), while it means a deprivation of liberty and human rights for the most nisei. The internment ironically provides Rev. Sasagawara with the opportunity to fulfill his religious ideal and thus reach the state of a saint. He rather enjoys the internment for his ideal self. He better accomplishes his religious practice by isolating himself from reality, not only physically, but also psychically, in the camp. On the contrary, the internment means to Miss Sasagawara the loss of her ideal as a professional dancer and the loss of her beloved mother and father.

These broken family ties with her father, as well as the death of her mother, signify that Miss Sasagawara has lost all loved objects and ideals and has become a ghost figure in the camp community. The internment causes the loss of her parents and deprives "her of her medium" and "the people that she knew outside . . . who were her friends and

co-performers" (Yamamoto, "A MELUS Interview" 81). It is difficult to understand the character of Miss Sasagawara throughout the story since she is not fully explained with causative relations, and thus remains ghostly, haunting the explicit narrative here and there. She is invisible in the relations with other internees and even with her father. She is doubly isolated, first from the career world in which "if it weren't for being put in the camp, she might have gone on" (81) and later from the Japanese community in the camp. However, even the monotonous internment life could not kill her creative desires. Her ideal is not completely extinguished. Her ideal does not declare its death: rather, it is still preserved in her body: her braided coronet hairstyle, clothes that remind people of ballet costume, her walking and delicate looks, etc. Despite her lost mother and the absent presence of her father, her creative passions for dance, which is later transferred to writing, still remain.

Miss Sasagawara, who once had a strong identity as a dancer, traveling all over the country, must have felt ashamed of herself for being helpless and powerless. Even though readers could not know what was happening in her psychic world since the story is narrated by the first person voice of Kiku, we can deduce that Miss Sasagawara must have undergone some serious psychological conflicts in her mind. She must have walked through the traumatic path effected by the end of her career as a ballerina, the death of her mother, and her father's indifference and saintly way of living in the camp. Yamamoto leaves Miss Sasagawara's psyche a gap—a mystery for the reader, unclaimed and unacknowledged, representing the nature of trauma, the unclaimed experiences of the past. The fragmented information of Miss Sasagawara, bits and pieces, here and there, are

the remnants of her life, which are excluded from the master narrative of History and become a "legend" in the Japanese community.

Yamamoto's use of narrative silence as well as her choice to have another character, Kiku, tell Ms. Sasagawara's story, functions as a device that reveals how Miss Sasagawara loses her medium of expression including her own voice when she is incarcerated in the camp. In this limited narration, Miss Sasagawara is deprived of her own voice and becomes the Other. If the incarceration means the loss of her career as a ballerina, the narrative style of the story shows the loss of her own voice and her descent into the state of the Otherness. Living as the Other, Miss Sasagawara attempts to restore her lost medium to express herself, and writing becomes a liberating medium for her.

It is only in the poem that she speaks for herself: about her own anguish and her father's "devotion as a sort of madness" (Yamamoto, "The Legend" 33). The ending of "The Legend" comes with an interpretive description of Miss Sasagawara's poem.

> But say that someone else, someone sensitive, someone admiring, someone who had not achieved this sublime condition and who did not wish to, were somehow called to companion such a man. Was it not likely that the saint, blissfully bent on cleansing from his already radiant soul the last imperceptible blemishes (for, being perfect, would he not humbly suspect his own flawlessness?) would be deaf and blind to the human passions rising, subsiding, and again rising, perhaps in anguished silence, within the selfsame room? The poet could not speak for others, of course; she could only speak for herself. But she would describe this man's devotion as a sort of madness, the monstrous sort which, pure of itself,

> might possibly bring troublous, scented scenes to recur in the other's sleep. (32-33)

This ending does not sound like Kiku, who has exhibited a shallow understanding of, and little interest in, Miss Sasagawara. As McDonald and Newman notice, "Whether [Yamamoto] uses the first person or a narrator, the final word [of her stories] is usually hers" (25), the ending of "The Legend" reflects Yamamoto's authorial voice, even though the narrator is Kiku. Therefore, illuminating Miss Sasagawara's unfulfilled "passions rising, subsiding, and again rising, perhaps in anguished silence" and her father Rev. Sasagawara who "would be deaf and blind to the human passions," Yamamoto calls into question who is sane and who is insane in this story. Furthermore, her interpretation of Rev. Sasagawara's "devotion as a sort of madness" subverts the internees' treatment of Miss Sasagawara as a madwoman and Rev. Sasagawara as a respected minister.

As the story develops, Miss Sasagawara is described by the internees as abnormal, if not as a madwoman, while her father is recognized as a Buddhist minister in spite of his eccentricity. As Cheung states, "the Reverend's blankness is deemed lofty and religious, while the daughter's similar expression comes across as unfriendly and unhealthy. His attitude is respected; hers, suspected" ("Thrice" 111). From the beginning of the story, she is described as unfriendly and antisocial. She refuses to go to the mess hall to have something to eat; her father brings food to their barrack for her. She has no friends—she seems to have a problem making friends in the camp, lacking social skills to communicate or get along with other internees. She does not seem to be concerned with anything related to her everyday life and continually estranges herself from the others and had no connections to any other outdoor activities. Her oddity, however, is not tolerated

by the internees as much as Rev. Sasagawars's eccentricity. The people in the camp call her Miss Sasagawara, and not by her first name, Mary: they cannot identify themselves with her and so maintain a distance from her. Miss Sasagwara is just considered to be "a decorative ingredient of some ballet" in the desolate place such as the internment camp. (Yamamoto, "The Legend" 20).

What remains as the main hole or gap for the story of Miss Sasagawara is what happens to her in the hospital. With only the superficial information given by Kiku, who has gleaned just bits and pieces of the Miss Sasagawara's story, we do not know why Miss Sasagawara refuses to get on to the ambulance when she comes back home from hospital and what the cause of her stomach pain is. When she comes back again to the hospital, she makes quite a scene; she fights with the hospital staff, saying that "she didn't want any more of those doctors pawing her" (26). All hospital staff, doctors, nurses, orderlies are there, watching "such a war of nerves as this" (27).

Miss Sasagawara's remark about "doctors pawing her" implies in a way that she has been sexually harassed or molested while having a physical examination. Even though it is not clearly explained, as Cheung states, we can assume that "in view of her physical beauty, there is reason to suspect that excessive groping did occur during the medical examinations. But no one takes her allegation seriously; it is automatically dismissed as one of her hysterics" ("Thrice" 112). Even though nothing is clear about what happened to her during the physical examination, she is considered and treated as a madwoman by the people in the camp and in the hospital, and finally sent to the sanitarium in Phoenix, "where special cases were occasionally sent under escort" (Yamamoto, "The Legend" 27). No apparent reason or information is provided

concerning her illness or madness. In addition, nobody listens to what she says to the doctor. Just as Japanese Americans were maligned by false rumors and speculation and incarcerated in the archetypal surveillance system of American racism, the internment camps, Miss Sasagawara is injured by rumors and gossip, regarded as ill and mad, and doubly displaced from the camp to another surveillance institution, a sanitarium in Phoenix.

According to Michel Foucault, the surveillance system represented by various institutions like hospitals, schools, prison, etc., functions for the reproduction of the extant ideology and consciousness. In a conversation with Gilles Deleuze, Foucault states, "To place someone in prison, to confine him there, to deprive him of food and heat, to prevent him from leaving, from making love, etc.—this is certainly the most frenzied manifestation of power imaginable. . . . Prison is the only place where power is manifested in its naked state, in its most excessive form, and where it is justified as moral force" ("Intellectuals" 210). The investment of racist power is revealed through the confinement of the internees and the further control of Miss Sasagawara's body.

Miss Sasagawara has changed into a new friendly person after returning from the sanitarium. She changes to become like the others in the camp, without stirring any suspicions or doubt. As Ming L. Cheng notes, "Camp crowding blurs personal and public life, creating a pressure to conform or risk ridicule" (103). As a consequence of being put in the sanitarium, Miss Sasagawara's personal characteristics as an individual become so blurred that she could not be distinguished from other internees. Therefore, she now participates in several activities like organizing a dancing class and teaching children in the camp to dance. She begins speaking to the neighbors, decorating her barrack, and

performing with the children at the Block Christmas party. The sanitarium seems quite successful in making Miss Sasagawara become like the other internees. However, all of a sudden, she subsides again into her own world, stopping the dance class and not talking to people any more. Even though the treatment in the sanitarium has the effect of recomposing Miss Sasagawara as an internee, it has been temporary. She slips back to who she was and the people again create rumors and gossip about her. The narrator Kiku later hears from Elsie that Miss Sasagawara "had been sent back to a state institution [in California]" (30). Her madness or psychic illness is not analyzed by the people: she has been continuously indecipherable and sent back to an institution for her odd activities.

Through the multilayered narrative structure surrounding Miss Sasagwara, Yamamoto delineates the small world that draws the relations between Japanese Americans and mainstream society. Though it is invisible and inaudible, this world exists under the descriptive narratives of the internment camp and the internees; it is implied under the surface plot of the story. As a synecdoche, this world is based on the silent narrative which convolutes Miss Sasagawara, who has become a narrative vacuum and remains unexplained and unclaimed throughout the story. Concerning the function of the story as a mirror of the dynamics between mainstream society and Japanese Americans, Stan Yogi notes:

> the story is layered with implicit allusions to the suspicions hurled at Japanese Americans during the war. Miss Sasagawara becomes a symbol of all Japanese Americans who, especially during the war, were thought to be disloyal and consequently were interned. Thus, in its exploration of

> intracommunity tensions, the story also mirrors broader societal conflicts. ("Japanese American" 136)

Even though all characters are the internees in the superficial structure, only Miss Sasagawara represents the internees in the implicit structure, and her conflicts with other internees show the struggles the internees undergo in mainstream society. In other words, the camp and its inhabitants of "The Legend" treat Miss Sasagawara in the way the mainstream society suspects and mistreats Japanese Americans with a variety of rumors and war hysteria. The camp as a synecdoche symbolizes the American society that oppresses Japanese Americans, and Miss Sasagawara becomes the representative character of the internees. Therefore, the dynamics between Miss Sasagawara and the internees show that no one in the camp (or outside the camp) attempts to listen to her (or Japanese Americans) but tries to judge her (or Japanese Americans) from the rumors and gossip. In this regard, Yamamoto's subversive question "who is insane" that is implied in her last words of "The Legend" is, in a larger sense, directed to the racist society.

Yamamoto's aesthetic use of narrative silence in "The Legend" creates a new form of narrative technique: the multilayered narrative structure of the story is possible through the narrative silence embedded within the surface plot. The narrative silence, hidden and implied, represents the psychic dimension of the internees who deny the failure of their object relationship with assimilation and attempt to maintain the object relationship with "the shadow of the object" that is now incorporated into the ego. At the center of the narrative silence is Miss Sasagawara. Through the contrasts and tensions between the internees and Miss Sasagawara, Yamamoto describes both conscious and unconscious dimensions of the psyches of the internees. The intentional omissions and

allusions of narrative silence, therefore, contribute to making the complex psyche of the internees visible. Furthermore, embedding the dynamics between Japanese Americans and mainstream society within the dynamics between Miss Sasagawara and other internees, Yamamoto ultimately creates a subversive plot out of narrative silence.

## Chapter 3. "Mother, I am listening. Assist me to hear you": Remembering Traumatic Memories in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*

> The cathexis between mother and daughter—essential, distorted, misused—is the great unwritten story. Probably there is nothing in human nature more resonant with charges than the flow of energy between two biologically alike bodies, one of which has lain in amniotic bliss inside the other, one of which has labored to give birth to the other.
> Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*

Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* is the first novel written by a Japanese Canadian about the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II. It was published in 1981, about three decades after Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* (1953) and Hisaye Yamamoto's "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara" (1950) which I analyzed in the second chapter. Although all these women writers deal with either the Japanese American or Japanese Canadian internment during the war, it is *Obasan* that has been recognized as the first novel that explores in depth the internment of those who are of Japanese descent in the U. S. and Canada. Whereas Sone and Yamamoto provide superficial sketches of the internment camps, Kogawa delivers more vivid descriptions both of the internment of Japanese Canadians and of the atomic bombing in Nagasaki during the war. Through various historical documents and in the form of epistolary monologue written by Aunt Emily in Canada and by Grandmother Kato in Japan, Kogawa describes the destructive power of the war to Japanese and Japanese Canadians both in Nagasaki and in Canada. This critical approach of *Obasan* towards the internment might be possible because it is temporally and emotionally distanced from the wounds of the internment in comparison with the fictions by Sone and Yamamoto.

As I point out in the second chapter, few literary works concerning the Japanese American/Canadian internment were published during the period from the war to the

mid-1970s. Memories of Japanese Canadians' internment experience, the most traumatic experience in the history of Japanese immigrants, have been latent and dammed inside the collective silence of the internees—who are mostly first- and second-generation Japanese Canadians—for more than three decades. Such temporal distance from the real event of the internment and consequent emotional distance ultimately help the survivors and their children look at the past and record what happened even if belatedly. This process of remembering a past that had been too traumatic to speak of and therefore silenced, provides Japanese descendants an opportunity to examine how their present life intersects with the past and how the past affects who they are now.

The process of reconciliation in Kogawa's novel is deliberately represented through the journey of the narrator into the painful past of her family. The narrator, Megumi Naomi Nakane, is a sansei, a third-generation Japanese immigrant, who experienced in her early childhood the evacuation and dispersal of Japanese Canadians during World War II. She is five when the war breaks out and the evacuation begins. Shortly before the war, her mother and grandmother leave for Japan because the mother's grandmother is ill there. As her mother departs, Naomi is forced to go through the relocation experiences by herself. The story picks up three decades after her mother's departure, and what has happened to them in Japan remains a hole or a gap of the story. Like many of the other nisei characters I discussed in the second chapter, several of the characters in *Obasan* such as Uncle Isamu, Ayako Obasan, and Aunt Emily have been silent about the traumatic truth of the disappeared mother and grandmother. It is Naomi who must fill in the gap through reconciliation with her absent and voiceless mother. Naomi's journey into the hidden, unclaimed experience is geared by her dialectic

negotiations with speech and silence, and this eventually enables her to encounter the traumatic truth concerning the internment of Japanese Canadians that has affected her entire household but which has been continuously buried in silence.

Kogawa's examination of speech and silence in *Obasan*, as well as her poetic writing style,[1] has drawn much critical attention. Kogawa deliberately calls into question in *Obasan* the dichotomy between speech and silence and debilitates the demarcation of these two through Naomi's negotiation with her two aunts, Obasan[2] and Emily, who live in the world of silence and the world of words respectively. However, examining the significance of speech and silence in the novel with respect to the particular historicity of Japanese Canadians' internment experience, critics like A. Lynne Magnusson, Fu-Jen Chen, and Rufus Cook still maintain the binary opposition between speech and silence in Western philosophy and in doing so, underestimate the discursive, redemptive power of silence.[3] Examining languages in the novel through the lens of psychoanalysis or psycholinguistics, Magnusson views "Obasan's silence and demeanour as lack or absence" (63); Chen states, "Obasan's silence is also destructive, and her serving hands are suffocating"; and Cook understands *Obasan* to be situated at "the polarization of

[1] For the critical reception of *Obasan*, refer to Arnold Davidson's *Writing against the Silence: Joy Kogawa's Obasan* (17-23), and Marie Lo's "*Obasan* by Joy Kogawa."

[2] The title word *Obasan* means aunt in Japanese.

[3] It is very significant to be able to read the silence of the internees in the novel. Kogawa says in an interview by Joyce Wayne that she calls her book *Obasan* because Obasan "is totally silent" (qtd. in Davidson 18). Entitling her book *Obasan* after the character Obasan whose language is silence, Kogawa dedicates her novel to the voiceless and silent internees. She also says, "If we never see Obasan, she will always be oppressed. How does . . . society stop oppressing those who never speak up?" (18). This is an urgent call for society to attend the oppressed whose voices have not been heard.

values" (55) between "the past and present, the East and the West, memory and forgetting, speech and silence" (58).

It is Gayle K. Fujita and King-Kok Cheung who take into account the cultural and ethnic values imposed on the silence in the novel and explore the cultural meaning of silence and its empowering functions for the female characters like Obasan and Naomi. Indebted to Fujita who explores Obasan's attentiveness to people's needs, Cheung analyzes *Obasan* with emphasis on the attentive silence of Naomi's family. What makes Cheung's analysis distinctive is that she acknowledges that Kogawa's *Obasan* "shows a mixed attitude toward both language and silence and reevaluates both in ways that undermine logocentrism . . . words can liberate, but it can also distort and wound; and while silence may obliterate, it can also minister, soothe, and communicate" (*Articulate* 128).

Analyzing silences of female characters such as Naomi, her mother, and Obasan, literary criticism on *Obasan* had a new direction in the early nineties: critics underlined the poetics of maternal space/language by applying the psychoanalytic feminist theories of Nancy Chodorow and Julia Kristeva. Among such critics are Donald C. Goellnicht, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, and Robin Potter. Drawing on psychoanalytic feminist theories, their studies examine the mother and daughter relationship in *Obasan* through the restoration of preoedipal unity with the lost maternal space/language. In doing so, they explore the redemptive power of maternal space/language for the narrator to resuscitate her lost bond with her mother and reconcile with her traumatic past. However, Tomo

Hattori critiques these three critics in terms of their orientalist approach.[4] In "Psycholinguistic Orientalism in Criticism of *The Woman Warrior* and *Obasan*," he argues that in spite of their contribution to the reexamination of female characters' silence in *Obasan*, their criticism has been based on a psycholinguistic orientalism in which they consider silent, "pre-oedipal communication as feminine-Japanese and figurative language as masculine-Canadian" (130). In addition, Traise Yamamoto critiques psychoanalytic and Kristevan articulations of the maternal in *Obasan* because they read "Naomi's recovery of her mother as indicating either a regressive return to the preverbal or as evidencing the 'eruption' of the maternal semiotic into the symbolic" (*Masking* 189). Christina Tourino also points out that reducing the maternal into the preoedipal/preverbal excludes the "fully linguistic and politicized voices" of women (139).

Fully aware of these limitations and pitfalls of psychoanalytic feminist theories, I argue that Naomi as a racialized minority subject challenges the established hierarchical structure between speech and silence, which often respectively represent the symbolic signification system and the nonverbal/preverbal language. Furthermore, Kogawa strives to delineate another language, that is, the speech and telling that consist of "living words" of unacknowledged memories. Kogawa explores the nature of "living words" by distinguishing them from those in the symbolic order and leads us to their reservoir

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[4] In "Psycholinguistic Orientalism in Criticism of *The Woman Warrior* and *Obasan*," Hattori critiques Lim's "Asian American Daughters Rewriting Asian Maternal Texts" and "Japanese American Women's Life Stories: Maternality in Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*"; Goellnicht's "Father Land and/or Mother Tongue: The Divided Female Subject in Kogawa's *Obasan* and Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*" and "Minority History as Metafiction: Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*"; and Potter's "Moral—In Whose Sense? Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*."

through the journey of the sansei female narrator Naomi into her unbearable but inescapable past. I will argue this alternative language is formed and constantly revised through Naomi's history of losses. Therefore, my exploration of Naomi's journey will focus on her traumatic past full of losses of her love objects and the psycholinguistic dynamics that she develops through her failed object relationships with her family members. Naomi's familial relationship with her parents, two aunts—one on her father's side, Obasan, and the other on her mother's side, Emily—and an older brother Stephen reveals the psychological dynamics in which Naomi searches for "the freeing living words" through the dialectic negotiations with speech and silence. Therefore, tracing the trajectory of her journey, I will examine how Naomi attends to and articulates the traumatic, silenced past of her family with the telling and speech that are composed of living words.

Naomi's psychological journey concerning the language of words and the language of silence is well implied in the epigraph of the novel, which epitomizes both the empowering nature of the collective silence of Naomi's family and the difficulties of listening to it. It is not clear who narrates the epigraph; it could be the narrator Naomi or the author Kogawa. But I argue that the *I* in the epigraph is Naomi because it insinuates the psychological itinerary of Naomi's journey that is developed throughout the course of the novel: her challenges, failures, and frustration in dealing not only with the silence of her family but also with hegemonic language represented by "white words." Therefore, it is worth quoting the whole epigraph in spite of its length.

> There is a silence that cannot speak.
>
> There is a silence that will not speak.

> Beneath the grass the speaking dreams and beneath the dreams is a sensate sea. The speech that frees comes forth from that amniotic deep. To attend its voice, I can hear it say, is to embrace its absence. But I fail the task. The word is stone.
>
> I admit it.
>
> I hate the stillness. I hate the stone. I hate the sealed vault with its cold icon. I hate the staring into the night. The questions thinning into space. The sky swallowing the echoes.
>
> Unless the stone bursts with telling, unless the seed flowers with speech, there is in my life no living word. The sound I hear is only sound. White sound. Words, when they fall, are pockmarks on the earth. They are hailstones seeking an underground stream.
>
> If I could follow the stream down and down to the hidden voice, would I come at last to the freeing word? I ask the night sky but the silence is steadfast. There is no reply. (Kogawa, *Obasan* Epigraph)

The silence of Japanese internees remains in the "amniotic deep" and "sensate sea." Like the metaphor of the sea and the sky in the epigraph, their silence is boundless, unfathomable, serene, and motionless. It is repressed by and also refuses to be penetrated by the established symbolic system. The amniotic space of silence is the maternal, semiotic space where nothing is formed, regulated, dominated, and everything has the potential to be free. Therefore, "The speech that frees" from the preoedipal space is indecipherable and conflicts with the hegemonic language of the dominant that constructs the reality, the fantasized concept of the world around us. The silence looks like a stone

since it is not readable and penetrable by the symbolic system of reality. However, "the stone" deliberately generates profound discursive implications in this novel.

The epigraph says, to attend to the voice of "The speech that . . . comes forth from that amniotic deep" is "to embrace its absence." To listen to the voice of the silence, one needs to understand that the silence implies profuse discursive implications for the internees and is often not understood by the symbolic system of the dominant. As discussed in the second chapter, the collective silence of the Japanese evacuees performs as an alternative language constructed psychologically while the Japanese evacuees experience diverse encounters with racism. The language system of the dominant is represented in the epigraph of *Obasan* by "white sound" and "words." As the linguistic tools that serve the hegemony of the dominant society, white words are not transparently referential and, thus, only leave "pockmarks on the earth" when used for or by a minority like the Japanese evacuees. As "hailstones," white sound and white words often fail to convey and decipher the nonverbal implications of their silence. However, the epigraph says that the stony crust of the silence should "[burst] with telling" and "[flower] with speech." Otherwise, "there is in my life no living word." Even though the epigraph refers to telling and speech as ways to attend to the voice of the silence, the telling and speech of the silence should be distinguished from those with the language of the dominant group. The freeing speech should "[come] forth from that amniotic deep."

Starting *Obasan* with this epitome of Naomi's psycholinguistic journey, Kogawa reveals Naomi's unsuccessful object relationship first through her marital status. In the present time of the story, Naomi is a thirty six year old schoolteacher and has not had a

satisfactory sexual/romantic relationship[5]. Naomi is not the only spinster in her small family; Emily who is her maternal aunt is also unmarried and in no intimate relationship. Naomi asks herself, "Why indeed are there two of us unmarried in our small family? Must be something in the blood. A crone-prone syndrome" (Kogawa, *Obasan* 10). By setting Naomi and Emily as old maids, Kogawa implies—though Naomi does not acknowledge herself in the course of the novel—that even such seemingly personal matters as marriage are affected by the relocation and dispersal policies of Japanese Canadians. In an interview by Cherry Clayton, Kogawa demonstrates the influence of the dispersal policy of Japanese Canadians on the marriage pattern:

> many of the Japanese Canadians who were dispersed after the war didn't have close associations with each other, because they were in fact scattered. Marriage outside of the group was not very common. So there is a relatively high percentage of people, a little older than me, who were of marriageable age at that time but never married. . . . Naomi is the kind of character who was raised to obedience and to honor the old. So she would have been one of those typical Japanese Canadians who would not have married. (5-6)

The internment and dispersal policies brought out the disruption of the family formation of Japanese Canadians and consequently, the disruption of their procreation and

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[5] Naomi's futile relationship described in *Obasan* continues to go on in *Itsuka*, a sequel to *Obasan*, published in 1992. In *Itsuka*, Naomi is described as having some problems in making intimate relationships with men and revealing some symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Refer to Julie Tharp's "'In the Center of My Body Is a Rift': Trauma and Recovery in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and *Itsuka*" for Naomi's "affect-less personality" in both novels, which, Tharp argues, has been affected by the sexual assault and separation from her mother in Naomi's early childhood.

reproduction.[6] Given the not-unusual spinsterhood after the war, Naomi's spinsterhood proves that she fails in making an object relationship with a lover on the personal level.

Naomi's futile object relationship, which plays a crucial role in her ambivalent relationship with the past, originally starts when her preoedipal bond with her mother was broken at age five. The mother and daughter relationship, Naomi's first object relationship, is well presented in the family picture given to her when she asks her uncle why her mother does not return. Looking at herself and her mother in the picture Naomi describes, "Your leg is a tree trunk and I am branch, vine, butterfly. I am joined to your limbs by right of birth, child of your flesh, leaf of your bough" (Kogawa, *Obasan* 291). She stands tightly holding her mother's leg with both arms, with her face half covered by her mother's skirt. They were one body, connected by flesh and blood, not isolated and independent creatures. Naomi remembers, "There is nothing about me that my mother does not know, nothing that is not safe to tell" (72). Reflecting the biblical parable of the vine and its branches (*New Jerusalem Bible*, John 15), the picture echoes the strong bond and unity between the mother and her daughter. Donald C. Goellnicht refers to this mother and daughter bond as "the preoedipal silence—the literal, nonfigurative language—she shared as a small child with her Mother, a positive and powerful

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[6] Unlike Japanese American internees, Japanese Canadian internees could not return to their homes in British Columbia since the evacuation until April 1, 1949. Because of the strict practice of the dispersal policy, many Japanese Canadian internees were settled in the British Columbia Interior and in Alberta, which were originally their relocation places. Roger Daniels writes, "The result of the long continuance of that policy was a far greater dispersal of population than had been achieved in the United States" (191). For more information on the Japanese Canadian internment and the Japanese Canadian redress movement, refer to *Concentration Camps North America: Japanese in the United States and Canada during World War II* by Roger Daniels and *Justice in Our Time: The Canadian Redress Settlement* by Roy Miki and Cassandra Kobayashi. For the disruption of ethnic maternity or reproduction by the internment and dispersal policies, see Christina Tourino's "Ethnic Reproduction and the Amniotic Deep."

communicative silence" ("Minority" 295). In other words, the young Naomi forms with her mother a semiotic bond that creates the seamless sense of unity and oneness.[7]

The description of her family, as well as her bond with her mother, before her mother's departure shows a small paradise as Kazuko in *Nisei Daughter* describes as "amoebic bliss" her early childhood, the preoedipal period when her racial difference does not intrude into her consciousness of identity. Just as Kazuko has seen herself as whole and has lived with no sense of any lack in her compact small world, Naomi has lived in the seamless unity with her mother and, therefore, had no sense of any lack before the separation from her mother. Naomi's house in Marpole, Vancouver, where her family lived before the war was full of "confidence and laughter, music and mealtimes, games and storytelling" (Kogawa, *Obasan* 39). At that time she had been grounded in solid and substantial relationships with her parents: both Naomi's mother and father were living together parenting their children. The childhoods of Kazuko and Naomi are often compared to each other by critics like Shirley Geok-lin Lim, especially in terms of the blissful preoedipal period. However, my exploration of *Obasan* in this chapter distinguishes Naomi's preoedipal period from Kazuko's. Whereas Kazuko's childhood represents the preoedipal stage of her psychoracial development in which Kazuko is not aware of her racial or ethnic difference, Naomi's early childhood captured in the family pictures represents the preoedipal stage of her psycholinguistic development in which

[7] In this context of preoedipal, semiotic unity and oneness, Robin Potter interprets Naomi's spinsterhood as follows: "It is my belief that Naomi's spinsterhood is caused by her very lack of understanding of her abandonment by her mother, the absence of her father, and the dispersal of the extended family and Japanese community, and of racism and her (self)conceptualization based on difference and cultural abomination." This is a way to understand Naomi's solitude. However, to say that Naomi lacks the understanding of losses of her love objects is to risk ignoring the dynamics of her psychological negotiations in her object relationships.

Naomi is not affected by the language of the symbolic order. Naomi's journey constantly contests the language of the symbolic order with her preoedipal bond with her mother and eventually reveals the way to acquire the language system of the collective silence and to free it with "living words" that come from the "amniotic deep."

However, the preoedipal unity and bond between Naomi and her mother starts to break for several reasons. A rupture first occurs because Naomi happens to have her own secret. By the time her mother leaves for Japan, Naomi is sexually abused by Old Man Gower, a white neighbor. In spite of happiness inside Naomi's house in Marpole, "outside, even in the backyard, there is an infinitely unpredictable, unknown, and often dangerous world" (39). Old Man Gower represents the "dangerous world" to Naomi.[8] Becoming an object of sexual desire, Naomi feels terror and shame. At the same time, she also feels the sense of guilt because she "[clambers] unbidden onto his lap. His hands are frightening and pleasurable" (77). Feeling terror, shame, and guilt of complicity, Naomi perceives, "in Mr. Gower's hands I become other—a parasite on her body, no longer of her mind. My arms are vines that strangle the limb to which I cling. . . . I am a growth that attaches and digs a furrow under the bark of her skin. If I tell my mother about Mr. Gower, the alarm will send a tremor through our bodies and I will be torn from her" (77). Sexual molestation by the white neighbor entraps Naomi into a secret that cannot be

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[8] Many critics including Julie Tharp and Cherry Clayton noticed analogies between Naomi's sexual abuse by Old Man Gower and racial violence imposed by the Canadian government on Japanese Canadians. In an interview with Kogawa, Cherry Clayton expresses her reading of Old Man Gower as follows: "I wondered if the fictional expression of child abuse wasn't an attempt to address hypocrisy, because child abuse is often covered over by social hypocrisy, just as the treatment of the Japanese was covered over by political hypocrisy. I noticed that when you described the split that happens in the young girl in *Obasan*, it was done in terms of a lie. It wasn't so much the invasion of the body that was at the centre of attention, but the idea of a man going out in public and presenting a public face of decency when privately there is atrocity" (111).

shared with anybody, let alone her mother. Despite being a victim, she is mostly scared of bringing shame and disgrace to her family: "If Stephen comes he will see my shame. He will know what I feel and the knowing will flood the landscape. There will be nowhere to hide" (76). Having grown up with the Japanese legend of Momotaro[9], which emphasizes proper behavior with honor and "a fine intent" (68), Naomi thinks of shame and disgrace that might be brought to all when the secret is exposed. If she speaks, she tells the reader, she feels as though she will "split open and spill out" (76). Instead of putting the whole family in shame and disgrace and, as a result, being separated from her mother, Naomi keeps it a secret and attempts to save her family and preserve her semiotic relationship with her mother. As a consequence of saving her family, she feels as though "Speech hides within me, watchful and afraid" (39). She thinks, "If I am still, I will be safe" (75).

In spite of her resistance, her seamless relationship with her mother starts to collapse because of her secret. Having a secret, Naomi is unable to form the same single body with her mother. The split that occurs in the young Naomi foregrounds the process of the psychological as well as physical departure or severance of Naomi from her mother. Naomi remembers, "It is around this time that Mother disappears. I hardly dare to think, let alone ask, why she has to leave" (78). Consumed by guilt and shame, she thinks her mother leaves because she has a secret that cannot be shared. Thus, Naomi cannot even raise questions concerning her mother's disappearance. Whereas the initial rupture of the preoedipal bond between Naomi and her mother occurs because of the

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[9] It is the story of Momotaro that Naomi's mother reiterates before Naomi sleeps. *Momotaro* means a peach boy in Japanese, and the story is about a boy who comes from a peach to an old childless couple. Even though Naomi does not remember the details of the story, its lesson still remains in her mind: to act with honor and not to bring shame and dishonor to all.

secret, her mother's departure for Japan plays a crucial role in the secondary breakdown of their relationship. When Naomi's mother and Grandmother Kato board the ship bound for Japan in order to see Naomi's ill great-grandmother, the ship symbolizes an umbilical cord, which has connected Naomi with her mother but is now about to be severed. With the ship sailing out of sight, the mother disappears into the amniotic sea, the swirling, unfathomable vacuum of silence and wordlessness. Naomi's semiotic bond starts to break down through the mother's departure and her unexplained disappearance.

As Naomi has a secret that cannot be shared with her mother, her mother also keeps a secret that cannot be revealed to her daughter: she is disfigured by the atomic bombing in Nagasaki; and we learn that she dies just a few years later. Even though the split in their relationship begins with Naomi, it is widened through the mother's disappearance, and later by the secret that has been kept from Naomi and Stephen by their mother's will. The mother's decision to keep her disfigurement a secret is an effort to protect her children who are too young to accept the traumatic truth. This secret once firmly sealed by the agreed silence of the family is never exposed to the children until the present time of the story, resulting in further splitting between Naomi and her mother. Later, Naomi admits, "we were lost together in our silences. Our wordlessness was our mutual destruction" (291).

Therefore, Naomi has lived with a hole, gap, or vacuum concerning her mother's disappearance for almost three decades. Even though she pretends to be aloof about her mother's disappearance, unasked and thus unresolved questions concerning her lost mother have continuously haunted Naomi. Until she encounters the truth about her mother, Naomi literally thinks that "for a child there is no presence without flesh" (292).

To the young Naomi who falls into interminable grief because of the split from and the loss of her mother, it is hard to figure out the whole picture of the mother's fate. Throughout the period of the internment, Naomi could not feel the presence of her mother. Since nothing is present without flesh to the child Naomi, the physical separation and severance from her mother means the absence of any connection and bond between them. Therefore, the absence of her mother consequently emaciates Naomi's strong affiliation to her mother exhibited in the family picture. Since the departure for Japan, as represented in Naomi's dream, the mother on whose vital tree Naomi once grew becomes "a dead tree", and Naomi "[sits] on its roots as a stone" (291). In her dream, the small child sitting on the dead tree that once provided strong shelter becomes a stone and "is forever unable to speak . . . [and] forever fears to tell" (291). In other words, their mutual secrets impede their preoedipal/preverbal communication, and the loss of the semiotic connection with her mother causes Naomi to live in a world of silence.

The absence of the mother means the loss of the love object to Naomi, and having lost her love object, Naomi falls into a state of melancholy, a state of permanent grieving. Having lost her love object and voice, a medium to communicate with, Naomi lives with "A double wound" (291) that has not been resolved or healed until the present time of the story. However, the preoedipal relationship with her mother, which is abruptly broken, is not terminated with the separation from her mother, but remains unresolved and continues to affect Naomi as she grows up. Psychoanalytic feminists like Nancy Chodorow, Jane Flex, Dorothy Dinnerstein based on Freud's oedipal paradigm and object-relations psychology, point out that the preoedipal, semiotic relationship between

mother and daughter continues beyond the infant stage and affects the life of adults.[10] Linking psychoanalysis and sociology in an attempt to correct Freudian theory of female sexuality based on a feminine Oedipus Complex, Chodorow states:

> Primary identification and symbiosis [of mothers] with daughters tend to be stronger and cathexis of daughters is more likely to retain and emphasize narcissistic elements, that is, to be based on experiencing a daughter as an extension or double of a mother herself, with cathexis of the daughter as a sexual other usually remaining a weaker, less significant theme. (109)

Julia Kristeva refers to this preoedipal bond between mother and daughter with the term "the semiotic." According to her, the semiotic "is opposed to the symbolic—logic, logos, Name of the Father. The semiotic is pre-oedipal, chronologically anterior to syntax, a cry, the gesture of a child. In adult discourse it is rhythm, prosody, pun, non-sense, laugh" (qtd. in Hirsch, "Mothers" 210). Exploring American and French psychoanalytic feminists' writings in *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, Hirsch concludes:

> the pre-oedipal realm figures as a powerful mythic space, not irrevocably lost but continually present because it is recoverable in ideal(ized) female relationships. Pre-symbolic and pre-cultural, it points to an alternative to

[10] In "Mothers and Daughters" Marianne Hirsch examines three trends of feminist psychoanalytic works about mothers and daughters: American psychoanalytic feminists like Dorothy Dinnerstein, Nancy Chodorow, and Jane Flex based on "the Freudian oedipal paradigm and on neo-Freudian theory, especially object-relations psychology" (204); French feminists like Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Helene Cixous based in Jacques Lacan; and Nor Hall and others based on Jungian studies. Hirsh's *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* provides more information about her examination of the mother and daughter relationship through the lenses of psychoanalysis and feminism.

> patriarchy and the logos—a world of shared female knowledge and experience in which subject/object dualism and power relationships might be challenged and redefined. (33)

The preoedipal relationship of Naomi with her lost mother continues in spite of the absence of Naomi's mother because Naomi denies the loss of her love object Mother. Undergoing the relocation during the war, Naomi must have conjectured that something bad had happened to her mother in Japan, and it is very plausible that she connected the atomic bombing in Japan with her mother's disappearance. Naomi must have felt the death of her mother, but she has evaded her death and left it as an unresolved secret or vacuum in her life. As long as her mother remains as a hole or gap, she remains alive. In the end, her waiting for her mother to return, Naomi comments, "takes the form of a shadow which grows and surrounds [her] like air" (Kogawa, *Obasan* 78).

Like Naomi's mother, who disappeared into silence, her father rarely speaks and dies during the relocation period because of tuberculosis which he contracts in the camp. According to Jacques Lacan, it is the father figure who represents the Name-of-the-Father of the symbolic system, which names and positions the subject within the symbolic order.[11] However, Naomi's father has been so effeminized by the relocation and dispersal policies that she could not successfully enter into the symbolic world. On the surface level, Naomi's object relationship with her parents fails because of her parents' absence and death. However, on the psychological level, Naomi maintains the relationship by refusing to address the deaths of her parents.

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[11] For the concept of the-Name-of-the-Father, refer to Lacan's "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis."

Sigmund Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" presents object relations theory in terms of the loss of the love object. He states, when the object relationship is shattered, "The result was not the normal one of a withdrawal of the libido from this object and a displacement of it on to a new one, but something different . . . the free libido . . . was withdrawn into the ego . . . to establish an identification of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego" in a state of melancholia (249). To melancholic subjects, the shadow of the object plays a crucial role in their ego development since the shadow of the object and the ego become indistinguishable through cannibalistic identification. Judith Butler posits, "only upon such a withdrawal can the ego emerge as an object for consciousness, something that might be represented at all, whether as a point of departure or a site of return" (177). When the ego makes the lost object live by taking back the cathexis originally attached to the love object, the ego refuses to avow the loss of the love object and revives it by devouring the shadow of the object. Now the ego is altered by the libido redirected from the lost object into the ego, and the ego in the guise of the object becomes the lost but not lost object. In this sense, in the melancholic state, it is not the object but the ego that one loses in the end. Devouring is the first step of the identification of the ego with the love object. Freud writes:

> The narcissistic identification with the object then becomes a substitute for the erotic cathexis, the result of which is that in spite of the conflict with the loved person the love-relation need not be given up. . . . The ego wants to incorporate this object into itself, and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development in which it is, it wants to do so by devouring it. ("Mourning" 249-50)

This concept of merging of the ego with the lost object is also developed by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok through the term "endocryptic identification." According to them, endocryptic identification "concerns not so much the object who may no longer exist, but essentially the 'mourning' that this 'object' might allegedly carry out because of having lost the subject; the subject, consequently, appears to be painfully missed by the 'object'" (141).[12] It is notable in theories by Freud, Bulter, Abraham, and Torok that the loss of the love object ultimately implies in itself the loss of the ego/subject, the suspended loss of the object through the fusion of the ego with the shadow of the object, and the beginning of the ego development. Therefore, Naomi's loss of her mother, her first love object, psychically signifies the loss of her ego/subject, her refusal to address her mother's death, and the start of her ego/subjectivity/identity development.

Naomi is devoured not by her lost mother, but by the unresolved questions repetitively haunting her. Naomi has absorbed her lost object into herself. The shadow of the lost mother remains in the form of the absent but not absent mother throughout the novel. Incorporating the absence of her mother into herself and thus making her mother live in her self, Naomi gradually becomes speechless and silent like her mother. Therefore, it is not only the mother but also Naomi who is trapped in the silence and

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[12] As Nicholas T. Rand comments in the introduction of *The Shell and the Kernel*, Abraham and Torok's theory could be epitomized by terms like introjection and incorporation. These terms are roughly exchangeable with the concepts of mourning and melancholia of Freud's theory. Abraham and Torok owe much to Freud, but their theory departs from him in that they "demote the sexual instinct from its characteristic Freudian status as the principal causative agent in psychopathology" (Rand 11). In Abraham's and Torok's theory, disturbances that may occur at any stage in life could be causative agents that affect one's psychosexuality, and sexual instinct is just one of many disturbances. Therefore, unlike Freud, Abraham and Torok lessen the significance of early experience of children with their parents and three stages of children (oral, anal, and phallic) in their psychosexual development.

voicelessness. Both the mother and Naomi live in the world of traumatic memories, "a sealed-off psychic place, a crypt in the ego" (Abraham and Torok 141), and the traumatic space requires a different communication system to listen to their silence.

Naomi's life with the shadows of her love objects is represented through a continual series of dreams.[13] Since her childhood in Marpole and especially after she was relocated in Slocan, she has been haunted by the departures of her parents, grandparents, Emily, and Uncle; the sickness of her father and Grandfather Nakane and Kato; the deaths of her grandparents and father; and her near drowning experience. All these images of death, departure, and illness appear fragmented in Naomi's dreams, in which she is haunted by segmented bodies of women and the dead but not quite dead kitten and chickens. The departures and deaths of her loved ones in reality are resuscitated in her dreams as if she is trapped by "our memories of the dead—all our dead—those who refuse to bury themselves. Like threads of old spiderwebs, still sticky and hovering, the past waits for us to submit, or depart" (Kogawa, *Obasan* 30). Even though Naomi shows some reluctance in diving into the memories of the traumatic past, all the images and memories have been preserved in her unconsciousness and constantly threaten to surface on her conscious. Living with the dead but not dead images, she narrates that she wants to "break loose from the heavy identity, the evidence of rejection, the unexpressed passion,

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[13] Just as Naomi is continuously haunted by dreams, Kogawa was guided by dreams to write *Obasan*. Kogawa comments in an interview by Ruth Y. Hsu that *Obasan* "was actually a response to some dreams I had. . . . I came across this stuff in the archives in Ottawa that was linked directly with dreams I'd been having telling me to go to the archives. When something explicit comes out of a dream, I really listen to it" (206). Listening to her dreams, she came to the archives in Ottawa and came across personal documents and letters concerning the internment, including the letters of Muriel Kitagawa—Kogawa's acknowledgement of the novel includes the names whom she met in the archives.

the misunderstood politeness. I am tired of living between deaths and funerals, weighted with decorum, unable to shout or sing or dance, unable to scream or swear, unable to laugh, unable to breathe out loud" (218). Naomi is fed up with the unresolved losses of loved objects, which subside into and fill out the place of her ego. She feels heavy since her ego is full of the shadows of loved objects from her failed object relationships.

Naomi's disavowal of the loss of her parents is also supported by her uncle and Obasan. Uncle and Obasan are recognized as Naomi and Stephen's parents by people who do not know the family well. They have taken care of the children since their mother left for Japan and their father was incarcerated in the relocation camp. Obasan and Uncle have taken on the shadows of the lost parents and played the role of parents to the children. As surrogate parents, they are shadowy figures in that they have been seen only through their relationships with Naomi and that they reside in the "amniotic deep" silence just like Naomi's mother.

As a shadowy figure of Naomi's father, Uncle undergoes experiences similar to those of Naomi's father. Both of them were boatbuilders[14] and incarcerated separately from the rest of their family.[15] Meanwhile, Obasan is a metaphoric figure as the shadow, or an alter ego, of Naomi's mother, and her silence reflects the absence of Naomi's mother. Even though she is present throughout the story, she seems absent. She hardly

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[14] Men of the Nakanes are all engaged in fishing. According to Roger Daniels, in Canada "fishing rather than agriculture provided the first economic foothold for Japanese Canadians, although eventually more would be engaged in the latter occupation" (174).

[15] In Canada, the internment and relocation of Japanese Canadians progressed in several steps: "First interned were 'alien' men, next Japanese Canadian men, and lastly all women and children of Japanese descent. Women and children were initially placed in 'detainment centres,' former livestock pens that reeked of urine and manure" (Sugiman 360). The internment of Japanese Canadians, thus, means not only displacement and relocation, but also separation with and brokenness of families.

speaks; she represents silence through her present absence. Naomi says, “The language of her grief is silence. She has learned it well, its idioms, its nuances. Over the years, silence within her small body has grown large and powerful” (17). Her presence is rarely conveyed by her voice and speech. Distinguishing Obasan’s silence from Naomi’s mother’s, Lim notes that Obasan’s silence “arises from powerlessness” (“Japanese” 300). She further describes Obasan as “the childless Japanese aunt, whose sufferings appear futile and unregenerative” (“Asian” 245).

However, in spite of Naomi’s inability to fully communicate with Obasan, Naomi feels that her silent aunt is “the bearer of keys to unknown doorways and to a network of astonishing tunnels. She is the possessor of life’s infinite personal details” (Kogawa, *Obasan* 18-19). Inside the unknown world are all the memories of the past, lurking. She is not a person whose presence or significance is defined through her tangible, visible, and audible physicality. Comprehending the secret of the world, the invisible and inaudible world, she is the one who knows the meaning of the absence of her mother, or the secret of her mother. Obasan is metaphorically connected to Naomi’s mother. Even though one is present and the other is absent in this novel, both represent silence, which is neither communicated through nor deciphered by words that serve only the hegemonic group of society. As Goellnicht notes, the “kind of meaningful silence” like the preoedipal silence shared by Naomi and her mother “continues to haunt [Naomi] into adulthood in the figure of Obasan” (“Minority” 295).

The spatial setting of *Obasan* also represents the emptied, hollow state of the internees. During the war Japanese Canadians were relocated to ghost towns in British

Columbia.[16] Slocan, where Naomi's family is relocated, was once a flourishing mining town, but is now described as a ghost town. An abandoned and uninhabited place, the ghost town welcomes Japanese Canadians who have lost their ideal of becoming successfully assimilated immigrants. Disavowing the loss of the ideal of assimilation and holding on to its shadow, the internees gradually empty their selves and as a result, lose their ego. Therefore, no other place would represent the ghost identity of the internees better than the ghost town Slocan. The old mining town functions metaphorically because it is a site where people were once occupied by deriving value from subterranean excursion. It is the place where Naomi has lost her ideals and where she needs to mine or dig deep in order to restore or recover what has been buried there. The ghost town having lost its prosperous luster resembles the psyche of internees who have lost their ideals and who have themselves become ghost figures.

Living with Obasan and Uncle, however, Naomi does not master their language, silence. She has witnessed the dark side of silence through the emotional/psychological stasis of her present life, Obasan's submergence into her own world, and her miscommunication with Stephen, as well as its empowering nature. This does not necessarily mean that Naomi is an expert with words. It is Emily who is described as "a word warrior" (Kogawa, *Obasan* 39). As an activist, "Wherever the words 'Japanese race' appeared, Aunt Emily had crossed them out and written 'Canadian citizen'" (40). Naomi also finds a statement underlined and circled in red "I am Canadian" (47) while

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[16] According to Daniels, more than half of the evacuated people, who amounted to more than 21,000 in Canada, were sent to what the Canadian government called Interior Housing Centers "located in six old mining towns in the interior of British Columbia and outside of the 'protected zone' – Greenwood, Slocan City, New Denver, Roseberry, Sandon and Kaslo – and in two 'new towns' – Tasme and Lemon Creek – which were constructed on leased land" (187).

reading Aunt Emily's manuscript entitled "THE STORY OF THE NISEI IN CANADA: A STRUGGLE FOR LIBERTY." Kogawa sets Emily as a foil to Obasan, and in doing so, seemingly establishes a binary opposition between speech and silence. The oppositional structure in terms of speech and silence is revealed through the contrast between the two aunts: "How different my two aunts are. One lives in sound, the other in stone. Obasan's language remains deeply underground but Emily, BA, MA, is a word warrior" (39). And more often than not, these two opposite values seem to implicate another binary opposition between something Japanese and something American. The discrete ethnic and linguistic dispositions of the two aunts are revealed through the way they are identified. Obasan's name is Ayako, but Naomi does not call her that while she calls Emily "Aunt Emily." Obasan is given the Japanese title that the named Emily is also entitled to but not called by. While Obasan is a symbolic figure of silence and inscrutability, then Emily seems like one of the nisei internees in *Nisei Daughter* who are desperate to prove their Americanness and to be accepted into American society.

These two worlds of language, speech and silence, can also be territorialized by the grouping of the characters. Emily and Stephen live in the world of speech while Obasan, Naomi, and her mother live in the world of silence. Emily and Stephen are the characters who succeed in moving forward from melancholia by finding a substitute to which they transfer their libido returned from their lost love object. For example, living together with Obasan, Stephen, unlike Naomi, could not bear "the density of her inner retreat and the rebuke he felt in her silence" (17). He feels suffocated in Obasan's silence. Therefore, "Departure, for him, is as necessary as breath" (17). It is music that saves Stephen from the interminable grief implied in Obasan's silence. Stephen successfully

transfers his detached libido onto the new object, music, which is notably an auditory medium that is opposed to silence, non-vocal and nonverbal. His transference is foreshadowed through his repetitive dreams: "about a metallic insect the size of a tractor webbing a grid of iron bars over him. (Later, he told me [Naomi] he had the same nightmare again, but escaped the web by turning the bars into a xylophone)" (264). Like his dreams where he transforms the iron bars symbolizing his imprisonment into a musical instrument, Stephen escapes Obasan's silence and the relocation camp in Alberta to Emily's place in Toronto with his talent as a pianist. Music has been a medium for him to liberate himself from the visible and invisible barbed wires of the camp and silence. From then on, he lives with Emily while Naomi lives with Obasan throughout her adolescent period in the state of permanent grieving. Later, he travels all over the world and rarely returns to Obasan's house.

However, this ostensible dichotomy is not sustained in the novel but blurred through the negotiations of Naomi with her two aunts. As Cheung mentions in *Articulate Silences*, Kogawa reasons the vantage points and weak points of silence and speech through Naomi, who is oscillating between the two extremes. Naomi also sees how Obasan has lived in the darkness of silence while understanding how profound and powerful her silence is. As Kogawa empowers Obasan's and Mother's silence as an alternative language by imbuing it with the preoedipal, semiotic power, she deliberately examines through Aunt Emily, the violent and manipulative power of white words and speech that serve only the dominant group of society. Emily distinguishes herself from the rest of the family with her activist viewpoint toward the relocation. For her "The past is the future" (42), and she keeps fighting for the unfair treatment of Japanese Canadians.

It is she who constantly urges Naomi to actively participate in history-making through speech and action. Emily also constantly encourages her to educate herself about the internment through reading materials like conference papers, letters, newspapers, etc.:

> You are your history. If you cut any of it off, you're an amputee. Don't deny the past. Remember everything. If you're bitter, be bitter. Cry it out! Scream! Denial is gangrene. Look at you, Nomi, shuffling back and forth between Cecil and Granton, unable either to go or to stay in the world with even a semblance of grace or ease. (60)

As Emily diagnoses, Naomi falls into melancholic purgatory by refusing to confront her past filled with the losses of her love objects. The "painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, [and] inhibition of all activity" Naomi exhibits in the course of the novel are "[t]he distinguishing mental features of melancholia" (Freud, "Mourning" 244). According to Freud, if one does not replace the loss of one's love object with a new substitute, one cannot overcome one's melancholic state. In the case of Naomi, she needs to reconcile with her past in order to move from the stage of interminable grief (melancholia) to the stage of terminable grief (mourning). It is her denial of the past that prevents her from moving on to the future. In spite of Emily's exhortation, Naomi does not consider the language of the symbolic system to be the liberating medium for her and her family.

Even though the novel includes many descriptions about the relocation through newspapers, letters, conference papers, and journals that Emily collected, wrote, and presented, Kogawa does not imply that speech overpowers non-speech. Emily's words and speech do not touch Naomi. Sometimes, Emily's words and speech sound dry and

empty to her who was a victim of the relocation. The power of voice and speech is not easily generated inside Naomi who has been repressed by the unbearable weight of trauma. Pondering the significance of words, which are Emily's tool for her activism, Naomi says:

> All of Aunt Emily's words, all her papers, the telegrams and petitions, are like scratching in the barnyard, the evidence of much activity, scaly claws hard at work. But what good they do, I do not know—those little black typewritten words—rain words, cloud droppings. They do not touch us where we are planted here in Alberta, our roots clawing the sudden prairie air. The words are not made flesh. (Kogawa, *Obasan* 226)

These words of Emily are neither touching the flesh of the victims nor telling the real wounds of the victims. As Hattori points out, Emily's words are "in a dry documentary fashion that does not connect to deep feeling" (132).

One newspaper clipping contained in Emily's package shows the emptiness of white words; it also reveals the power of white words to distort and leave "pockmarks on the earth," as described in the epigraph. The language used for reporting what happened to the indentured Japanese Canadians is not so much referential, and, thus, fails to speak for and reconstruct their history. The clipping is about the labor supply of Japanese evacuees for sugar beet fields in Alberta. Its index card reads "Facts about evacuees in Alberta" (Kogawa, *Obasan* 231). Emily concentrates on the factual, intellectual information about the evacuees explained by the words in the newspaper clipping. However, what draws Naomi's attention is "a photograph of one family, all smiles, standing around a pile of beets. The captions read: 'Grinning and Happy'" (231). When

Naomi opens the folder, her voice sounds angry at the superficial telling of the newspaper clipping. Since she was one of the evacuees in Alberta, Naomi can sense the gap between the document and reality.[17]

As an evacuee in Alberta, Naomi suffered a hardship in which "All the oil in my joints has drained out and I have been invaded by dust and grit from the fields and mud is in my bone marrow" (232). Looking back on her experience in Alberta, Naomi senses the harsh lives of the evacuees sliding away from the document of white words. The words are too superficial to describe the real faces under the grinning masks. To Naomi, that is just "one telling" (236), and this "impossibility of reading behind the words of history complements the futility of Emily's quest for justice" (Palumbo-Liu 223). Her accumulated information with folders and filing cards cannot serve as the language that "read behind the facts of history to find some human voice" (223). According to Trinh T. Minh-ha, stories and histories of minority groups are not accumulated factual knowledge but stories full of living words that connect together the past, the present, and the future. What Emily is collecting, however, is closer to History which is "unrelated to the Present and the Future . . . waiting to be revealed and related" like knowledge sanctioned as truth (Trinh, *Woman* 120). Even though Emily's activism must have contributed to the redress movement of Japanese Canadians, which was initiated in the early 1970s,[18] her speech and writings sometimes fail to penetrate the manipulative power of language.

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[17] It is notable that Emily avoided the internment herself. Unlike the Nakanes, Emily escaped to Toronto with her father and evaded the relocation and the indentured labor system on sugar beet fields in Alberta.

[18] With the success of *Obasan*, Kogawa, like Emily, "became seriously involved with the Japanese Canadian Redress Movement in 1983" (Lo 100). When the Canadian government finalized a negotiated settlement with the Committee for Japanese Canadian

Naomi's in-betweenness of the past and the present, as well as her ambivalent attitude towards remembering and acknowledging the past, is deliberately represented through the metaphor of the attic and the living room of Obasan's house. The attic is a storage place of official and unofficial, historical and personal, documents—where all unforgettable, unspeakable memories have been stored—while the living room symbolizes the present that contains unresolved and unexplained historical gaps. The opposition between the attic and the living room could be made in terms of psychological spaces. In other words, the attic serves as a psychological place where unresolved cathexes have been stored while the living room represents the psychical dimension of consciousness.

As a reservoir of the past, the attic contains the tools Uncle brought from Japan, his photo ID with a signature of RCMP,[19] old letters, magazines, and papers, all dusted. Once shiny and now all dusty. The attic is a metaphoric place for memory. On the night Naomi visits Obasan upon the news of Uncle's death, she finds herself standing on the ladder to the attic following Obasan who wants to pull something out of the darkness of the attic, which later turns out to be the letters from Grandmother Kato. The ladder to the attic symbolizes the bridge that connects the present and the past, the living room and the attic. Naomi states, "All our ordinary stories are changed in time, altered as much by the present as the present is shaped by the past. . . . Our attics and living rooms encroach on each other, deep into their invisible places" (Kogawa, *Obasan* 30). Even though Naomi shows some reluctance to discover what has been veiled such a long time, it is inevitable

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Redress on 22 September 1989, parts of the novel "were read in the Canadian House of Commons as well as at a press conference later that day to celebrate the settlement" (98).

[19] RCMP stands for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

that she should pursue her search. As long as she does not reconcile with the past, Naomi is only deemed to be unstable, floating, and drifting. Since the traumatic past serves as the place from which questions of her present identity arise, it is necessary for Naomi to confront her unresolved past.

As the story starts with the death of her uncle, which calls all the scattered family members together in Obasan's house, Naomi is invited to confront the death—the loss—of her mother that has been pending for such a long time. The death of her uncle, a surrogate parent who has sustained the lost but not lost relationship with her parents, makes her encounter the loss of her love object—the truth of her mother's disappearance. The letters of Grandma Kato contain detailed descriptions of the atomic bombing and consequent destruction of the village and her mother's disfigurement in Nagasaki, Japan, but the letters written in Japanese have been saved from Naomi and Stephen in respect of their mother's wish. The letters are "skeletons," "bones," or remnants of the past (292). With these "skeletons" and "bones," Naomi does not hastily attempt to make flesh with words. Rather than making alternative scripts, she first attempts to feel and embrace the absence of her lost mother.

It is the letters that "deliver the 'freeing words' to Naomi" (Hattori 132). Encountering these remnants of the past, Naomi who is no longer a child, starts to feel the presence of her mother in spite of her absence. She acknowledges that "There are so many betrayals—departures, deaths, absences—there are all the many absences within which we who live are left" (Kogawa, *Obasan* 294). Naomi feels presence only through physicality when she is young. However, when she finally realizes her mother's truth three decades later, Naomi overcomes her literal understanding of presence and thus feels

the presence that exists beyond the materiality of flesh and blood. She states, "perhaps it is because I am no longer a child I can know your presence though you are not here" (292). She can now feel the presence out of her mother's absence and understand that there is another level of existence beyond the material existence of being, and that absence does not mean non-existence. With this realization, Naomi becomes ready to restore her relationship with her mother out of her absence.

Her incantation of her mother, "Mother, I am listening. Assist me to hear you" (288), implies that she is now ready to confront her loss and listen to her mother's language, silence. As an artist evokes the muses for their artistic inspiration and guidance, Naomi evokes her mother for the guidance to listen to her silence and feel her presence out of her absence. Listening to the silence is a way to restore their intimate relationship and furthermore, to reconcile with her lost mother. However, it is not a regressive return to the original preverbal and pre-social relationship with her mother that Naomi had in her childhood. Rather, it is an attempt to restore Naomi's identity that has been lost in the midst of the historical conditions of the internment and relocation within her mother's survival and resistance. Examining the mother and daughter relationship within the particularity of Japanese American history, Traise Yamamoto notes that "the structure of racialized motherhood suggests that the mother is a crucial figure for enculturating the daughter in modes of material and psychological survival in a social realm where she will be defined by both her race and gender" (*Masking* 145). Therefore, reconciling with her mother and rebuilding their intimate connection is necessary for Naomi to contextualize her lost identity and reconstruct her present identity. It is also "an act of lending coherence and integrity to a history interrupted, divided, or compromised by instances of

loss" and in doing so, we can "redress forcibly forgotten experiences, allow the silences of history to come to word, and imagine alternative scripts of the past" (Seyhan 4).

Confronting the truth surrounding the disappearance of her mother, Naomi starts to communicate with her mother:

> Silent Mother, you do not speak or write. You do not reach through the night to enter morning, but remain in the voicelessness. From the extremity of much dying, the only sound that reaches me now is the sigh of your remembered breath, a wordless word. How shall I attend that speech, Mother, how shall I trace the wave? . . .
>
> Martyr Mother, you pilot your powerful vocielessness over the ocean and across the mountain, straight as a missile to our hut on the edge of a sugar-beet field. You wish to protect us with lies, but the camouflage does not hide your cries. Beneath the hiding I am there with you. Silent Mother, lost in the abandoning, you do not share the horror. At first, stumbling and unaware of pain, you open your eyes in the red mist and, sheltering a dead child, you flee through the flames. Young Mother at Nagasaki, am I not also there? (Kogawa, *Obasan* 289-90)

This is Naomi's imaginary journey to her mother's life and death in Nagasaki; this is the way Naomi embraces and communicates with her absent mother. Most importantly, this is the way Naomi remembers and reconciles with her ghost mother. Remembering and reconciling with the past is for Naomi not to color the dilapidated image of her mother with vivid colors, but to build up the postmemory of her mother in Nagasaki. Defining the indirect and fragmented memory that has been transmitted to the next generation by

the term "postmemory," Marianne Hirsch states, postmemory's "connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation" (*Family* 22). Naomi's imaginary journey into her mother's life and death in Nagasaki paves a path to the generational transmission of traumatic memories from her mother to herself. At the last stage of the journey, holding the letters, Naomi now can embrace her lost mother and listen to the voice of her silence. She now shares the pain, horror, and suffering her mother had kept only within herself in order to protect her children. By sharing the feelings and affections of the traumatic moments, Naomi feels her mother at the suffering moment, and in doing so, she rebuilds her lost affiliation with her mother. The silence that had dammed inside the mother is now flowing to her daughter.

Having gone through her journey, Naomi now better understands her uncle who used to look at the prairie in Granton. Naomi and Uncle visit the coulee for the first time in 1954. This incident takes place when Naomi is eighteen years old, two months after Emily visits them with the Grandma Kato's letters from Japan. Agitated and distressed by the letters, Uncle comes to the coulee and does not tell Naomi about the letters since he believes she is too young to hear all this traumatic news. The coulee becomes the place where Uncle buries the family secret. Kogawa describes the coulee as the ocean and the grass as waves. Dark and wide, the coulee resonates with the sky and the sea mentioned in the epigraph. As preverbal, "virgin land" (Kogawa, *Obasan* 2), the coulee which deeply embraces the traumatic memories, symbolizes the unfathomable depth of silence and wordlessness. The annual visit with Uncle becomes a ritual at the place where something unspeakable is buried and hidden.

When Naomi comes back to the coulee a month after the death of her uncle, the place is the same but Naomi is not the same as she was. Now she knows what has been buried for years in this place and understands the stares of Uncle aimed at the waving grasses. Finally she can see what is beyond the stillness and silence and is ready to listen to the silence buried for decades.

> What stillness in this predawn hour. The air is cold. In all our life of preparation we are unprepared for this new hour filled with emptiness. How thick the darkness behind which hides the animal cry. I know what is there, hidden from my stare. Grief's weeping. Deeper emptiness.
>
> Grief wails like a scarecrow in the wild night, beckoning the wind to clothe his gaunt shell. With his outstretched arms he is gathering eyes for his disguise. I had not known that Grief had such gentle eyes—eyes reflecting my uncle's eyes, my mother's eyes, all the familiar lost eyes of Love that are not his and that he dons as a mask and a mockery.
>
> This body of grief is not fit for human habitation. Let there be flesh. The song of mourning is not a lifelong song. (295)

This is the moment when Naomi as a melancholic subject recognizes her loss and confronts the animated grief that has for so long had control over her life and her family. Kogawa constructs layers of grief by setting up Naomi's dialectic reconciliation with her mother through her mourning process of her uncle. On the surface level, this novel is centered on the death of Naomi's uncle. Yet, on another level, Naomi is unraveling her therapeutic process of reconciliation with her losses and the inscrutable silence of her mother. The explicit mourning process for her uncle's death parallels Naomi's implicit

grieving process concerning her lost mother, through endocryptic identification whose "mechanism consists of exchanging one's own identity for a fantasmic identification with the 'life'—beyond the grave—of an object of love, lost as a result of some metapsychological traumatism" (Abraham and Torok 142).

The reconciliation with the lost object of love is an initial step for Naomi to restore her own subject/identity, and the process of reconciliation progresses as Naomi moves out of the state of melancholy towards successful transference to another love object through the state of mourning. In the middle of the continuum between melancholia and mourning, Naomi has taken a step forward from her traumatic melancholic state through reconciliation with the ghostly object and the lost self. She realizes, "This body of grief is not fit for human habitation. Let there be flesh. The song of mourning is not a lifelong song" (Kogawa, *Obasan* 295). As Gurleen Grewal states, grief, as a "'waiting room,' [or] a 'tunnel,'" is "a station at which the 'train' stops but from which it must move on" (155).

As David L. Eng and Shinhee Han comment, melancholia is "the inherent unfolding and outcome of the mourning process that underwrites the losses of the immigration experience" (353). However, nobody remains permanently in interminable grief, the state of melancholia; it is always the transitional moment from melancholia to mourning where they stay. They might have stayed for a long time in the stage of endless mourning, dealing with cultural, racial, ethnic, and economic issues that suppress their ideals, desires, or love objects. But they never stay in stasis; they constantly struggle in order to overcome the stage of incessant grief. Likewise, Naomi's "shuffling back and forth" (Kogawa, *Obasan* 60) between the past and the present will be over through her

reconciliation and reestablished bond with her mother and through her acquisition of silence full of living words as an alternative language. Naomi finally starts the healthy transition from the state of melancholia to the state of mourning so that she can move through the stage of permanent grief over the losses of her love objects.

## Chapter 4. Melancholic Identification and Traumatic Memories in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*

*Dictee* is the only complete written work of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Korean American filmmaker, performance artist, and writer, who was raped and murdered at the age of thirty two in 1982, the same year her first and last book came out. Cha immigrated to the United States with her family in 1962, and by the 1970's she emerged on San Francisco's burgeoning performance and conceptual art scene, becoming well known for her own performance, video works, film, and writing. Early critics like Susan Wolf and Allan deSouza who examine both Cha's visual and performing art and *Dictee* agree that *Dictee* is the crystallization of Cha's artistic achievement and complexity[1].

As Allan deSouza comments, Cha's *Dictee* was initially received by "a primarily white avant-garde audience" (73). It had invited only tangential attention from literary critics until a panel on *Dictee* was convened in 1991 at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian American Studies and the papers presented at the meeting were published in a book entitled *Writing Self Writing Nation: A Collection of Essays on Dictee by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha* in 1994 by Third Woman Press. In the preface of the essay collection, Elaine Kim exhorts critics who focus mainly on the avant-garde experimental form and writing of *Dictee* to consider "the specific histories it represents and the material histories out of which it emerges" (ix). The materialist readings of the text in terms of specific histories such as "the Japanese colonialism in Korea, Korean nationalist movements, the Korean War, Korean immigration to the United States" (ix)

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[1] For references for Cha's film and video works, see Susan Wolf's "Theresa Cha: Recalling Telling ReTelling," and Constance M. Lewallen's *The Dream of the Audience: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-1982).*

are substantiated by the four seminal essays of the collection. Critics such as Allan deSouza, Sue J. Kim, and Anne Anlin Cheng agree, the panel presentation in 1991 and the publication of the presented papers in 1994 catalyzed the expansion of literary criticism on *Dictee* and greatly contributed to drawing critical attention from "a largely academic Asian American audience," beyond the white avant-garde (deSouza 73). Attention was then paid not only to *Dictee* but also to Cha's films and video works, which were on the verge of being wiped out from the memory of critics and audience alike.

After almost a decade of its publication, *Dictee* has re-emerged in academic circles and is being treated in terms of Korean American identity politics which get more complex with the memory of Japanese colonialism in Korea, Korean nationalist movements against colonialism, immigration to the United States, and the ensuing process of identification of citizenship and assimilation. In the mid to late 90's some critics began focusing on the identity politics of Korean Americans in relation to the diverse national and personal displacements of Korea, Koreans, and Korean Americans. While Elaine Kim's "Poised on the In-between: A Korean American's Reflection on Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*" focuses on in-between and interstitial space emerging among Korean Americans fraught with transnational/transcultural crossings and experiences,[2] Shu-Mei Shih's "Nationalism and Korean American Women's Writing" examines how the postcolonial hybridity and its deterritorialized and denationalized consciousness develops through the dialogic relations between claiming and transcending

[2] For Elaine Kim's concern on the intersection between gender and nation in Asian American literature, refer to her "'Such Opposite Creatures': Men and Women in Asian American Literature."

nationalism.[3] In *Dictee*, the lives of women revolutionaries like Yu Guan Soon and St. Therese of Lisieux, and Joan of Arc, as well as the lives of the female narrator, her mother, and other nameless women, all situated in historical moments, complicate the juncture where nation and gender meet and work together without denying each other, and therefore, avoid unifying thematic threads that fixate the identity of Korean American women on the simple, monolithic process of identity formation.

In addition, various uncaptioned materials in *Dictee* like photographs, a map, anatomical figures of the Larynx, the nine muses in Greek mythology, Chinese calligraphic letters, a film still, a postcard, handwritten drafts, film scriptwriting, etc. make it impossible to categorize Cha's text in a genre and/or literary form. With this indefinable literary form, the anti-realist aesthetics in *Dictee* which debunk the tenets of realism like mimesis, coherence, and commensurability also draw critics' attention to the postmodern aesthetics Cha employs in her art work. On the narrative form of *Dictee*, Juliana M. Spahr in "Postmodernism, Readers, and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*" focuses on its fractured forms of writing and their power of decolonizing and destabilizing "reading practices that seek to conquer or master." Meanwhile, Sue-Im Lee's "Suspicious Characters: Realism, Asian American Identity, and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*" theorizes "a postmodern realism" in order to describe "the unresolvable tension between realist clarity and postmodern opacity in the representation of an Asian American subject" (230).

[3] For more references on nation, nationalism, and identity, see Srimati Mukherjee's "Nation, Immigration, Text: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*," and Helena Grice's "Korean American National Identity in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*."

What is notable in these literary criticisms on *Dictee* is that many of them primarily concentrate on the specific histories of Korea and the experience of immigration that reflect Cha's and her mother's lives,[4] and they ignore the second half of the text where anonymous women are described in the form of film script and legend. Mayumi Takada argues that "the omission of the filmic latter half in critical discussions reflects a critical and political need in Asian American studies to valorize and centralize race and ethnicity at the cost of downplaying sections that may not easily correspond to discourses on ethnic identity" (24). Takada admits the invaluable contributions of *Writing Self Writing Nation* and Elaine Kim's emphasis on the historical specificity of Korea and Cha's autobiographical background in making foundational frameworks for Korean American identity politics. However, as Takada points out in "Annihilating Possibilities: Witnessing and Testimony through Cinematic Love in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*," the emphasis on ethnic and historical specificity results in the ellipsis of the latter half of the text since the narratives of *Dictee* change from the personal, national, and historical ones of female characters to the ones of women anonymously described in the filmic frame, the theatre, and the fictional frame of legend—therefore, losing their visible connection to specific ethnicity, nationality, and historicity. Critics like Stella Oh, Mayumi Takada, and Kun Jong Lee have recently explored how the latter half of Cha's *Dictee* corresponds to the themes of its first half through examining Cha's appropriation of the form and content of the nine muses in Greek mythology (Oh and Lee) and Cha's application of filmic theory in her text (Takada).

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[4] Since *Dictee* is partly based on Cha's and her mother's experience of immigration and colonialism, many critics introduce it autobiographical. However, when it comes to Cha's experimental mix of multiple materials in *Dictee*, it is more reasonable to consider it as a part of her art work.

On the horizon of these recent critical approaches to *Dictee*, this chapter first focuses on the violence caused by the process of identification which is originally grounded on the "ideal of equivalence" and "the *ethos* of fidelity" (Lowe 42). An artist statement Cha wrote after 1976 gives us insight into the issues to which Cha had been long attracted:

> The main body of my work is with language, "looking for the roots of language before it is born on the tip of the tongue." . . . Certain areas that continue to hold interest for me are: grammatical structures of a language, syntax. How words and meaning are *constructed* in the language system itself, by function or usage, and how transformation is brought about through manipulation, process as changing the syntax, isolation, removing from context, repetition, and reduction to minimal units. (qtd. in Rinder 19-20)

Even though this statement was written before *Dictee* was published, her interests in language continue to be explored in the text through language lessons, the repetitive mechanism in language education, and the process of identification that follows and simultaneously defies the logic of reproduction.

The process of identification is ramified in *Dictee* not only through Japanese colonialism of Korea which has drawn much attention from critics on account of its ethnic, historical specificity. But it is also executed in Catholic catechism, in the cinematic relationship between the viewer and the viewed, and in the process of assimilation and naturalization of immigrants. All these processes of identification are parts of the Ideological State Apparatuses (the ISAs), according to Louis Althusser,

which are manipulated by the ideology of the ruling class and thus, serve to maintain its power and domination. Althusser demonstrates that "the Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly *by ideology*, but they also function secondarily by repression" (98). The ISAs include the school, church, religion, family, and other cultural apparatuses like censorship and "use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion, selection, etc., to 'discipline' not only their shepherds, but also their flocks" (98). Therefore, the displaced, transnational subjects caught in colonial, religious, immigrant, and cinematic systems in *Dictee* are supposed to all be interpellated and reproduced according to the norms and values of the society where they are newly placed.

My main concern in this chapter is to explore the violent process of reproduction or identification for the displaced subjects represented in *Dictee*. The process of reproduction and identification is violent because it demands to replace the once loved and safe objects with new counterparts as the subject is displaced, immigrated, and acculturated. Lisa Lowe's "Unfaithful to the Original: the Subject of *Dictee*" offers a seminal critique of the logic of domination through identical equivalence and proposes the resistant power of unfaithfulness accompanying the process of identification. I am much indebted to Lowe since I investigate the violent and compulsive processes of identifications, which always and already contain interstitial and deferring spaces where unexpected outcomes appear as subversive powers of resistance. However, my argument is departing from hers. Drawing on psychoanalytic theories, especially object relations theory and trauma studies, my psychoanalytic reading will explore how the various processes of identification force the new object to take the place of the extant object in the object relationship, and how the displaced, transnational subject responds to the

objects, both lost and newly imposed, in the state of melancholy. It is in this psychological space where preexisting love objects conflict and contest with new ones, as well as being crossed, blurred, disrupted, and rearranged by them. It is in the subject's relation with objects where many different elements such as cultures, ethnicities, nationalities, and languages get repetitively disordered and reordered, contested and accepted. Therefore, this reading will eventually lead us to the psychological space where the complex identity of the displaced subject is constructed dealing with both old and newly imposed objects.

Exploring the object relationships of the displaced, transnational subjects in *Dictee*, I will pay careful attention to the significance of the homeland that the subjects left behind and which becomes the object for the psychological and physical return of the subjects who are now caught in-between original objects/ideals and new substitutes in the state of national/personal melancholia. In so doing, I will shed light on how Cha's equivocal use of *mother* in *Dictee* delineates the intersecting areas of gender and nation, especially the nation as a once loved but lost object. In addition, I will argue that trauma occurs and traumatic memories remain in the dynamic psychological space where the subjects deal with their objects in the processes of identification. While the narratives of *Dictee* are interested in the process of identification, its anti-realist and postmodern aesthetics reflects the nature of traumatic memories. Because Cha takes the form of writing as an artistic tool for her messages, the aesthetic form of *Dictee* will also be one of my concerns.

**The Psychological Dynamics in the Processes of Identification**

Sigmund Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" renders the concept of mourning and melancholia in terms of the loss of the love object. If the transference from the original object that one lost to a new substitute occurs smoothly, mourning over the loss will be over, but if one cannot replace the loss with a new object, one becomes melancholic, stuck in the state of permanent grieving. However, the failed object or ideal, according to Freud, is not entirely lost since "the shadow of the object fell upon the ego" ("Mourning" 249) and thus overlaps and lives in the ego when the libido that was originally attached to the object is withdrawn into the ego.

The object relations theory implied in Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" is of great importance since, once the ego is split from its object, it develops the concept of the self. The object relations theory is introduced to Asian American literary tradition by Eng and Han's "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia" and Cheng's *The Melancholy of Race*. Exploring Asian American racial melancholia in terms of assimilation, Eng and Han claim, "To the extent that ideals of whiteness for Asian Americans (and other groups of color) remain unattainable, processes of assimilation are suspended, conflicted, and unresolved" (345). According to them, "ideals of whiteness are continually estranged" and "remain at an unattainable distance, at once a compelling fantasy and a lost ideal" (345). This suspended assimilation eventually places Asian Americans within a framework of melancholia, the infinite state of grieving.

Based on case studies of Asian Americans, Eng and Han observe: "While acquiring a new language (English) should be perceived as a positive cognitive development, what is not often acknowledged or emphasized enough is the concomitant psychic trauma triggered by the loss of what had once been safe, nurturing, and familiar"

(357). As a privileged vehicle to measure the success or failure of assimilation, language acquisition through the process of compulsory identification implies in itself the devaluation of the mother tongue, which was once a loved and safe object. Even though they take notice of the underestimated loss of the object that "had been safe, nurturing, and familiar," Eng and Han do not offer further analysis of this old object that is lost in the process of assimilation.

In other words, looking at "the unstable immigration and suspended assimilation of Asian Americans into the [American] national fabric" (345), Eng and Han do not pay much attention to the process of identification of the ego with the returned object cathexis. They write, "In identifying with the lost object, the melancholic is able to preserve it but only as a type of haunted, ghostly identification. That is, the melancholic assumes the emptiness of the lost object or ideal, identifies with this emptiness, and thus participates in his or her own self-denigration and ruination of self-esteem" (346). While ideals of whiteness as objectives to live up to are constantly suspended and deferred, the loved objects immigrants leave behind are lost somewhere on their way to the ideals of whiteness. The former is never fully identified and constantly suspended, and the latter that was once fully identified is now lost by the imposition of the new object. Paying less attention to these kinds of differences of objects in the melancholic dynamics of Asian Americans, Eng and Han fail not only to grasp the significance of the "haunted, ghostly identification" with ideals of whiteness that Asian Americans live up to in their process of assimilation, but also to examine other loved but entirely lost objects or ideals of Asian Americans that are related to their countries of ancestors.

It is Cheng who explores the process of identification of the ego with the object cathexis returned from the lost object or ideal. Her concept of "the loss-but-not-loss" is based on the dynamics of the ego that denies the loss of its object and identifies with the cathexis withdrawn from the lost object. As Cheng emphasizes based on Freud' theory, the old object is lost in the process of identification but not entirely erased or disappeared from the psyche of the immigrant. It is because the subject does not admit the death of his/her love object and resurrects it in him-/herself with "the shadow of the object," the returned object cathexis, through the process of incorporation. However, even though Cheng offers a psychoanalytic reading of Cha's *Dictee*, she, like Eng and Han, pays less attention to how the old objects have been imperiled by the replacement with new ones and how the traumatic split of the ego/subject is caused by the replacement of the old objects with new ones.

As Homi Bhabha comments, "the very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a space of splitting" ("Interrogating" 44). As implied in Freud's theory, the splitting space of the ego/subject from objects is the place where the complex identity formation of the displaced subject takes place through denial, negotiation, tension, swallowing, and incorporation. Therefore, Asian American racial melancholia grounded on the multifaceted layers of loss gets much more complicated not only by constantly deferring the unfulfilled ideals of whiteness but also by the old objects that are supposed to be replaced with new ones but ultimately suspended on account of their unsuccessful replacement. Thus, the old objects, lost in the external world but now alive (with the ego) in the internal world, often conflict with new substitutes. The conflicts between the internal and external objects are more concretized in *Dictee* in the

linguistic, religious, cinematic processes of identification. In these processes, the characters are constantly negotiating with their original and newly imposed objects, and therefore, their identities are in constant motion and transition, rather than stillness and stasis.

Cultural translation fundamentally assumes “the transmission of elements from one culture to another across a cultural and/or linguistic gap” (Tymoczko 23). The notion of translation is closely related, in colonial discourse, to the implantation of dominant culture into the colony. In the colonial condition, cultural translation intends to reproduce the colonized as the people who conform to the ideologies of the colonizer. According to Ngugi wa Thiongo in *Decolonizing the Mind*, language is not only a tool of communication but also a carrier of culture. Language carries the culture of the people who have grown up using it by reflecting the real life of human beings and by forming, sharing, distorting, and transmitting images of the world and reality. He states that the most important area of colonial domination “was the mental universe of the colonized, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. . . . The domination of a people’s language by the languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized” (16). Even through Ngugi wa Thiongo does not take a psychoanalytic perspective, it is implied in his critique of the violent imposition of the colonial language that the deprivation of native tongue and the compulsive imposition of the colonial language results in a psychological split of the colonized people from their own culture.

Similarly, the process of assimilation also demands immigrants reproduce the norms and values of their adopted country by incorporating ideals of whiteness. Both

colonial translation and the process of assimilation depend on "the identical equivalence" in which people are demanded to imitate and correspond to what they are forced to learn, assimilate, and naturalize. In other words, cultural translation like the colonial domination through language and the process of assimilation intends to interpellate and indoctrinate the subject with the ideology of the dominant society, and in so doing, aims for identification.

As the title *Dictee* (dictation in French) indicates, Cha's interest in or critique of cultural translation is represented above all by the practice of dictation. Many questions for, and practices of, translation and dictation, either in French or in English, are scattered throughout the text. Cha even starts her book with one paragraph in French and beneath it, the other paragraph in English that means almost the same as the French paragraph. Both paragraphs describe the first day at a new school for a young girl. The following is the English paragraph:

> Open paragraph  It was the first day  period  She had come from a far period  tonight at dinner  comma  the families would ask  comma  open quotation marks  How was the first day  interrogation mark  close quotation marks  at least to say the least of it possible  comma  the answer would be  open quotation marks  there is but one thing  period  There is someone   period  From  a far   period  close quotation marks (1)

The two paragraphs could be both translation of one into the other and dictation of sentences told both in French and in English. What is evident in these two paragraphs is that the passages are not dictated or translated as intended by the teacher or the speaker of the original. The student who is dictating or translating the sentences creates punctuation

marks not as symbols but as parts of the content. As Lowe indicates, dictation is usually considered as “a model for the conversion of the individual into a subject of discourse through the repetition of form, genre, and example” (39). However, practicing dictation, the student literalizes punctuation marks and in so doing, reveals the guided control of the sentence structure as it is practiced, and creates a new meaning in the process of dictation or translation of the original.

These translated or dictated paragraphs that appear to be literally written as the original is read involve the traces of the original paragraph, out of which they emerge. The original paragraph would be like “It was the first day. She had come from a far. Tonight at dinner, the families would ask, ‘How was the first day?’ At least to say the least of it possible, the answer would be ‘There is but one thing. There is someone. From a far.’” Even though it is not visible and audible, the original paragraph is tracked and traced in the English and French paragraphs. In short, the student exposes how the original sentences are reserved in the new counterparts and how the new counterparts create difference and slippage of meaning in the process of dictation or translation. As epitomized in this example of language lessons, Cha attempts in *Dictee* to make transparent the logic of identification and the psychological dynamics the subject effects in relation to various objects.

Compulsory identification occurs at one level when the narrator’s mother in the text is deprived of her mother tongue, customs, and culture during the Japanese occupation; and, on the other level, when the narrator and her mother endure suffering through the process of assimilation in the United States. The mother’s experience of colonialism echoes in her daughter’s experience of assimilation. The bond between the

mother and her daughter continues to go on because of unfulfilled dreams and ambitions or unresolved traumas caused by the process of identification. Srimati Mukherjee in "Nation, Immigrant, Text" reduces the immigrant experiences of the characters in *Dictee* into another metaphor that repeats "the trauma of Korean nationalist struggles" (197). Even though I agree that colonialism and immigration in *Dictee* are main causes of trauma for the Korean American subjects, we should consider them not in terms of reduction or subordination. As far as the processes of identification are concerned, both colonialism and assimilation in *Dictee* are commensurate with each other on account of their logics of imposing the new objects over the old ones. Thus, undergoing these two processes of identification, the narrator and her mother get psychically wounded because the identification process imperatively replaces the established loved objects with new substitutes of the colonizer's country or of the country they live in as immigrants.

According to Freud, the object whose loss in the object relationship evokes the process of grieving could be either "a loved person" or "some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" ("Mourning" 243). That is, the loss of object which makes one fall into a state of mourning or melancholia involves not only visible and material objects but also abstract ideas and concepts like "one's country, liberty, [and] an ideal." The lost love objects in *Dictee* that make female revolutionaries, as well as ordinary women like the narrator and her mother, live in the state of interminable grieving are those that are lost in war, colonialism, and immigration. Especially, when it comes to specific Korean histories and Korean American immigrants in *Dictee*, the lost loved objects are closely related to the nation, Korea, which loses its sovereignty during Japanese colonialism and is replaced with the

United States for the immigrants. During colonialism, the nation, Korea, is deprived of its place in the object relationship and the nation, Japan, takes the place of a new object. The native tongue and culture have also been replaced with Japanese counterparts and later, during their immigration period, with English and American culture.

During Japanese colonialism in Korea, the nation, Korea, is lost, but the people refuse to bury the nation as a lost object and forget about it. The family of the narrator's mother move to Yong Jung, Manchuria in order to escape from the Japanese occupation and the narrator's mother is born there as a refuge. The mother is described in her daughter's narrative as an orphan who is "Birth less" and rootless (Cha, *Dictee* 46). Even though she was born outside of Korea, she identifies herself as Korean; therefore, the mother seeks her refuge in her mother tongue, Korean, despite her displacement from the homeland, the replacement of her mother tongue with Japanese, and the delegitimation of her own culture. The narrator describes her mother, "You speak in the dark. In the secret. The one that is yours. Your own. You speak very softly, you speak in a whisper. In the dark, in secret" (45). The mother refuses to abandon the failed object relationship with her mother tongue and her nation, and retains the lost objects by keeping them alive within the domain of her psyche. Even though she is compelled to speak and thus, stutters in Japanese, the substitute for the loved object, Korean, she keeps her mother tongue alive and does not let it be silenced. The mother carries, by blood, the mark of "being who you are" "in [her] chest, in [her] MAH-UHM, in [her] MAH-UHM, in [her] spirit-heart" (46), while she mimics the colonial language under the colonial government, culture, and order. By keeping alive her mother tongue as refuge, the mother feels "being home" (46), and this makes it more bearable for her to endure the compulsory processes

of identification with new language, culture, and order during the colonial period. Empty and ghostly, the lost but not entirely lost old object still performs as a secret, but safe and familiar, relief.

Translation, cultural and/or linguistic, has its contingent gap in transplanting one culture/language into another. This gap in colonial translation implies the potential resistance which the colonized create against the imposed culture by means of parody, mockery, and counter discourse. Under the colonial oppression, the narrator and her mother in *Dictee* are compelled to desert their Korean culture and acquire a new one, and as a result, become new selves. However, they take advantage of the difference that accompanies colonial/cultural translation. Their imitation of the new culture is not quite identical with the colonizers'. The colonized return to the past, temporally and spatially, and drift between their own history, culture, and identity and the compulsory counterparts of the colonizer. The characters who have suffered from colonial translation remain, throughout the text, in-between, adrift, and split. In other words, they defer the identification with the dominant culture of the colonizer and make use of the slippage as a strategic resistance that avoids full cultural identification in the colonial translation.

Colonial translation implies in its process what Homi Bhabha calls mimicry in the sense that it compels the colonized to imitate and reproduce the colonizer's culture. Denying the simplified vision of the binary opposition in the colonial discourse, Bhabha represents colonial ambivalence through mimicry; the colonizer can find the Other inside himself, and the Other is at times obedient and at other times resistant to the colonizer. Inferring from this fluidity and indeterminacy, we can see that inside the stereotypes of the colonized created by the colonizer, coexist desire and fear, denial and approval,

surveillance and paranoia. In short, mimicry produces the ambivalent subject who is imitating and, at the same time, mocking the dominant culture. In this sense, "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is *almost the same, but not quite,* " and "in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (my italics, Bhabha, "Of Mimicry" 86). Hence, when the colonizer says "an eye for an eye," the colonized repeats "an eye for an I." In the repetition of the colonized, the latter "eye" slips into the capital "I." Articulating the same sound as "eye," the colonized contrive to be the subject "I," not to be the instrumental "eye" of the colonizer. As such, as a secret art of revenge, mockery, or parody, mimicry continually produces differences through slippage of meaning, and this ambivalent creation of meaning as intentional parody comes to break the authority of the colonizer. Furthermore, this unattainable identification with the self or the mimetic ideal in mimicry, as Eng and Han notice, shows that "mimicry can operate only as a melancholic process" (350).

Slippage as a device of creating difference is represented in *Dictee* at several attempts of language lessons for the equivalent identification with target languages. The narrator, who is forced to acquire a new language through the colonial pedagogies, merely "mimicks the speaking [that] might resemble speech" of the colonizer (Cha, *Dictee* 3). The language the narrator articulates is not the fluent and polished one, but "Bared noise, groan, bits torn from words" (3). As an immigrant, the narrator experiences the painful process of speaking the adopted language: she describes herself while speaking as she "Swallows. Inhales. Stutter. Starts. Stops before starts. / About to. Then stops. Exhale / swallowed to a sudden arrest" (75). Her fragmented articulation, torn from

words, is a "Semblance of noise. / Broken speech . . . / Cracked tongue. Broken tongue. / . . . Semblance of speech" (75). In the compulsory object relationship with the target language, the narrator "allows others. In place of her. Admits others to make full. . . . All barren cavities to make swollen" (3) by giving in her body to the new substitute object. However, she is not "a passive receptacle" who mechanically reproduces the norms, values, and signs of the colonial power (3). Despite her repeated imitation of the language, the narrator fails in reproducing the exact sounds and speech of the language. Her learned language sounds far from equivalent. Rather, it unremittingly slips away from the faithfulness and creates a gap between the target language and her imitation.

While Cha offers a monologue of the displaced, transnational subject that reflects her own and her mother's experience of displacement and painful processes of identification roughly in the first half of *Dictee*, other examples of the violent process of identification appear in the second half through Catholic catechism and cinematic identification between the viewer and the film viewed. Because the anonymous religious and cinematic subjects do not provide specific ethnic or historical backgrounds, these parts have been underestimated in, or often missed from, the critical purview of *Dictee*. However, Cha's exploration of the processes of identification by way of manipulation, control, distortion, parody, etc. continues to go on beyond specific histories of Korea and Korean immigrants.

The religious identification first appears before Cha earnestly starts the first section, "Clio History." The spatial setting for the sacred identification is in the chapel of a Catholic school where religious dictation is practiced: "First Friday. One hour before mass. Mass every First Friday. Dictee first. Every Friday. Before Mass. Dictee before"

(18)[5]. During the mass, the religious subject takes the process of identification with God through the sacrament of communion in which she takes in "the Host Wafer (His Body. His Blood)" (13). Above all, men's fundamental identification with God in Catholic catechism is conveyed in the following lines:

> God who has made me in His own likeness. In His Own Image in His Own Resemblance, in His Own Copy, In His Own Counterfeit Reproduction, in His Cast, in His Carbon, His Image and His Mirror. Pleasure in the image pleasure in the copy pleasure in the projection of likeness pleasure in the repetition. . . . Acquiesce, to and for the complot in the Hieratic tongue. Theirs. Into Their tongue, the counterscript, my confession in Theirs. Into Theirs. (17-18)

This catechism tells the basic Catholic doctrine that God creates men in his own image and likeness. The catechumen who answers the catechistic question "GOD WHO HAS MADE YOU IN HIS OWN LIKENESS" (17) gradually internalizes the religious doctrine through the catechetical process, that she is nothing but the reproduction, copy, or repetition of God.

However, even though this catechumen seems to conform to the doctrine, she appropriates the religious catechism when it comes to the sacrament of contrition and penance. Taking advantage of "the guarantee of absolution" in Catholic doctrine, the

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[5] When Cha's family moved from Hawaii, their first destination in the United States, to San Francisco, Cha attended Catholic school and first learned French there. Therefore, the religious subject is partly reflecting Cha herself. However, Cha's use of grammatical person is too ambiguous to claim that the religious subject is related to the narrator or reflects the author Cha. For Cha's biographical and artistic chronology, refer to both Moira Roth's "Theresa Hak Kyung Cha 1951-1982: A Narrative Chronology" and Susette Min's "Narrative Chronology."

religious subject is now "making up the sins" (16); she also writes, "The greater the sin, greater the forgiveness, greater the Glory of God in His forgiveness" (17). The subject appropriates the doctrine by creating inverted interpretation that committing greater sins becomes a way to reveal the greater glory of God in forgiveness. Furthermore, she confesses, she is "making the confession. To make words. To make a speech in such tongues" (17). Externally repeating and therefore internalizing Catholic catechism and following the sacraments of Catholic doctrine, the subject internally appropriates the religious ritual and creates a chance from it to raise and practice her own speech. In the holy process of identification, the sacred rituals are mocked and desecrated because the subject gives birth to what is not expected at all in the doctrine, using the same religious tongues and rituals.

According to film theorists Jean-Louis Baudry and Christian Metz, "the film audience experience compares to the infantile state prior to ego formation"—the stage where the infant does not feel separated from his/her mother (Lewallen 3). Attending Centre d'Etudes Americain du Cinema in Paris in 1976, Cha studied with Christian Metz, Raymond Bellour, and Thierry Kuntzel[6], all of whom are included in *Apparatus Cinematographic Apparatus: Selected Writings* edited by Cha in 1980, and all of whose essays examine "all the elements of the cinematic experience: filmmaker, camera, screen and screen image, spectator, and so forth" (Rinder 23). Cha's main concerns as the editor are expressed in the preface of *Apparatus*[7]: cinematographic apparatus such as "the

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[6] Refer to Susette Min's "Narrative Chronology."

[7] *Apparatus* includes essays of Roland Barthes, Dziga Vertov, Jean-Louis Baudry, Maya Deren, Gregory Woods, Daniele Huillet, Jean-Marie Straub, Thierry Kuntzel, Marc Vernet, Christian Metz, and Bertrand Augst. Cha's "Commentaire," a filmic sequencing of images, words, and stills, is also included in the collection. For deep analyses of filmic

function of film, the film's author, the effects produced on the viewer while viewing them" and the process of how it creates "the impression of reality whose function, inherent in its very medium, is to conceal from its spectator the relationship of the viewer/subject to the work being viewed." Greatly influenced by these film theorists who work on "a marriage between the old semiotic approach [in the 1960s] and contemporary psychoanalytic views [in the 1970s]" (Rinder 23), Cha embodies their psychological film theories by way of the anonymous cinematic subject. Also her interests in the cinematic identification are still noticed through the cinematic subject in *Dictee*.

Cha's concern on the cinematic identification is revealed through her different descriptions of a woman sitting in a theatre. The first description appears in the Melpomene Tragedy section: the anonymous woman is "sitting in the first few rows" (Cha, *Dictee* 79). The two other descriptions of the same woman are included in the Erato Love Poetry section. One of them describes the woman in more succinct sentences, but with more detailed descriptive information about her, as she purchases a ticket, enters the theatre, and sits in a seat (94). The last description of this woman appears as camera directions and shots that frame this woman in a film. It is not until this description when we take notice that this woman is the viewer sitting in the theatre within the frame of a film. In other words, the anonymous woman, referred to in the third person pronoun "she", is not only the viewer inside the film but also the viewed object to us, readers of this book. It is not only the ambivalent position of the cinematic subject but also the

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theories collected in *Apparatus*, see Sue J. Kim's "Apparatus: Theresa Hak Kyung and the Politics of Form" and Lawrence R. Rinder's "The Plurality of Entrances, the Opening of Networks, the Infinity of Languages."

Chinese-box structure of the scene that alludes the slippage of identification between the viewer and the viewed.

The cinematic subject is a woman who is lost in the frame. Trapped in the film frame that captures the patriarchal society, she performs the roles of mother and wife that "is given" (102), "the apprenticeship of the wife to her husband" (104), and "the apprenticeship to silence" (106). Her marriage life with her husband who "touches her with his rank" reveals "Her non-body her non-entity" (112), that is, her existence as an object of possession, not as a subject and agent.

This anonymous women's hollow, empty identity is also implied in the cinematic relations between the viewer and the viewed. Addressing the readers, Cha clarifies how the viewer of this cinematic scene "imagines her," (98) the woman who is on the white screen, as "you, as a viewer and guest, enter the house. It is you who are entering to see her" (98). Watching the film, we enter the darkness of the theatre or the imaginary world of the film where the cinematic identification between the viewer and the viewed comes into being in the state of fascination. In fascination, we lose ourselves and are swallowed up in the object.[8] Distinguished from being in love which originates from instinctual desire, fascination makes the ego/subject "suspended, limited merely to its function of perception. The fascinating object has, as it were, direct access to the motor apparatus,

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[8] The psychoanalyst Siegfried Bernfeld renders the adult who experiences fascination as follows: "he will say that he has 'lost himself.' The eyes are fixated by the object, the motor apparatus is paralyzed or at least immobilized. He is swallowed up in the object; certainly not psychically paralyzed but rather psychically moved, as if the entire ego is 'filled up' with the object. Associations and thoughts do not occur, the continuity of the ego with its past is disrupted (that is what the term 'losing oneself' means), the orientation in the present is disturbed; there are no wishes for the future in regard to the object; the aim-orientedness of the ego is suspended" (qtd. in Leys 57).

which is otherwise dominated by the ego" (Bernfeld, qtd. in Leys 57). As many film theorists including Roland Barthes in *Apparatus* agree, cinematic identification is based on the psychological logics of fascination, dreaming, or the mirror stage. In the state of fascination, the viewer is devoured and becomes the viewed, and this is how cinematic images get reality—through their relationship to the viewer. Therefore, in this cinematic identification, "You are she, she speaks you, you speak her" (Cha, *Dictee* 106).

However, Cha disintegrates this cinematic identification by explicating that she on the screen is not the real object, but the image or trace of the reality. Cha further writes, she is continually "suspended, in a white mist, in white layers of memory. In layers of forgetting, increasing the density of mist, the opaque light fading it to absence, the object of memory" (108). Psychologically speaking, her image on the white screen is like the shadow of the lost object and the film becomes the psychological space where the lost object remains and is resurrected with its relationship to the viewer who is swallowed by the ghostly object in the filmic imaginary world. Therefore, crossing over the screen into the imaginary world, "you see her without actually seeing, actually having seen her. You do not see her yet. For the moment, you see only her traces" (100). In this sense, the viewed in cinema becomes a fantasy that lacks the object and produces "the impression of reality" to the viewer. However, in spite of this fascinating, identifying moment that paralyzes the motor apparatus of the subject, cinematic identification is fundamentally melancholic like other processes of identification in *Dictee* because it stands on the loss of the object and on the incorporation of the ghostly images or shadow of the object.

**The Imaginary Homeland of the Melancholic Subject: "Mother, I miss you, I am hungry, I want to go home to my native place"[9]**

To borrow Arjun Appadurai's term in "Patriotism and Its Futures," Asian Americans could be the representative of "postnation," which is defined not by territorial boundary and blood, but by "its uneasy engagement with diasporic people, mobile peoples, mobile technologies, and queer nationalities" (412). Through their common experiences of immigration, diaspora, and (post)colonialism, Asian Americans become American ethnics, unite together, and establish their own communities according to their distinctive cultural traits. In *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (1999), Aihwa Ong explains "the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement . . . induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions" (7). Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquid identity" also emphasizes fluidity and flexibility of identity in correspondence to rapidly changing modern conditions. Bauman states, "'Identities' float in the air. . . . One can even begin to feel everywhere *chez soi*, 'at home' – but the price to be paid is to accept that nowhere will one be fully and truly at home" (13-14).

As all these theorists remark, Asian Americans as displaced and mobile subjects now live in this transnational, global, and liquid modern era. The concept of homeland is neither essential nor authentic as its subjects are in constant motion and transition across the world. As Benedict Anderson defines in his monumental book *Imagined Communities*

[9] This quote comes from the frontispiece of *Dictee*, that is, a picture of anonymous wall carving. The quote is a translated version in English of the original in Korean (어머니 보고 싶어 배가 고파요 고향에 가고 싶다). For more information about the origin of this wall carving, refer to L. Hyun Yi Kang's note 7 in "The 'Liberatory Voice' of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*."

in 1983, nation is "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6) by means of print capitalism. The concept of the nation as the imagined community constructed in the limited time and space by a certain group of people still holds even when the people are displaced and placed in a different time and space. Even though the homeland becomes the lost loved object to the displaced subjects, they hardly admit its death and leave it in oblivion. Therefore, displaced writers outside their native countries attempt to build their imaginary homelands based on "a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time" (Rushdie 9).

Salman Rushdie as an exile comments about the significance of homeland for the displaced and dislocated subject as follows:

> It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge . . . that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (10)

Through memory, nostalgia, sentimentality, and stereotypes, displaced writers revive their homeland on the imaginary level with their unresolved object cathexis returned from the lost loved ideal, that is, their homeland. Thus, the imaginary homeland is born out of the melancholic relations of displaced subjects with their lost loved object, the home country they left for various reasons. Putting one leg in this imaginary homeland and the

other in the real place where they now are, the displaced subjects are drifting between borderlines, psychological and physical, to seek relief and a sense of belonging, so they might stand balanced.

Rushdie's comment on the imaginary homeland clearly echoes in Cha's "Personal Statement and Outline of Postdoctoral Project" in 1978. Cha demonstrates that her work "in one sense has been a series of metaphors for the return, going back to a lost time and space, always in the imaginary"; therefore, her interest for the return has been realized through "the imprint, the inscription, etched from the experiences of leaving" (qtd. in Rinder 30). Tenaciously resurrecting the old love objects that have been overridden, layered, and eventually palimpsested by new objects in various conditions, Cha's displaced subjects attempt to recall their own genealogy out of fragmented images and memories of their traumatic past. In so doing, the imaginary homeland in *Dictee* attempts to picture itself with bits and pieces of traumatic memories from the past.

Displacement presupposes in itself the possibility of "returning" or "homecoming," either mentally or physically, in relation to the country of origin. The narrator and her mother as displaced subjects from their home country to Yong Jung (the mother) and later to the United States (the narrator and her mother), strive to reclaim their national identity through examining their "Composition of the body, taking into consideration from conception, the soil, seed, amount of light and water necessary, [and] the genealogy" (Cha, *Dictee* 58). Their revisiting the past in search of their origin is the attempt to redeem the lost genealogy and concretize it with words and images. They seek to restore their sense of belonging by "[coming] back to the shell left empty" (57) when they leave, but only to fail. The physical return of the narrator and her mother does not

allow them to reclaim their homeland that they lost as they are multiply displaced. As they realize going through the immigration and customs clearance procedure at the airport, their passports show how distant they have been away from their homeland through their changed nationality. Describing the mother's return, the narrator states, "You return and you are not one of them, they treat you indifference. All the time you understand what you are saying. But the papers give you away" (56).

The narrator states how documents like passports take away her old (Korean) identity and replace it with a new (American) one: "One day you raise the right hand and you are American. They give you an American Pass port. The United States of America. Somewhere someone has taken my identity and replaced it with their photograph. . . . The rest is past" (56). Even though the narrator and her mother still feel attached and as though they belong to their homeland, their passport tells a different story—that they are American. Their official passport as the symbol of the new object overriding the old one in their assimilation, conflicts with their psychological attachment to the nation Korea. The speed of transference of the melancholic subject from the lost object to the new substitute falls far behind from that of document transference. Denied by the homeland because of their changed nationality and suspended from the identification with their adopted country, the mother and her daughter are deferred, floating, and drifting, somewhere between their two incompatible love objects, new and old.

In spite of their physical return after a lapse of eighteen years, the nation Korea remains unchanged as the lost loved object. Since the liberation from the grip of Japanese colonialism in August 1945, the unstable national and political conditions of Korea have lasted as the Korean War (1950-1953) broke and resulted in the severance of Korea into

two separate nations. The narrator notes, "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" (81). The external intervention of the United States in the division of Korea brings out not only the territorial severance but also the psychological split of the nation.

In addition, the April 19th (4. 19) Revolution in 1960, started mainly by university students and spread to every major city of South Korea, was a protest against the dictatorship and corruption of the first Korean government; eventually, the demonstration brought an end to the regime of the first government. Two years after the 4. 19 Revolution, student demonstrations for democracy were still going on, at the cost of student lives. The narrator in *Dictee* remembers the day of April 19th in 1962 when her brother attempted to join a civil demonstration where people were being killed simply for participating. Despite her mother's entreaties for him to stay, he joins the protest, and the narrator remembers the blood stains of the participants on the streets, which are not erased by rain, or by time.

The spirit of the 4. 19 Revolution continues to repeat at a different time and place in Korean history. In the Melpomene Tragedy section, when the narrator visits the country eighteen years after her emigration, the unstable nation state of Korea is the same as when she left. In her 1980 revisitation of the homeland, the narrator finds herself still "in the same crowd, the same coup, the same revolt, nothing has changed" (81). After being "liberated," Korea falls again into the semi-colonial state because of the nationalist political leaders, politicians, and intellectuals who now take the place of the colonizer. It is in 1980 that nationwide demonstrations by labor activists, students, and opposition

politicians were held in Kwangju to demand democratic elections and bring an end to martial law. Likewise, since its independence, Korea has been severed by external and internal enemies and consequent "Imaginary borders. Un Imaginable boundaries" (87).

The narrator depicts, "Here at my return in eighteen years, the war is not ended. We fight the same war" (81). The nation is severed, split, and lost in standstill: it exists just as a "Name without substance" (88), neither wholly united nor restored from its ghostly state under the rule of Japan. The homeland is far from being a safe place, and its people again lose their nation as an ideal or love object. Even physical return fails in restoring the lost but not lost object; thus, the nation Korea, the homeland, remains imaginary and ghostly to the displaced subjects, constantly slipping out of their grasp. Therefore, the narrator states, "Our destination is fixed on the perpetual motion of search. Fixed in its perpetual exile" (81). And this constantly unstable, insecure nation state furthers the dwelling of the narrator and her mother in the state of melancholy.

In these narratives of *Dictee*, the traumatic events of the narrator and her mother are not only personal but also national events; therefore, *mother* in *Dictee* often implies the collective mother, the nation Korea, of the people who live in the lost nation, as well as the mother of the narrator. Describing the moment the mother comes back home from her teaching post during colonialism, the narrator addresses her mother: "You are home now your mother your home. Mother inseparable from which is her identity, her presence" (49). The mother's homecoming also means coming to her mother. In other words, the narrator fuses the word *home* into the word *mother* that is "my first sound, the first utter, the first concept" (50).

In addition, describing the "Self-devouring" (88) state of Korea due to civil demonstrations, the narrator comments, "SHE opposes Her. She against her. More than that. Refuses to become discard decomposed oblivion" (87). "SHE" in this quote designates both the mother and the nation, metaphorically and contextually. With the equivocality of *mother*, the narrator indicates both the personal and collective mother that refuses to be erased, eliminated, and decomposed in oblivion under the chaotic conditions of Korea. Therefore, the equivocal meaning of the word *mother* expands the interpretative range of *Dictee*: that is, the narratives are addressed, not only to her mother as a love object, but also to her mother country as an ideal, and her mother's hardships during colonialism also represent those of her mother country. In short, the narrator embodies the nation "associated with the mother, the maternal body, and matrilineage within and beyond the family" (Friedman, "Modernism" 51).

This homeland imagined in *Dictee* is "neither the actual geographical entity of Korea, nor an idealized Korean homeland" (51). Even though the narrator and her mother revisit the place mentally and physically, their country of origin is destined to exist as the lost, unreachable place for them because they as immigrants are caught in-between two cultures, languages, and territorial boundaries. They stand on borderlands, which as "in-between places," function as a metaphor of space and situation in which preexisting border lines have been crossed, blurred, disrupted, and are continually being rearranged. When Gloria Anzaldua empowers this space in *Borderlands: La Frontera*, she does so through the dialectic process or interplay.[10] Not to be cracked by many temporal, spatial,

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[10] In the book, Gloria Anzaldua as a Chicana living close to the border between Texas and Mexico builds a mosaic of marginal person who is caught between two different cultures and territories. Her concept of mestiza consciousness, even though it comes from

cultural, and national disjunctions and to be balanced on two disparate borderlands, languages, and cultures, it is imperative for the Asian American narrator and her mother to imagine their lost, unreachable homeland to produce their Asian American identity. Even though homeland functions as the imagined destination of their perpetual search, the narrator and her mother continue to resurrect the imaginary homeland through the histories of losses of love objects as well as the fragmented and partly forgotten memories. What we learn from their "perpetual motion of search" (Cha, *Dictee* 81) is that their imaginary homeland is neither nostalgic nor redemptive, and it is neither completely forgotten nor erased. It rather constantly intervenes in the process of identity formation of the displaced subjects who are situated in infinite transition and negotiation among territorial, cultural, and linguistic spaces.

As Michel Foucault explains, "If genealogy in its own right gives rise to questions concerning our native land, native language, or the laws that govern us, its intention is to reveal the heterogeneous systems which, masked by the self, inhibit the formation of any form of identity" ("Nietzshe"162). Likewise, what Cha has shown through *Dictee* is not a claim to any fixed identity of Korean Americans through genealogy, history, and homeland/nation, but to reveal the discontinuities, disjunctions, and palimpsests in the dynamic process of identity formation of the displaced, melancholic subjects with the loss of love objects.

**Traumatic Memories and Diseuse**

In *Dictee,* Cha elicits the epics of melancholic subjects by invoking the nine muses of Greek mythology: the book is divided into nine sections, each of which is

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a different cultural background, provides powerful insights into understanding Asian American women's identity.

designated by one of the nine muses in Greek mythology. [11] Before she starts the stories of the nine muses, Cha devotes the very first page to a quotation from Sappho: "May I write words more naked than flesh, stronger than bone, more resilient than sinew, sensitive than nerve" (Cha, *Dictee* 1). With these invocations of Sappho and the nine muses, the daughters of Mnemosyne who is the personification of remembrance, Cha intends to remember and speak stories that are "Dead words. Dead tongue. . . . Buried in Time's memory. Unemployed. Unspoken. History. Past" (133). They are the stories of women—mothers, wives, daughters, immigrant women, and revolutionaries; the stories offer a variety of residues that "remain uncontained by, and antagonistic to, the state apparatuses of domination and assimilation" (Lowe 43). According to Raymond Williams who distinguishes culture in three steps, dominant, residual, and emergent, the residual is "the certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed and substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture" (122). Even though it has been formed in the past, the residual is "still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present" (112). Repressed under the grid of master narrative or dominant culture, marginalized voices of women in *Dictee* are neither finished nor completed works in the past to be observed and appreciated; rather, they are the residues of the previous reality which happened in the past but is still effective in the present in many ways.

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[11] While each chapter is designated by the nine muses, Cha in *Dictee* deliberately alters the muse Euterpe, the muse of Lyric Poetry, to Elitere, her own creation. Likewise, while invoking the muses in each chapter, Cha rework them in *Dictee*. For the intertextual relation between Cha's *Dictee* and Hesiod's *Theogony*, refer to Kun Jong Lee's "Rewriting Hesiod, Revisioning Korea: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* as a Subversive Hesiodic Catalogue of Women" and Stella Oh's "The Enunciation of the Tenth Muse in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*.

The residue of the past in *Dictee* is accumulated as the dislocated female subjects are being reconstructed by diverse processes of identification and translation in terms of language, nationality, religion, and culture. As I explored earlier in this chapter, the violent processes of identification break the relations between the characters with their safe and familiar objects, resulting in the physical and psychical split from their love objects. In short, traumatic memories in *Dictee* are stories engendered mainly through the losses of love objects. Therefore, the stories of women in *Dictee* are "Remnants. Missing. / The mute signs. Never the same. / Absent" (69). The melancholic subjects in *Dictee* "heard the signs" (Cha, *Dictee* 69) concerning their devalued and repressed love objects and acknowledged that there is something inside them that they cannot articulate because they lack the right tools to express it. The remnants of their past, the muting sound inside them, are not the same as nothingness. They are the hidden and inaudible voices that are repressed and silenced in the processes of cultural translation and identification. The oppressed sounds murmur inside them, begin to fester, and become "the wound, liquid, [and] dust" (3). As the residue of the past and as the palimpsests of traumatic memories, the remnants involve the once loved objects that are lost but refuse to be buried in amnesia and oblivion.

Traumatic memories in *Dictee* are the traces of the lives of the melancholic, displaced subjects that are not entirely obliterated as they are overridden by new objects; thus, their traumatic memories are described as "The decapitated forms. Worn. Marred, recording a past, of previous forms" (38). Their losses of love objects undergoing various processes of identification are repressed down, hidden deep, partially forgotten, slipping out of their mind, but not entirely erased, and as a consequence, result in "Would-be-said

remnant, memory" (38). Even though "Narratives shifts, discovers variation" (145) with bits and pieces of memory, all these remnants of the past are still alive in the body and psyche of the displaced, dislocated subjects, the sites where their traumatic memories, as well as their losses, are inscribed and accumulated; and continually threaten to return to consciousness as belated and unexpected flashbacks of fragmented memories as one's lost objects do.

This cultural, linguistic, religious, and psychological purgatory is the place where their unclaimed and unheard words and speech remain as traumatic memory. Traumatic memory of the past coexists with the present, but we hardly recognize the coexistence since there is an invisible and transparent screen, membrane, or a cheesecloth curtain "whose effect is that of 'an opaque transparency'" (Trinh, "White" 33). Our view of reality is only seen through "stain glass," so that we often forget that "One is deceived. One was deceived of the view / outside inside stain glass. Opaque. Reflects / never" (Cha, *Dictee* 126). Cha implies, the absent, void outside of the world seen through stain glass is full of the shadows or remnants of love objects that are "Ancient. Refusing banishment. Refusing to die, the already faded image" (149-50).

It is the role of diseuse in *Dictee* to elicit these hidden, unclaimed voices and stories. Diseuse means a skilled and usually professional female reciter, and Cha invokes the spirit of a diseuse when she delineates the nature of memory in the Elitere Lyric Poetry section. Cha writes:

> *Dead time. Hollow depression interred  invalid to resurgence, resistant to memory. Waits. Apel. Apellation. Excavation. Let the one who is diseuse. Diseuse de bonne aventure. Let her call forth. Let her break open the spell*

> *cast upon time upon time again and again. With her voice, penetrate earth's floor, the walls of Tartaurus to circle and scratch the bowl's surface. Let the sound enter from without, the bowl's hollow its sleep. Until.* (*Dictee* 123)

As a female storyteller, the diseuse of *Dictee* should deliver "the living memory of her time, her people" (Trinh, *Woman* 125). She is the one who tells stories before whose ink "runs dry before it stops writing at all" (Cha, *Dictee* 133); it is also her voice that can penetrate the earth's floor and the shield of time and let the marginalized stories loose from their incarceration in time and under the earth. In other words, her role is to build a bridge to the hidden side of the past and "to represent the other within the self that retains the memory of the 'unwitting' traumatic events of one's past" (Caruth 8).[12]

In order to overcome the destroying power of time and to redeem the present which stands on "the grace of oblivion" (Cha, *Dictee* 140) with "dead time" and "dead words," the diseuse of *Dictee* relies on writing: "*She says to herself if she were able to write she could continue to live . . . if by writing she could abolish real time. She would live. If she could display it before her and become its voyeur*" (141). Both the narrator and her mother in *Dictee* "write" and "speak voices hidden [and] masked" (48). The act of writing for these women excluded from the access to hegemonic discourses is to witness and compose their body and identity through fragmented, forgotten, and scattered memories of losses. Directed by the sky, water, and traveling birds, their words and speech, "the seed of message" are scattered and disseminated over the world. Even

[12] In terms of these roles of diseuse, Stella Oh in "The Enunciation of the Tenth Muse in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*" reads the diseuse of the text as the tenth muse, which is created by Cha and goes with the nine muses in Greek mythology.

though their seed of language is not visibly brought to fruition, it is "Not hollow not empty" (56). This psychological dynamics of constituting the present with remembering the past is the way the displaced subjects are forming their present identity. However, their words and speech are not visible and heard in the real world since they "plant words to the moon . . . through the wind. Through the passing of seasons" (48).

In addition, the stories told by the diseuse are far from coherent and mellow narratives. The narratives salvaged by the diseuse from the obliteration and oblivion reflect the nature of traumatic memory, which is stuttering, fragmented, and disconnected. Neither colored nor embellished by a glib tongue or the hegemonic signification system, the stories are much closer to the bone, sinew, and nerve of our bodies. Therefore, the disintegrated, non-linear, and anti-chronological narrative patterns of *Dictee* evoke the traumatized psyche of the displaced, melancholic subjects like the narrator and her mother.

Likewise, emphasizing the complex itinerary of displaced subjects with their old and newly imposed objects in the processes of compulsory or voluntary identification, Cha's *Dictee* provides crucial insights into the psychical dynamics of the melancholic, displaced subject. *Dictee* has its main focus not on the relationships of immigrants with new objects imposed through the process of identification, but on the painful/violent process of identification in political, cultural, religious, linguistic conditions and on the haunting role of the lost but not entirely lost objects like the nation, mother tongue, and culture. Therefore, the psychological reading of *Dictee* in this chapter sheds light not only on the nature of remnants resulting from the contests of the lost but not entirely lost objects and newly imposed objects but also on the structure of the traumatic memories.

These remnants of traumatic memories coming out of painful processes of identification ultimately function as counter memory and complicate the official versions of historical continuity by acknowledging their traumatic undertones.

**Chapter 5. Mourning Unmourned Deaths in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman***

I want to tell her about the empty room
of myself
This room we lock ourselves in
where whispers live like fungus,
giggles about small breasts and cellulite,
where we confine ourselves to jealousies,
bedridden by menstruation.
This waiting room where we feel our hands
are useless, dead speechless clamps
that need hospitals and forceps and kitchens
and plugs and ironing boards to make them useful.
I deny I am like my mother. I remember why:
She kept her room neat with silence,
defiance smothered in requirements to be
otonashii,
passion and loudness wrapped in an obi,
her steps confined to ceremony,
the weight of her sacrifice she carried like
a foetus. Guilt passed on in our bones.
"Breaking Tradition" by Janice Mirikitani

The mother and daughter plot has been one of the theoretical anchors that characterizes Asian American women's fiction, especially fiction by Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan as well as fiction by other women writers whom I explore in this dissertation.[1] The opening poem, "Breaking Tradition" by Janice Mirikitani, a sansei—American-born third generation of Japanese immigrants—poet, is written for the poet's daughter, who "denies she is like me" with "her secretive eyes." This poem is a good example of one that reveals the conflict, tension, separation, as well as the differences between mothers and daughters: the mother in the poem has her own room which is not shared with her daughter and her daughter does not plumb the depths of secrets hiding in

[1] Refer to Patricia P. Chu's "'To Hide Her True Self': Sentimentality and the Search for an Intersubjective Self in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*" for the formulas and pitfalls of mother-daughter narratives by Asian American women writers. Traise Yamamoto also explores the mother and daughter plot in Japanese American women's fiction in *Masking Selves, Making Subjects*.

the mother's smothered silence, but instead builds a separate room of her own. Generational gaps and bonds, difficulties in communicating, or sharing and transmitting family histories and secrets in Asian American women's fiction are often represented through the mother and daughter relationships.

For example, Hisaye Yamamoto's "Yoneko's Earthquake" describes the procedure in which a teenage girl becomes aware of women's lives as mothers and wives through her own mother's relationship with her father. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* emphasizes the connection and bond between mother and daughter who undergo Japanese colonization in Korea and the processes of immigration and racialization in America. Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* is also centered on the mother and daughter plot with stories from different generations, one from the sansei narrator Naomi, and others from characters in her mother's generation, all concerning their Japanese internment experiences. Just as Kogawa's *Obasan* deals with the Japanese internment and the disappearance and ensuing silence of Naomi's mother during and after World War II through the mother-daughter plot, Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*, which I will explore in this chapter, continues to investigate the tension and conflict between a mother and her daughter mainly caused by the haunting memories and legacies of the mother's past as a former comfort woman.

Comfort women are those who were abducted to the frontlines of Japanese-occupied territories, and forced into prostitution by and for the Japanese military as the Japanese Imperial forces started the Asia Pacific War, which began when they attacked and occupied Manchuria of China in 1931 and ended with the Japanese defeat in World War II in 1945. Until the late 1980s, the issue of comfort women had hardly been

discussed publicly, and as a result, these women lived in silence and shame for fifty years. The silence was unbroken until Korean women's groups started to concern themselves with the issue and began organizing public testimonials. In 1991 Hak Sun Kim, a former Korean comfort woman, delivered the first personal testimony about her experience as a comfort woman. Kim's bold testimonial inspired other comfort women to break their silence and bear witness to their traumatic experiences.

Keller's *Comfort Woman* was conceived as Keller attended the personal testimony of Keum Ja Hwang, a former Korean comfort woman, at the University of Hawaii in 1993. [2] As noted in an interview with Young-Oak Lee, Keller recognizes the term *military comfort women*, "given them by the Japanese soldiers, is a horrible euphemism" (151). According to Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, the term *comfort women* has come into question repetitively, and the replacement of the term with *military sexual slavery by Japan* has corrected the sterile euphemism. However, since *military comfort women* is already widely known, it is used interchangeably with *military sexual slavery by Japan*. Well-aware of this euphemistic usage of the term, Keller says that she deliberately uses the term *comfort woman* as the title of her novel in order to "underscore the unjust irony" (Interview by Lee 151). Keller spent a long time researching comfort women,[3] and out of her research came the fictional testimony of Akiko, a former Korean comfort woman in her novel.

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[2] Refer to the Council's website (http://www.womenandwar.net/index.php) and Yoshimi's *Comfort Women* (39-40).

[3] Keller talks about how she came to the topic and wrote her first novel, *Comfort Woman*, in several interviews. Refer to "Releasing the Story to the Word: An Interview with Nora Okja Keller" by Jocelyn Lieu; "Interview: Nora Okja Keller" by Robert Birnbaum; "Nora Okja Keller and the Silenced Woman: An Interview" by Young-Oak Lee; and "Nora Okja Keller Writes Powerful Debut in 'Comfort Woman'" by Beth Gardiner.

Akiko is a palimpsestic character: she undergoes the early deaths of her parents, Japanese colonialism in Korea, the objectification of her body as a sex slave both at the comfort camps and in her marriage to an American missionary and consequent psychological deaths, and migration to America. Even though encompassed by the remnants and memories of all these events, Akiko does not disclose her suffering and traumatic past to her American-born daughter Beccah, and her secret contributes to widening the breach between them. However, Keller's *Comfort Woman* is not a story of isolation or miscommunication but a story that delves into the tension between mother and daughter and the process of their reconciliation with each other. Their conflicting and reconciling process is viewed through the alternating structure of the novel with two narratives, one from Akiko and the other from Beccah. Entwining Akiko's narrative with Beccah's as if they were conversing with each other, Keller attempts to reveal the intricate entanglement and interlocking connection between mother and daughter and how histories and secrets that have been unacknowledged and unclaimed are passed on from generation to generation.

Their relationship becomes much more complicated as Akiko's "unclaimed experience" at the camp stations "repeats itself, exactly and unremittingly, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against [her] very will" (Caruth 2). The endless haunting eventually leads Akiko into the other world of spirits and awards her the power to communicate with them and mediate their unresolved wishes or desires as a shaman. Akiko becomes a shaman who consoles and mourns for comfort women as well as other immigrant spirits who stray and drift far from their countries of ancestry. However, there are few critics who pay attention to the metaphoric significance of Akiko's shamanism.

Literary criticism on Keller's *Comfort Woman* has mainly taken a historical approach towards the violence, rape, and traumatic memory inscribed on the bodies of comfort women.[4] Even though there are critics who are interested in Akiko's shamanic transformation and haunting, their approaches are not on its psychical implications: Kung Jong Lee approaches the novel with emphasis on how Akiko and Beccah reflect Princess Pari, the Ur-shaman character in the Korean myth Princess Pari; Kathleen Brogan concentrates on the ethnic performativity of Akiko's shamanism; and Wendy Ann Lee explores the process of Beccah's identification as an Asian American.

My primary concern in this chapter, therefore, is to explore Akiko's shamanism as a synecdoche of the psychical space that reflects her traumatic memories. Akiko's shamanism is the psychological space which contains the shards and fragments of her experience as a woman who was objectified for the sexual desire and pleasure of countless men—not only for the military soldiers but also for her husband. I approach Akiko's shamanism in order to explore its interventionist or revisionist function toward the official history by providing life stories of unacknowledged and therefore unmourned people, rather than to explore it as her psychological split caused by the systemic appropriation of her body. I will read Akiko's shamanism in terms of her melancholic identifications with matrilineal spirits and argue that the identification process saves Akiko from the state of objectification by resuming her lost agency. Therefore, I will first examine Akiko's objectification process at the camps and in her relationship with her

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[4] For the historical approach to *Comfort Woman*, refer to Jodi Kim's "Haunting History: Violence, Trauma, and the Politics of Memory in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*" and Silvia Schultermandl's "Writing Rape, Trauma, and Transnationality onto the Female Body." For broader information, beyond the novel, on the issue of comfort women, refer to journal issues dedicated to the subject: *Positions* 5.1 (1997) and *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6.1 (2003).

husband and then move to Akiko's shamanic transformation through melancholic identifications and its function as a mourning performance for unmourned deaths.

Lastly, I will turn to Beccah's narrative and examine how she conflicts, receives, and reconciles with the historical and genealogical legacies inherited from her mother. As Patricia P. Chu points out, Akiko's trauma does not exist as a simple object to be cured and healed once it is revealed to her American daughter Beccah. Rather, Beccah needs to actively participate in the mourning process for her mother in order to reconcile with her hidden past. I will read Beccah's participation in the mourning performance, which is done by Akiko for anonymous ghosts while she is alive, as her way of reconciling with her silent mother and accepting her mother's legacies. Beccah's process of identification with her mother and foremothers will be examined as I explore the psychological effects and results of the historical war crimes systematically committed on the bodies of the colonized women. Before I discuss the novel, I will give a general review on the issue of comfort women which should illuminate my reading of Keller's fictionalized character, Akiko.

**The Silence and Emergence of the Comfort Women Issue**

The comfort women issue started to draw public attention not only in Korea but also in other countries when Hak Sun Kim became the first comfort woman to testify about her experience in the comfort stations. Since the late 1980s, Korean feminist scholars, organizations and civic groups have made efforts along with Japanese women's groups to publicize the comfort women issue and to demand that the Japanese government admit its involvement in the comfort station system, apologize and

compensate former comfort women.[5] However, all these works were of no effect until former comfort women decided to speak out against their sexual enslavement in 1991. Not long after the first testimony of Hak Sun Kim, two other former Korean comfort women stepped out and lifted the veil on their experiences; three of them filed suit in the Tokyo District Court against Japan and sought a public apology and compensation from the Japanese government in December 1991. Given that the Japanese government destroyed almost all documents concerning the war right after their defeat in World War II, the testimonies of surviving comfort women played a crucial role in discovering the omitted history of military sexual slavery and began to help "revise our conceptions of the past" (Hutton 113). [6]

Hak Sun Kim's testimony immediately inspired many scholars such as Yoshiaki Yoshimi and George Hicks who had researched Japanese war crimes and Japanese complicity. Against the Japanese government's denial of its responsibility for the comfort system, Yoshimi discovered from the National Institute for Defense Studies Library, six pieces of evidence that had survived the destruction of documents after the war. Yoshimi published the evidence that attested "to the fact that the Japanese army directed the setting up of comfort stations" in Asahi Shimbun, a Japanese newspaper, on January 11, 1992; and on the following day, the Japanese government acknowledged its involvement in the establishment and management of the comfort station system (Yoshimi 35). After a

[5] Refer to George Hicks' *The Comfort Women*, especially chapter 7, for the early movements of Korean women's groups concerning the comfort women issue.

[6] For testimonies of former comfort women, refer to *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women* edited by Keith Howard; *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military* edited by Sangmie Choi Schellstede; and Maria Rosa Henson's *Comfort Woman: A Filipina's Story of Prostitution and Slavery under the Japanese Military*.

limited survey on the issue, the Japanese government admitted in 1993 that the Japanese military participated, “directly and indirectly” (36), in organizing the comfort stations and that comfort women were recruited, coerced, deceived, or lured against their will and lived in misery. However, as Yoshimi points out, the government’s statement left it ambiguous whether the subject of recruitment was “the state/military or private operators” and avoided “a thorough explication of the truth, an acknowledgement of and apology for the crimes, compensation, and an outline of steps to be taken to prevent a recurrence of these crimes” (37).

The United Nations took up the issue and Radhika Coomaraswamy, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, investigated the issue and presented a detailed report on it. However, Japanese representatives pressed the UN Commission on Human Rights to just “take note” of the Commaraswamy’s report and evaded their legal responsibility for comfort women in 1996 (Oh 18). Meanwhile, the Asian Women’s Fund, a private fund, was planned and fund raising campaigns for comfort women were initiated in Japan in 1995. However, only some of Filipina former comfort women had accepted the disbursements since they had “little hope of receiving any form of aid from their own government” (Yoshimi 24). Infuriated by the private fund raising that involves the intention of the Japanese government to evade its official responsibility and the continuous denial of the government, Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese former comfort women and their supporters “[continued] to press Japan to offer formal, official apologies and to pay restitution out of official funds” (Oh 19).

Since the mid-1990s, Yoshiaki Yoshimi, George Hicks, Yuki Tanaka, and others, whose research is grounded in testimonies and interviews of former comfort women,

memoirs of former soldiers or officers, and/or archival materials previously neglected by the government, have shed light on the overshadowed lives of former comfort women.[7] According to these scholars, the Japanese Imperial forces established the first military comfort stations in Shanghi in 1932 and increased their numbers as they began their full scale war against China with their invasion of Nanjing in 1937. Comfort stations were originally devised in order to prevent further Chinese outrage caused by the mass rape committed by Japanese soldiers (Oh 8; Tanaka "Introduction" x; Yoshimi 49). The Imperial forces procured suitable women through methods of deception, enticement, abduction, and/or coercion, first from Japan and Korea and later from the local areas where the military occupied. Thus, comfort women's nationality is as varied as Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, Indonesians, Filipinas, Dutch, Malays, Burmese, etc.[8]

Since the Japanese government incinerated crucial documents concerning war crimes and violence at the end of the war, the overall number of comfort women and comfort stations are only approximated by the remaining materials and the testimonies of the surviving comfort women. Yoshimi and Hicks argue that there were as many as 200,000[9] and that more than 80 percent of comfort women were Korean. Because Korea had long been under Japanese colonialism, the Japanese government exploited the natural and human resources of Korea for the war supplies. The colonial situation of Korea made

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[7] Refer to Yoshimi's *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military during World War II*; Hicks' *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War*; and Tanaka's *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the US Occupation*.

[8] Refer to the statistical data on the comfort stations and comfort women collected by the hotlines set up in 1992 (Hicks 17-20).

[9] For the approximation of the overall number of comfort women, see chapter 2 in Yoshimi's *Comfort Women* (91-94).

it easier for the Japanese authorities to draft women and men for the comfort system and the military forces, respectively. The drafted comfort women were mostly poor; uneducated; and aged from 12 to 21, and they had to serve from 15 to 20 Japanese soldiers a day as military sex slaves. They suffered chronically from hunger, venereal disease, lack of medical treatment, and physical violence. Even though they survived the comfort system after the three to eight year service, their bodies and minds were so broken that many of them did not come back to their countries and could not marry or give birth to a child. If the women married, they had to hide their past from their families; otherwise, they would be abandoned by their husbands and families.

Many critics like Elaine H. Kim, Chungmoo Choi, Seungsook Moon, and Hyunah Yang[10] point out that there have been several factors that directly and indirectly prevent the public discussion of the comfort women issue in Korea. One of them is Korean feminism's collusion with Korean nationalism during the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945) and during its post war period. Under Japanese colonialism, the primary wish of Koreans was the national liberation of their country, so that all kinds of movements in Korea were then united for the purpose of emancipating Koreans from the oppression of colonialism. The independence of Korea in August 1945, however, meant only the national liberation of Korea from Japanese exploitation, leaving the national sexist ideologies intact. The successive military regimes in Korea after the liberation had concentrated on the reconstruction of the nation, and the continued reconstruction of the country devastated by Japanese colonialism and later by the Korean War (1950 - 1953)

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[10] For the antinomic relationship between feminism and nationalism in Korean history, refer to *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism*, an essay collection edited by Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi. "The Discourse of Decolonization and Popular Memory: South Korea" by Chungmoo Choi is also useful.

had meant the rebuilding of the damaged masculinity of Korean nationalism. As noted by many critics in *Dangerous Women*, anti-colonialism in Korea and the ensuing capitalist modernization of Korea, which was later combined with military dictatorship, were grounded on and reinforced "androcentric" nationalism.

Since Koreans had highly valued their national discourse of "homogeneous single-nation (tanil minjok)," the Japanese conquest of the territory and people of the nation was the most shameful history for Koreans (Choi, "Nationalism" 14). Koreans' emphasis on the purity and homogeneity of their nation is strongly entwined with the chastity ideology imposed on Korean women. They have obsessively "regulated women's bodies as metaphors for their uncontaminated, uninterrupted homonational (or homosocial) identity" (13); many Korean comfort women who had grown up with the chastity ideology committed suicide in order to escape not only the inhumane situation, but also the shame and guilt of being raped. Therefore, the mass rape on the Korean comfort women by the Japanese Imperial forces reminds Koreans that they have lost their purity, homogeneity, and integrity in the composition of their national and cultural identity. In other words, the comfort women issue does nothing but recall the national disgrace in the past, and thus, has been an uncomfortable memory for Koreans especially during the period of nation building under the patriarchal order of Korean nationalism.

As a result, the Korean national leaders neglected and effaced the issue for the progressive development of the nation, and ultimately, encouraged a collective amnesia and silence for Korean comfort women. Since the issue emerged in the late 1980s, the sexual violence conducted on Korean comfort women's bodies has a tendency to be reduced as a metonymy of the atrocities of Japanese colonialism conducted on the

territory of Korea. The Japanese sexual exploitation is to Korean women's bodies, as the Japanese colonial exploitation is to the Korean territory. However, as Yang acutely points out, to consider the comfort women issue as "the sexualized nation and nationalized sexuality" or in terms of the collective nation of Korea "not only marginalizes the surviving women, but . . . also consigns them to life-long shame, silence, and pain" (134). To approach the issue with the national discourse is to neglect the victimized individuals under the collective category as nation and to cover and trivialize women's issues in the name of nation. "[Opposing] history as knowledge" or truth that needs to be discovered and regarding history as a narrative or perspective of events in the past (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 160), Keller's novel *Comfort Woman* functions as a narrativization of the comfort women's history just like the testimonies of many former comfort women. Therefore, I will read Keller's novel not as a documentary of the history but a literary representation of the history.

**Akiko's Objectification and Melancholic Identification**

Keller's *Comfort Woman* consists of eighteen chapters and each chapter is titled either "Akiko" or "Beccah." Akiko's narrative alternating with Beccah's shifts its title from Akiko to Soon Hyo in the last chapter of Akiko's narrative—chapter 16. Until this revelation, Akiko's Korean name and identity, Soon Hyo, has been buried and repressed. As Akiko confesses, she psychologically dies several times, and her psychical deaths are connoted in the title of her narrative, Akiko, the Japanese name that replaces her Korean name since her imprisonment in the comfort stations. Therefore, Akiko's narrative always implies the death and absence of her original self Soon Hyo.

Akiko's first death occurs when she is sold to the Japanese military for her oldest sister's dowry at the age of twelve. Like many other comfort women, Akiko belongs to the low and poor class of Korea—her father is a cow trader. The economic situation worsens after her parents' early deaths. She and many other poor girls are then deceived by the Japanese military who promise that they can make money by working in factories, hospitals, or restaurants. Even though they have heard the rumors that "girls bought or stolen from villages outside the city, sent to Japanese recreation centers," they have no ideas what the centers are like (Keller, *Comfort* 19).

At the comfort stations, all comfort women are assigned a Japanese name accompanying a number like Hanako 38, Miyoko 52, Kimi-ko 3, Akiko 40, and Tamayo 29 (19). The number next to each name indicates the number of comfort women who served for the military with the name. For example, Akiko 40 means that there were 39 previous Akikos who consecutively replaced the previous dead Akiko. They are categorized as "military supplies," and "new women" are supplied "to replace the ones that died" along with "food rations, ammunition, [and] boots" (65). Their Korean identity and their humanity are further destroyed as these women are "taught only whatever was necessary to service the soldiers. Other than that, [they] were not expected to understand and were forbidden to speak, any language at all" (16). In the comfort system of institutionalized sexual violence, these women are objectified and degraded into "disposable commodities" (147) for the soldiers' sexual desire.

The comfort women system is abject, to borrow Julia Kristeva's term, since it destroys the identities and human rights of these drafted women. According to Kristeva, the abject as "the jettisoned object" is driven away or excluded by superego and remains

in the "opaque and forgotten life" or world (2). However, it does not stop harrying or challenging the ego and the threat of the abject leads the ego "toward the place where meaning collapses" (2). The abject threatens the ego, the state of being, and the identity that has been established in the symbolic order. In other words, the abject as a tangible threat or revolt is related to "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules" (4). Kristeva further writes, "Any crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law, is abject, but premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge are even more so because they heighten the display of such fragility" (4). In this context, the abjectification of the comfort women system culminates as the comfort women are objectified and materialized and as a result, their humanity is deprived.

Akiko is psychologically murdered in the night when she is named after Akiko 40 who was killed for her nonstop talking and is put in her stall to serve the Japanese soldiers for the first time. Looking back on the night, Akiko narrates:

> To this day, I do not think Induk—the woman who was the Akiko before me—cracked. Most of the other women thought she did because she would not shut up. One night she talked loud and nonstop. In Korean and in Japanese, she denounced the soldiers, yelling at them to stop their invasion of her country and her body. Even as they mounted her, she shouted: I am Korea, I am a woman, I am alive. I am seventeen, I had a family just like you do, I am a daughter, I am a sister. (Keller, *Comfort* 20)

As Akiko realizes, Induk ironically becomes sane in her trances, and her spirit escapes from the comfort stations when she is "reclaiming her Korean name, reciting her family

genealogy, even chanting the recipes her mother had passed on to her" (20). Although her body is imprisoned in the name Akiko 40 at the comfort stations, Induk emancipates her spirit from the sexual slavery and restores her subjectivity, which is compulsorily lost and inhibited, by conjuring her dignity and composition out of her national, familial, and sisterly relations. In other words, Induk saves herself from the abjectification of the sexual slavery. Given that Induk uses her deprived, but dignified voice to reclaim her lost identity and defy the soldiers, her death is what she bravely and heroically chooses. Her dead body "skewered from her vagina to her mouth" (21) in the night is a symbol for the violence conducted on comfort women who as sex slaves have been deprived of the rights of their bodies and voices. However, what is murdered by the Japanese soldiers is only Induk's body; her spirit is liberated even as her flesh is cracked and killed. The one killed by the soldiers is not Induk, but Soon Hyo, who is forced into prostitution that night and forced to become a new Akiko, Akiko 41.

Filling the empty space of the name Akiko, the new Akiko undergoes the same suffering and violence that drove Induk to freedom by choosing a heroic death. Living as Akiko 41, the narrator becomes split and impoverished, losing her own ego, subjectivity, and agency and becomes a sack of a body without its substance, the ultimate object desired by the soldiers. However, unlike Induk, Akiko saves herself (her body) by escaping the camp stations at the night when the camp doctor aborts her first child with a stick. It is when she finds herself sprawled at the riverside of the Yalu that Akiko realizes Induk's spirit for the first time: "She comes in singing, entering with full voice, filling me so that there is no me except for her, Induk" (36). Akiko's saved, but empty and hollow body is now incorporated with Induk's spirit. Inviting and identifying with Induk who

symbolizes “a full voice” and agency restored by bravery, Akiko seeks to restore her own lost voice and agency. Akiko’s incorporation of Induk opens a way further to reconcile with her dead mother because Induk’s spirit merges with matrilineal ancestors. In the process of Akiko’s identification with Induk, Induk becomes Akiko’s mother “as if without their earthly bodies, the boundaries between them melted, blending their features, merging their spirits” (36). Since this time, it is Induk, Akiko’s mother, or her matrilineal ancestors swallowed inside Akiko’s trampled body who guide her back to Korea and bestow upon her the shamanic power to communicate with spirits and acknowledge their unresolved wishes and desires.

But Akiko’s physical escape from the camp stations does not guarantee any freedom or liberation from the objectification of her female body. Just as she is sold to the Japanese military by her oldest sister for her dowry, Akiko is again handed over to the mission house that hides itself in the Heaven and Earth Mentholatum and Matches Company building in Pyongyang by Manshin Ahjima who receives money for that handover. Akiko is, for a second time, given over to somebody else’s hands; this time to the missionaries’ hands. Her own voice lost, and “filled with the memories of the comfort camps,” Akiko just follows “gestures and pointing fingers” (64) of the missionaries and “responded to the simple commands they issued in Japanese: sit, eat, sleep” (16). Despite the humanitarian intention, as Chungmoo Choi reflects from her own experience in post-war Korea, charitable gifts or relief facilities “require the recipient’s self-degradation and surrender of dignity to the power that not only produces the fine commodity but affords a luxury surplus to be dispensed” (“Nationalism” 12). Housed in the mission house, Akiko is unable to redeem her self-esteem, agency, or voice, and she is just seen as “the wild

child raised by tigers," the wild child that needs to be cultivated and educated in the eyes of the missionaries (Keller, *Comfort* 16).

The Orientalist viewpoint of the missionaries is well marked by Akiko's married life with Richard Bradley, the minister of the mission house. Richard, who is old enough to be a stepfather to Akiko marries her in order to make it easy for him to take her to America when the war is over. He thinks it is only he who can save her. As Lisa Yoneyama comments, this "American missionary who rescues and marries Akiko" delineates "the paternalistic relation between the United States and Asia" (70), the role of the United States as the liberator and savior of these uncivilized people during the colonialism and war. Akiko lives in America as a wife to her minister husband and travels over America as he gives lectures. She remembers what she looks like, "I would stand by my husband's side in my Korean dress as he lectured on Spreading the Light: My Experiences in the Obscure Orient" (107). Akiko in an exotic dress is exhibited as an object from "the Obscure Orient" that the minister saves and cultivates through his humanitarianism.

The minister's Orientalist disposition is connected to his secret desire for a young, exotic woman Akiko. Akiko feels the same desire from the minister as that which the Japanese soldiers had for her: "This is his sin, the sin he fought against and still denies: that he wanted me—a young girl—not for his God but for himself" (95). In the eyes of her husband, Akiko sees "the lust, dark and heavy and animal, that I'd seen in the eyes of men at the camps" (146). Their marriage does not stand on their mutual love and faith, but on the husband's own desire and pleasure. Therefore, when they have sex, Akiko "let [her] mind fly away. For [she] knew then that [her] body was, and always would be,

locked in a cubicle at the camps, trapped under the bodies of innumerable men" (106). Akiko's married life is therefore juxtaposed with, or an extension of, her experience at the camp stations. Unlike Induk, she is again degraded to the level of the object of sexual desire and fails to be fully saved from the abjectification initiated at the comfort camps.

It is Induk who saves Akiko from her husband's appropriation of her body for his own sexual pleasure. Just as Induk bravely copes with the sexual violence of the military soldiers, Induk intervenes and ends the minister's sexual desire through her spiritual incorporation into Akiko's body. Induk's claim of Akiko's body is erotically described as lesbian love, and it is seen as and accused by the minister of "self-fornification" (146). Because he senses the existence of someone else between himself and Akiko while having intercourse, the minister starts to dread Akiko's supernatural power. He gets to know Akiko's past as a comfort woman and stops taking her body.

Akiko's repetitive objectification is implied in her persistent use of her Japanese name Akiko even while living as a wife to an American missionary in the United States. When the minister first calls her Akiko in the mission house, Akiko "wanted to shout, No! that is not my name! but I said nothing, knowing that after what had happened to me, I had no right to use the name I was born with. That girl was dead" (93). Her original self taken away by the Japanese military is not reclaimed. She says, "I had no right to use the name I was born with. That girl was dead" (93). Akiko's self-deprivation of her right to reclaim her Korean name originates from unfathomable shame at her appropriated body, mainly affected by the chastity ideology prevalent in Korea. Akiko's immeasurable shame gives birth to her life-long silence concerning her past, and her past is reinforced by people around her, such as the minister. When the minister knows about her past, he

says, "What if Beccah hears you? Think of how she would feel, knowing her mother was a prostitute. . . . I ask you to protect our daughter, with your silence, from that shame" (196). Therefore, shame and silence are powerful interlocking devices in building a fortress over Akiko's unmourned death as a sex slave.

In spite of this Orientalist treatment and consequent objectification of her body, her marriage gives her hope "to escape memories" and "to search for new lives and new homes" (104). However, she cannot root herself in America because "the longer you walk through it, the more you realize that the dream is empty, false, sterile. You realize that you have no face and no place in this country" (110). Akiko who lost her face and name by being sold to the soldiers fails to put her splintered self back together since she loses her ideals and dreams of assimilation into the country. Failing to fulfill her hope and dream by acculturating into the society, Akiko becomes homeless and rootless, and her hollow and empty psyche is filled with the spirits of Induk, other comfort women, her mother and grandmothers.

**Akiko's Shamanism as a Genealogy of Unmourned Deaths**

Akiko's shamanism metaphorically represents the psyche of a former comfort woman who loses objects to live up to in her life and fails in adopting new substitutes for her lost ideals or love objects, permanently falling into the state of melancholia. As she undergoes her early psychological deaths by the mass rape of the soldiers and the repetitive objectification both in the comfort camps and in her married life, Akiko loses all connection to her original self, family, and nation, and becomes empty and hollow. Even though she is physically alive, she is psychologically and socially dead. In explaining the state of interminable grieving, melancholia, with the loss of love object,

Sigmund Freud asserts the impoverishment of the ego: "The melancholic displays something else besides which is lacking in mourning—an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself" ("Mourning" 246). In the melancholic identification process in which the lost object is introjected[11] or incorporated into the ego, "an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss" (249) and the ego is "altered by identification" (249). As the ego is impoverished and altered by denouncing the death or loss of the love object and swallowing the object into the ego, Akiko's impoverished psyche is occupied with the shadows of her ideals or loved people, who have been the objects in her ego/identity development such as Induk, her mother, and her grandmother, and foremothers. All these spirits of matrilineal ancestors identified with Akiko's ego are figuratively embodied with her shamanism. In short, Akiko's shamanism reveals the composition of her psychical space, which is altered and reconfigured by melancholic identifications with "the shadow of the object [fallen] upon the ego" (249).

The love objects which dwell in Akiko's spiritual world are the ghosts or spirits of people whose lives are not recorded and accounted for and consequently, do not enter history through their deaths. They are "So many true names unknown, dead in the heart. So many bodies left unprepared, lost in the river" (Keller, *Comfort* 192). They are the spirits of comfort women including Induk, Akiko's mother who had to live as a wife in

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[11] Freud uses the term *introjection* while explaining identification in "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego." Even though Freud equates introjection with identification or incorporation, introjection is developed as an entirely different theoretical entity by Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok in their understanding of mourning and melancholia. Refer to "The Illness of Mourning" in Abraham and Torok's *The Shell and the Kernel*.

her blindly arranged marriage and as a mother taking care of four children, and spirits of the foremothers who underwent diverse inequalities of patriarchal discourses. All these marginalized spirits are hardly recognized or acknowledged even in their family histories, let alone Korean national discourses or history; as a result, nobody mourns for their deaths or losses. According to Nadia Serematakis who explores Greek mourning rituals, "The acoustics of death embodied in 'screaming' and lamenting and the presence or 'appearance (*fanerosi*) of kin construct the 'good death.' The silent death is the asocial 'bad death' without kin support. Silence here connotes the absence of witness" (qtd. in Das, "Language" 78). The spirits and ghosts haunting Akiko are all "bad deaths" that were not mourned and witnessed in history. Having experienced psychological death several times in her early days, Akiko not only belongs to the group of these unmourned, bad deaths, but also is a living daughter of these matrilineal foremothers and sisters. Therefore, when possessed by these spirits, Akiko as a descendant has a filial duty to perform mourning rituals for them by listening to and acknowledging their unclaimed experiences in her shamanism.

Akiko's shamanic narrative is a story of unmourned deaths; Akiko's transformation into a shaman allows her to work as a medium between the spiritual and material worlds so that she can help settle and soothe the spirits' unresolved desires, even if belatedly. All these disputes or contentions between the spirits and the real world shown through Akiko's shamanism are significant in that they provide individual genealogies of the unmourned deaths. Reading Michel Foucault's understanding of history as "a procedure known as genealogy," Elizabeth Grosz notes:

> Genealogy is what provides a "history of the present," a history of the various events that lead up to or make possible various struggles in the present . . . a history that in no way pretends to be neutral, disinterested, and objective or to describe historical events as they really occurred . . . genealogy can be seen as the study of elements insofar as they are already interpreted, a study aimed at unsettling established models of knowledge and epistemological presumptions involved in the production of history, philosophy, and morality. (145)

The unmourned deaths haunting Akiko's shamanism bear individual life-histories that continue to be alive in the present and sometimes "lead up to or make possible various struggles in the present." The haunting of the dead during Akiko's trances originates from their unacknowledged experiences or unmourned losses in the past; however, their haunting is not the exact repetition of their pasts, rather "a memory of the present" repeated as displaced (Gordon 45). Therefore, Akiko as a spiritual arbiter exposes to the material world the stories of these unmourned ghosts which are endlessly haunting while being temporally displaced to the present, becoming "memories of the present," or "histories of the present." These "histories of the present" composed of their individual genealogies counter and unsettle the official history of Korea that excludes marginalized people like comfort women for their standing in the way of Korean nation-building and modernization process. Therefore, Akiko's shamanic narrative brings light to the overshadowed phase of Korean history.

In ghost stories binary oppositions are crossed over and blurred. According to Avery F. Gordon, writing invisibilities and ghosts "requires attention to what is not seen,

but is nonetheless powerfully real; requires attention to what appears dead, but is nonetheless powerfully alive; requires attention to what appears to be in the past, but is nonetheless powerfully present; requires attention to just who the subject of analysis is" (42). This crossing over the invisible/visible and the dead/living is revealed through Akiko's shamanism, especially her juxtaposition between two oppositional worlds (spiritual and material), temporalities (past and present), and spatialities (there and here). The spatial and temporal blurring in Akiko's shamanism depends on the unexpected and unremitting haunting of the shadowy, phantasmal people from the past. Akiko lives in temporal blurring where the past and the present coexist. As Yoneyama indicates, for Akiko the past is not completely past but present at the present (71). Not only does Akiko's shamanism blur temporal continuity, but it also destroys spatial distinctions since Akiko lives with ghosts from the past who demand her to settle their unresolved problems in the present. Akiko's in-betweeness is also alluded to geographically; the spatial setting of the novel in Hawaii represents her in-between positionality. Even though Akiko plans to return to Korea after her husband's death, she fails to make it happen because of her poor financial condition. She gets as far as Hawaii, between her home country, Korea, and the mainland of the U. S. As a spiritual medium for the unacknowledged ghosts, Akiko's border-crossing makes it possible to remember and reconcile, even though belatedly, with what has been unseen, unheard, and unclaimed not only in their personal lives but also in the national history of Korea.

Akiko's shamanism is in a sense a feminist empowerment Keller devises for her devastated character. Given Keller's acknowledgement of Youngsook Kim Harvey's anthropological research on Korean shamans, *Six Korean Women*, Akiko is a product of

Keller's effort to empower a comfort woman with her literary imagination.[12] In her anthropological approach to six Korean female shamans, Harvey points out that shamans who are mainly women in Korea "make the transition from being helpless housewives trapped in the impasse of a double bind to being shamans who transcend the natural (culturally defined) limits of being a woman, who have a system of social support independent of their domestic role, who have economic autonomy, and who have clear professional identities in the larger society" (237). Transforming a former comfort woman, Akiko, into a shaman, Keller intends to restore to Akiko her own agency and autonomy which she has been deprived of due to the objectification she has suffered in the camps and in her marriage. In other words, through shamanism, Akiko is bestowed the power to communicate with the spirits and ghosts that people awe and fear; it is through this spiritual power that Akiko gains financial independence and reclaims her agency. However, even in her shamanism, Akiko cannot be a full agent in the true meaning of the word. Akiko's body and soul have always been possessed by somebody else such as the soldiers, her husband, or now the spirits. The spirits fallen upon Akiko's ego become Akiko, blurring the line between the ego and the objects; thus, the object-loss becomes the ego-loss. Even though Akiko restores her own agency through melancholic identifications with these matrilineal foremothers and sisters, the death and loss of her original self remains unchanged and must be mourned.

Akiko's shamanic performance-like dancing and chanting in her trances is connected back to her use of nonverbal, bodily gestures, touch, or alternative means of

[12] Keller acknowledges Harvey's book in the novel. Critics like Kung Jong Lee and Kathleen Brogan refer to Laurel Kendall's *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits* as another source for Keller to build Akiko's character as a shaman.

communication in the comfort camps in which the women are only demanded to "close mouth" and "open legs" (Keller, *Comfort* 16). According to anthropologist Veena Das who studies Indian women who have suffered from gendered violence during and after the Partition of India, "Through complex transactions between body and language, [women] were able both *to voice* and *to show* the hurt done to them and also to provide witness to the harm done to the whole social fabric" ("The Act" 205-06). Likewise, losing their voices, the comfort women, including Akiko, develop alternative means of communication by using their bodies or making rhythmical sounds for signals. Akiko reflects: "we were fast learners and creative. . . . We taught ourselves to communicate through eye movements, body posture, tilts of the head, or—when we could not see each other—through rhythmic rustlings between our stalls; in this way we could speak, in this way we kept our sanity" (Keller, *Comfort* 16). Women like Akiko, her mother, and other comfort women are creative and artistic enough to devise alternative means of communication out of the oppressive conditions where they are situated such as the comfort camps and the gender roles imposed on women in the patriarchal system of Korea.

In contrast to Akiko's nonverbal, bodily gestures, her husband is "A scholar who spend his life with the Bible," which is the text that most representatively reveals the power of the word: according to the Bible, the world is created by the Word of God (21). Believing in the power of words, her husband "thinks he is safe, that the words he reads, the meaning he gathers, will remain the same" (21). His phonocentric characterization is revealed through his ability to speak four languages and learn his fifth foreign language, Polish. In addition, his voice "lulled and lured the girls from the Pyongyang mission" and

sounded "so honest and joyful that you want to believe, even when you know the truth" (69). However, Akiko distrusts words since she was deceived by the Japanese military with the false promises of words that "lulled and lured" poor Korean girls with the prospect of earning money. Her experience of deception and betrayal makes her keenly aware of the falseness of the soft, romantic, and future promising voice and words.

The language that she knows to be truthful is an alternative to verbal language in the symbolic order, a language that builds on her body such as motherly care and touch as well as bodily gestures created among the comfort women. Akiko wants to raise her daughter with her truthful language, not with her husband's words. She wants her daughter to know "that all of what I touch is her and hers to name in her own mind, before language dissects her into pieces that can be swallowed and digested by others not herself" (22). All Akiko experiences with words or language are orders that claim her body and demands like sit, sleep, or eat. In the camp stations and during her marriage, Akiko becomes the object that is controlled by the power of words and language. She does not want Beccah to follow the same path she has trodden being deceived and alienated from her own self: she does not want her daughter to be swallowed by someone other than herself. Hence, she protects her daughter from the imprisonment of words through her motherly touches so that her daughter can feel who she is and to whom she is connected. Akiko's motherly touch as well as bodily gestures is what Luce Irigaray calls a "feminine language" that speaks:

> the relation which is at the same time the most archaic and the most actual to the mother's body, to our body, the phrases which translate the bond between her body, our own [and] those of our daughters. A language

> which does not substitute for the tussle of bodies . . . as paternal language does, but which accompanies it, words which do not bar the corporeal but which speak corporeally. (qtd. in Silverman 144-45)

Just as Akiko shares "secret signals" with her mother while washing clothes by "pounding out the dirt" against the rocks at the stream (17), she wants to create a genealogical or matrilineal connection between her daughter and herself through her motherly touches, a feminine language that starts from and returns to her body.

The matrilineal connection between Akiko and her daughter also helps Akiko to be reconnected with the material world. To Akiko possessed by the spirits and dwelling in the ghost world, Beccah becomes the only person who "with the tendril of her body, keeps [her] from crossing over and roots [her] to this earth" (117). Giving birth to her daughter, Beccah who "[shares] one body, one flesh" with her, Akiko becomes able to be linked and therefore communicate again with the material world, crossing in from the spiritual world. As a single immigrant mother to her American-born daughter, Akiko's presence in the material world is defined and fulfilled by her relationship with her only daughter. However, to Beccah, her mother exists as her love object who is constantly missing and lacking since she slips into the spiritual world that Beccah cannot follow. Through Beccah's narrative, we encounter the conflict and tension Akiko's silence has formulated between them. Elaborating how Akiko's shamanism is received by Beccah through their relationship, Keller embodies how the mother's histories and secrets are transmitted to her daughter and affect her identity formation as a Korean American.

**"Your Body in Mine": Beccah's Melancholic Identification**

Starting with the news of Akiko's death, Beccah's narrative spirals into Akiko's traumatic past as a comfort woman which has been silenced while she is alive. Focusing on her melancholic relationship with her mother Akiko, who is her first love object but continuously suspended because of her shamanism, Beccah's narrative reveals how she comes to encounter and understand her mysterious mother. Beccah's belated reconciliation with her dead mother ultimately allows her to mourn the death and loss of her mother and accept the legacies inherited from her matrilineal foremothers.

Beccah is an obituarist for the *Honolulu Star Bulletin.* She has been doing her job for six years, although the ambition she had at the beginning of her career has faded and now she "[deals] only in words and statistics that need to be typed into the system" (26). Beccah's job implicitly conveys the analogy with what her mother performs through her shamanism: to mourn and remember the unmourned deaths. While Akiko sympathizes with wandering ghosts through her body, Beccah acknowledges and mourns the deaths of people by recording their lives. Even though Beccah has been gradually distanced from Akiko and from what she represents, such as Korean shamanism, culture, nation, and history, since she first started to fall into her trances, Beccah has been unknowingly and unconsciously related to her mother's mourning performance. However, when she encounters Akiko's death and must obiturize her mother, she does not have "the facts for even the most basic, skeletal obituary" and does not know "how to start imagining her life" (26). Just like many spirits "who traveled far from home and died a stranger" (140) and now haunt Akiko, Akiko is at the moment of becoming one of these spirits with no descendants who can offer proper mourning or remember their lives.

Beccah has been nurtured with Korean folklores like Princess Pari (48-50), the Heavenly Toad (157-59), and the Little Frog (170) told by Akiko. All these stories involve and emphasize filial relationships and values between parents and their children. The children of these stories are deserted (Princess Pari), adopted (the Heavenly Toad), or raised (the Little Frog) by their parents; reconcile with their parents after some conflicts (Princess Pari and the Little Frog); rescue their parents from hell (Princess Pari); or ascend with them to heaven (the Heavenly Toad). When Akiko tells these stories, she asks Beccah to care for her dead body: "When I die, you must prepare my body and protect my spirit before the Heavenly Toad angel grabs me and jumps to heaven" (157). Or it is Beccah who promises to do the filial or daughterly duty: "I'll be like Princess Pari, and I will rescue you" (50); "What do you want, Mommy? What do you want me to do? . . . Ask me and I'll do it. Okay? Just tell me" (170). As Kung Jong Lee argues, Keller pays special attention to the characterization of Akiko and Beccah as Princess Pari by adapting and manipulating the shamanistic myth Princess Pari among these folklores. Princess Pari is the character who is abandoned by her parents but later rescues her dead parents from hell out of her filial duty and responsibility. As a shaman, Akiko functions as Princess Pari in that she mediates straying spirits with their descendants so that their unsettled matters can be settled and they can fly free from this world to the other world. However, when the time comes, Beccah cannot make her promises. Since she has known nothing about her mother, Beccah does not know how to mediate her dead mother, let alone rescue her from death and hell.

Akiko is Beccha's first love object whom Beccah cannot possess completely. "When the spirits called to her, my mother would leave me and slip inside herself, to

somewhere I could not and did not want to follow. It was as if the mother I knew turned off, checked out, and someone else came to rent the space" (4). She needs to share her mother with invisible spirits claiming Akiko's body and soul. "[Not] receiving the whole of [her] parents love" (Freud, "Family" 237), Beccah feels as though she is being slighted and starts to retaliate and criticize her mother. Even though the young Beccah fantasizes that her dead father will "[burn] with his blue eyes the Korean ghosts and demons that fed off our lives" (2), he is not embodied as a savior or rescuer even in her dreams: in her dreams it is herself, not the Korean ghosts and demons, whom he is burning with his blue eyes. Therefore, Akiko transforms from Beccah's first love object into the object to take care of when she falls into trances, and this reversed situation makes Beccah become premature in her early age. Since her childhood, Akiko's disappearance into the spiritual world means the loss of the love object to Beccah who remains in the real world. Beccah loses her intimate bond and tie to her mother at these times, and her frequent loss and lack of her mother cause her to be melancholic in her relationship with her mother, her mother becoming the object of love and hate. The sporadic loss and absence of Akiko's full love and attention result in Beccah's misunderstanding, conflicts, and repulsion towards her mother and her shamanism. To Beccah, Akiko's shamanism is the other world across the invisible spiritual border, something she cannot understand, fathom, or follow.

However, Beccah has been always and already exposed to the haunting of matrilineal foremothers in Akiko's shamanism. On the day of her first period, Beccah encounters Induk's spirit in her dream. Sliding into sleep as Akiko bathes her body and soothes her painful cramping with water that soaks wild grass and unearthed roots from

her garden, Beccah meets Induk: "At first I thought the woman was my mother, then I realized it was myself. 'My name is Induk,' the woman said through my lips. I looked into the face that was once my own and wondered who she saw, who stood in my place looking at the body that Induk now claimed" (188). In her dream Beccah becomes Induk who has claimed Akiko's body and Induk becomes Beccah. Beccah's identification with Induk who "represents an idealized, pre-Oedipal version of Akiko's mother, an embodiment of her own resistant spirit, and her motherland" (Chu 70) is very symbolic in terms of transmission of genealogies and histories of her foremothers. As a bearer of tradition and culture, Induk invites Beccah to realize where she comes from and to go back. To Beccah who tries "to find a clue to my present identity" in the dream, Induk says, "You must come back across running water" (Keller, *Comfort* 189).

In *Comfort Woman*, the imagery of water and river is very crucial: Keller says in an interview with Young-Oak Lee that the water imagery represents "life and rebirth" (151). It works as a metaphor of a life cycle from birth, death, and rebirth through its endless flowing, crossing, and circulating. It is the river where Akiko's mother floats away her stillborn child; where Akiko bathes her devastated body and the remaining trace of her first aborted child right after her escape from the camps; where Akiko tries to commit suicide several times; and where she is reborn by the incorporation with the spirits of Induk and her foremothers. According to the river song[13] which is sung by Princess Pari's mother, Akiko's mother, and Akiko to their daughters, blue waters of the river carries so many lives and "the sorrow of people far, far away" (Keller, *Comfort* 40). Witnessing oppressive conditions under Japanese colonialism in Korea, this song is "full

[13] The original title of the song is "Nodle Kang-byon" ("The riverside at Nodle"). Refer to Lee's "Princess Pari in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*" (439 and note 26).

of tears" and sung for the country and her people (71). However, as Kung Jong Lee comments, this song also "reflects the strong will of common people to survive the frustration, sadness, misery, pain, and limitation of their lives in the face of harsh realities" (439). The "strong will of common people" of the river song is vividly represented in Keller's novel, not by the song itself, but by the implication of a mother's womb through the river and water imagery, the maternal place where life is conceived, cared for, born, and reborn. Therefore, the deaths carried away by the river are "nestled in the crook of the river's elbow, nursing at its breast" (Keller, *Comfort* 41). Akiko's attempts to take her own life at the river also indicate her intention to be reborn like Induk through her death. Sung by mothers to their daughters, the river song transmits the stories and genealogies of foremothers through the meandering river and water from generation to generation.

In this sense, when Beccah is asked to come across "running water" by Induk in her dream, it is an invitation to the world where she lets her spirit fly and must "always follow the water back to its source" (191). The "running water" is an invisible, spiritual thread that will connect Beccah to where she belongs, that is, to her mother, without being lost. Led by her shamanic mother the next day, Beccah crosses the shallow water of the Manoa Stream that flows in the woods not far from Akiko's Manoa house. This is the ritual Akiko offers for Beccah's spirit to "fly with the river, then follow it back home" (191). Soaking "the running water" through her body and washing her blood in the river, Beccah becomes part of the river, rooted in her lineage, and to be reborn as a woman who can share what the river speaks to her, the secrets and memories contained in the other world.

It is not until Beccah unearths her mother's jewelry box that she ultimately comes to know her mother called Soon Hyo. Akiko's jewelry box preserves newspaper articles concerning World War II, two official letters from Korea, and a cassette tape marked "Beccah" by her mother. Akiko mimics her mother who keeps treasures in a box "for times other than the present, among them: fingernails and newspaper articles; a red-and-blue wedding dress; gold thread that she was forever saving to sew her first son's, then later her first grandson's, birthday coat" (181-82). What Akiko's mother keeps in the box are some clues that reveal her past and some treasures saved for her future generation. Thinking of the function of the box as a generational bridge, Akiko herself archives for Beccah all the materials that reveal her unspoken lineage and histories. Akiko ponders, "Later, perhaps, when she is older, she will sift through her own memories, and through the box that I will leave for her, and come to know her own mother—and then herself as well" (183). Beccah finally comes to know that her mother's Korean name is Soon Hyo Kim and realizes that her mother "once belonged to a name, to a life," had a bond to her family members, and had been forced into the comfort camps (173). As expected, Akiko's jewelry box as an archive allows Beccah to reconfigure her mother through reading the letters and newspaper scraps and writing down the names Akiko recorded in the cassette tape. This is how Beccah starts to reconstruct her deceased mother as a whole person. This is also how Beccah starts to mourn and remember her mother.

Melanie Klein notes, "every advance in the process of mourning results in a deepening in the individual's relation to his inner objects, in the happiness of regaining them after they were felt to be lost ('Paradise Lost and Regained'), in an increased trust in them and love for them because they proved to be good and helpful after all"

("Mourning" 360). Now, Beccah knows her mother's life, and her understanding of her mother's tragic story leads her to prepare her mother's body by herself. And through this preparation, Beccah finally plays the role of Princess Pari as she promised to her mother. As Akiko bathes her on her first day of menstruation, Beccah prepares a water bowl and floats on it flowers she gets from her mother's garden. The perfumed water will wash away all sorrows, frustration, shame, and suffering as sung in the river song. It will also guide her mother safely to where she belongs without getting lost and wandering. Beccah prepares "strips of linen cut from the bedsheet I had written on when I listened to her tapes" (Keller, *Comfort* 208). Written words on the strips of linen include Akiko's name, her family members' names and other comfort women's names and their lives that are not acknowledged. Dipping into the fragrant water the strips of linen and washing her mother's body with the strips, Beccah talks to her mother: "This is for your name, Omoni [mother], so you can speak it true: Soon Hyo. Soon Hyo. Soon Hyo. . . . I will massage your arms with perfumed water blessed by the running river. I will massage your legs until they are strong enough to swim you to heaven" (209).

After washing, Beccah drapes the damp strips over her mother's body, and wishes that "Her words, coiled tightly in my script, tied her spirit to her body and bound her to this life. When they burned, they would travel with her across the waters, free" (209). What Beccah does to her mother's body is a ritual to heal, purify, and liberate her mother from the traumatic memories in the comfort stations. It is a ritual to restore her mother's name and her true self. Through this ritual, Beccah attempts to connect her separated worlds between the spiritual and the material, her lost name Soon Hyo and her pseudo

name Akiko, and her present in Hawaii and her traumatic past in Korea and in the camp stations, in order to make her mother a whole person.

Interestingly, by offering this bathing ritual in order for her mother to be reborn and reconciled with her lost life and identity, Beccah fully accepts her mother's legacies and restores their mother and daughter relationship through melancholic identification. Mirroring the performance Akiko did for Beccah in the runoff of the Manoa Stream, Beccah brings her mother's ashes to the place where both of them stood together years ago and sprinkles them over the water.

> I stepped into the stream, letting the water bite through my shoes, the cuffs of my jeans, with its cold teeth. Bending down, I cupped a handful of my mother's river and held it over her box of ashes. "Mommy," I said as the water dribbled through my fingers. "Omoni, please drink. Share this meal with me, a sip to know how much I love you."
>
> I opened my mother's box, sprinkled her ashes over the water. I held my fingers under the slow fall of ash, sifting, letting it coat my hand. I touched my fingers to my lips. "Your body in mine," I told my mother, "so you will always be with me, even when your spirit finds its way home. To Korea. To Sulsulham. And across the river of heaven to the Seven Sisters." (212)

As Kun Jong Lee points out, "Incorporation is fantasized as a kind of eucharist in which the remains of the loved one are transubstantiated into food and drink that bind the dead to and inside of the living" (290). Through the incorporation with her mother's ashes, Beccah narrates, "Your body in mine" (Keller, *Comfort* 212). This incorporation or

melancholic identification means that Beccah denies her mother's death and allows her to live inside herself. As Induk is dead but not entirely dead to Akiko through their melancholic identification, Akiko lives as the lost but not entirely lost love object in Beccah through their melancholic or Eucharistic identification. Taking her mother deep inside her self, Beccah also accepts legacies and inheritances of her mother and foremothers, and these transmitted genealogies and histories open up a new space where Beccah comes to know about herself as well as her mother.

The ending of *Comfort Woman* also symbolizes the identification and reconciliation between Akiko and Beccah. On the night she sprinkles her mother's ashes, Beccah dreams:

> Later that night, I stepped into water again. In my dreams, I swam a deep river, trying to reach the far shore, where my mother danced around a ribbon of red. I swam for hours, for weeks, for years, and when I became too tired to swim any longer, I felt the pull on my legs. I struggled, flailing week kicks, but when I turned and saw that it was my mother hanging on to me, I yielded. I opened my mouth to drown, expecting to suck in heavy water, but instead I breathed in air, clear and blue. Instead of ocean, I swam through sky, higher and higher, until, dizzy with the freedom of light and air. I looked down to see a thin blue river of light spiraling down to earth, where I lay sleeping in bed, coiled tight around a small seed planted by my mother, waiting to be born. (213)

Through her reconciliation with her mother, Beccah is now able to swim in the river and better listen to what it speaks, unacknowledged memories and stories of her mother and

ancestors. While Akiko makes a balance between the spiritual and the material worlds because of Beccah, Beccah is now introduced to the world of genealogies and histories through the spiritual guide of her mother. In this sense, this ending is not a regressive return to the nonverbal or pre-Oedipal relationship between mother and daughter as Silvia Schultermandl reads (77-78). Rather, the metaphor of Beccah's waiting to be born in her mother's womb can be read in terms of her self-awareness of who she is, what composes her, and where she belongs. This sense of being rooted and home is what Akiko has been deprived of throughout her life and therefore wants to secure for her daughter, Beccah. And Beccah's understanding of her roots and origins will help her reshape her identity as a Korean American in Hawaii.

In her shamanic trances, Akiko sings the comfort women's names in order not to forget them. The most important thing nowadays for the surviving comfort women is to remember them and prevent them from disappearing into the oblivious history. The surviving comfort women are now getting older, and many of the witnesses have died since their testimonies. The Japanese government, who has stubbornly denied their responsibility in the comfort system, might expect the last witness to pass away. The comfort women issue, however, will be alive and circulate in many ways, and one of the ways is through literature about the issue.[14] In an interview by Robert Birnbaum, Keller says:

> While I was working on the novel [*Comfort Woman*], I'd type in "comfort women" into a search engine and come up with Martha Stewart articles

[14] The comfort women issue is also explored in fiction such as *A Gesture Life* by Chang-Rae Lee and *A Gift of the Emperor* by Therese S. Park.

> about how to make the home more comfortable. When I came back from my book tour, I could find actual articles about comfort women and my book. You know we all wonder what effect any of our written words can have on the real world, so for me, it was incredible to be tied that whole history and growing awareness.

To write about the issue is to infuse life into these women's genealogies, and their genealogical narratives will intervene in the historical description of comfort women. The interventionist and revisionist role is internally represented in Keller's *Comfort Woman* as Beccah, a descendant of the comfort women, writes and acknowledges her mother's true self and histories and mourns the loss of her mother. The act of writing is not only an activism but also a device to mourn and remember. Therefore, through writing about comfort women and circulating the writings, this chapter contributes to mourning and remembering comfort women and helping the comfort women issue flow and cross from reader to reader like the river imagery in Keller's novel.

**Chapter 6. Silence, Traumatic Memories, and History**

The genealogy of silence in feminist scholarship has its roots in Tillie Olsen's talk, "Silences in Literature," given at the Radcliffe Institute in 1962 and later published by *Harper's Magazine* in 1965. Examining "unnatural silences" and the impediments "of what struggles to come to being" (6) such as economic struggle, social censorship, lack of education, and distraction posed by marriage and domestic chores, Olsen shed a new light on the significance of silence as a medium that reflects women's positionality in economic, social, and political structures. Since then, feminist critics and writers like Marge Percy, Adrienne Rich, Susan Gubar, Sandra Gilbert, Joanna Russ, Audre Lorde, Elizabeth Meese, and Patricia Yeager have explored silence in relation to the social, cultural, and psychological obstacles that impede women's creative activity (Hedges and Fishkin 4). According to Elaine Hedges and Shelley Fisher Fishkin, it is not until the mid-1980s that the study of silence generates a new facet of its critical perspective, under the influence of poststructuralism, by turning its focal point from investigating external obstacles to women's writing to exploring silences that "might reveal reticences culturally imposed upon women, the workings of a repressed ideology, or alternatively, women's deployment of silence as a form of resistance to the dominant discourse" (5).

At the dawn of feminist scholarship, it was African American, Asian American, Native American, and Latino/a and Chicano/a, feminist critics who emphasized the importance of "breaking silence" and "coming to voice." Understanding silence as a direct consequence of suppression and thus as a barometer for women's oppression, they are grounded on the binary opposition of speech and silence. As shown in other pairs such as activity/passivity, sun/moon, culture/nature, day/night, father/mother,

logos/pathos, and man/woman (Cixous 63), the binarism in Western culture is intrinsic with violent hierarchy and valorizes one term of the oppositional pairs over the other. Patti Duncan explains, "Invisibility, loss, absence, repression, oppression, the unspoken, the unknown—these concepts continue to be equated with silence, while visibility, gain, presence, liberation, and 'truth' are equated with the act of speech itself" (7).

Audre Lorde, having encountered her mortality through breast cancer, exhorts the transformation of silence into language "as an act of self-revelation," although "that always seems fraught with danger" (42). Coping with the sexist notion of silence as "'right speech of womanhood'—the sign of woman's submission to patriarchal authority," bell hooks emphasizes "talking back" and encourages women "[t]o make a speech that compels listeners, one that is heard" (337-8). Speech regarded superior to silence is what women lack in their lives; therefore, many feminists endeavor to give a voice to women in order to liberate them. However, as bell hooks observes, not all speech is heard and thus liberates women from subordination. The censorship and structural oppression that gets more complicated in conjunctions with race, class, and gender, as Kyo Maclear suggests, calls into question the equation of speech with freedom and agency (8).

As Duncan points out, silence standing for repression imposed on women within a patriarchy becomes, along with speech, a recurring theme "among feminist writings and in the writings of people of color in the United States" (8). The silence of Asian Americans has intimate relationships with social, political, and legal constraints and restrictions based on anti-Asian sentiments and racism. Anti-Chinese racism was at its climax when the Chinese Exclusion Act passed in 1882, three decades after Chinese

immigration had begun, thus prohibiting Chinese laborers from entering the United States. In the case of Japanese immigrants, a "Gentlemen's Agreement" between Japan and the United States in 1908 made a halt in emigration from Japan.[1] The most notable juridical practices of anti-Japanese racism include the school segregation of Japanese children in San Francisco in 1906.[2] The Alien Land Law in 1913 prohibited Japanese aliens from purchasing land, and the Immigration Act of 1924 forbade further immigration from Japan.

Partly constructed as a consequence of the historical oppression, the silence of Asian Americans is caught in a vicious circle, reinforcing their stereotypes and the ways Asian Americans are seen and treated as the Other in American society. Mitsuye Yamada in "Invisibility is an Unnatural Disaster" explains how she realizes her quietness has contributed to the stereotyping of Asian Americans. Through the responses and reactions she got from her colleagues and the administrators when she filed a grievance for the violation of her rights as a teacher, she states: "They all seemed to exclaim, 'We don't understand this; this is so uncharacteristic of her; she seemed such a nice person, so polite, so obedient, so non-troublemaking'" (36). The only way to act against this homogenizing stereotyping, according to Yamada, is "to make ourselves more visible by

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[1] According to Ng, the Gentlemen's Agreement was based on negotiation between Japan and the United States:

> At the request of the U. S. government, Japan stopped issuing passports to laborers. In return, Congress never passed any formal exclusion law directed toward the Japanese. The immigration agreement was a diplomatic relations side step between the two countries. The U. S. government recognized Japan's increasing military power in Asia, and saved Japan from any social and diplomatic embarrassment by not having an exclusion law toward its citizens. (3)

[2] The San Francisco School Board ordered the segregation against ninety-three Japanese American students in 1906 and rescinded the order in 1907 by the order of President Theodore Roosevelt.

speaking out on the condition of our sex and race and on certain political issues which concern us" ("Asian Pacific" 71).

While acknowledging the role of silence in intensifying the stereotypes of Asian Americans, King-Kok Cheung in *Articulate Silences*, unlike the previous critics, does not remain at the analysis of silence in terms of "patriarchal constructions of womanhood" (3) but explore other functions and meanings of silence in the context of specific cultures and experiences. Focusing on the implications of silence represented in the fiction of Asian American women writers such as Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Joy Kogawa, Cheung offers a new insight on "the study of textual silences" that has been initiated since the mid-1980s (Hedge and Fishkin 5). Cheung is the first critic in Asian American studies who focuses on the reading of the silence of Asian American women with respect to their social, historical, and cultural specificities, beyond logocentric perspectives.  Patti Duncan's *Tell This Silence* is another book project that investigates implicit meanings of silence in Asian American Literature and how silence becomes "a form of discourse and . . . a means of resistance to hegemonic power" (2). Both Cheung and Duncan challenge the long-standing assumptions of speech and silence in the Western binary philosophy and reconceptualize silence in Asian American literature by investigating diverse implications of silence as well as its subversive and resistant power.

My dissertation extends the scholarship of silence in Asian American literature with a focus on the psychological implications of the collective silence of Asian Americans, especially those who are caught in the memories of traumatic, historical catastrophes such as war, colonialism, forced displacement and dislocation by the Japanese internment, exile, and systemic rape of women during World War II. Reading

the prose fiction of the Japanese American/Canadian women writers (Monica Sone, Hisaye Yamamoto, and Joy Kogawa) and Korean American women writers (Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Nora Okja Keller), I approach the silence in their trauma narratives as a crypt or tomb consciously or unconsciously constructed in the psyche of the victims of the historical violence. The trauma narratives of the five women writers revolve around historically pivotal events that in turn relate the survival of the victims, not through their conscious recognition but through their bodily wounds and psychical scars. Their fiction is mostly centered on unraveled stories that are captured and dammed in the silence of the subjects who are once in the heart of the historical turmoil. Their stories entombed in silence are their "unclaimed experiences" that happened in the past but were not recognized as they occurred (Caruth) and "poisonous knowledge" that "makes [the] past encircle the present as atmosphere" and therefore makes us engage with the knowledge not by our dry intellectual knowing but by sharing the suffering emerging from the past (Das, "The Act" 221). As "the return of the repressed," to borrow Sigmund Freud's term, the stories include "a trace, a web, a palimpsest, a rune, a disguise . . . of what has not or cannot be spoken directly because of the external and internalized censors [not only] of patriarchal social order" (Friedman, "The Return" 142) [3] but also of cultural, racial, and national ideologies of the given society.

The silence and traumatic memories of the displaced, dislocated subjects implicitly signify the melancholic state of the subjects who have love objects lost from reality but alive in their silence and traumatic memories. In this dissertation, I have used

[3] Susan Stanford Friedman in "The Return of the Repressed in Women's Narrative" reads women's writing as "the return of the repressed" and "the repressed of history." However, her examination of women's writing does not account for various forms of censorship other than the patriarchal social order.

melancholia as a major theoretical tool with which I investigate the psychical space of the Asian American subjects. Through tracing the psychological trajectories of the trauma narratives, I have explored how the Asian American subjects have dealt with their unfulfilled ideals of assimilation, objectified and thus denigrated female bodies, and homelands and mother tongues lost due to the tyranny of colonial powers and the circumstance of immigration. These unfulfilled, devalued, and unresolved wishes, ideals, and desires are all reserved as the remnants or the residue of their traumatic past and sealed with their conscious or unconscious silence.

From their entombed silence emerge ghosts of the traumatic memories that have not entered history in spite of their psychological or physical deaths and sufferings. According to Avery F. Gordon, the ghost as "a social figure" is "one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us" through haunting (8). The ghost stories haunting from the trauma narratives lead us to know "what has happened or is happening" (8). At the center of the haunting stories in the five texts I discuss are the marginalized subjects' lives, which are unrecorded and unacknowledged as they go through the historical oppression. Therefore, the haunting of their life stories plays a crucial role in bringing testimony to their unrecognized lives and existences. According to Shoshana Felman, testimony "composed of bits and pieces of memory" is "a discursive *practice*" (5). She writes, "As a performative speech act, testimony in effect addresses what in history is *action* that exceeds any substantialized significance, and what in happenings is *impact* that dynamically explodes any conceptual reifications and any constative delimitations" (5).

The haunting of the traumatic memories has a testimonial power within the historiography of the society where the subjects are situated. By shedding light on new phases of the same history, the trauma narratives in each of the five women's works provide the marginalized subjects' life stories and attempt to reconstitute history with their alternative narratives. As Caruth writes, the repetition or haunting of traumatic memory is aimed "not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting *history* to arise where *immediate understanding* may not" (11). Therefore, assimilating and acknowledging the unclaimed experiences of the diasporic, transnational subjects in the five works is a particular way of transmitting histories from one generation to the next generation, as well as reconstituting the official, dominant historiography.

Even though I have mainly focused on the transmission of history through the first generation mothers and the second generation daughters in these texts, we can easily conjecture that the intensity of the traumatic memories will be thinned off as the generations go on. The vivid traumatic memories the first generation of immigrants live with will lose their luster as they are inherited to the third and fourth generations. The widening emotional and temporal distance from the historical events may demand different needs and perspectives in investigating and remembering their forefathers' and foremothers' histories. However, what is unchanged is, as Pierre Nora writes, that "The passage from memory to history has required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history" (15). Just as the daughters in the texts redefine their own positionality with the transmitted and inherited memories, their

descendants will also become their own historians through “the task of remembering” (15) and reconciliation.

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