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The Matrilineal Specter in Kingston's Woman Warrior and Keller's Comfort Woman

Theodore V. Burns
Bates College, tburns@bates.edu

The Matrilineal Specter in Kingston's *Woman Warrior* and Keller's *Comfort Woman*

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By

Ted Burns

Honors Thesis Panel:

Professor Tiffany Salter, Advisor

Professor Therí Pickens

Professor Nathan Faries

Professor Belinda Kong, Bowdoin College

Dedication

This is dedicated Joanna Sturiano. I am indebted to your ability to pique my interest.

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There’s always justice

And when justice is gone

There’s always force

And when force is gone

There’s always Mom.

Hi Mom!

–Laurie Anderson, *O Superman (For Massenet)*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There are experiences, entire lives, that come and go in this world that are nearly impossible to describe because of how unbelievable and confounding they are. These moments can only be understood with the passage of time, as their startling newness in the moment is inexplicable without context or precedent. Isolation presents these challenges and all their paradoxical potential. What does it mean to be in one place but feel like you belong in another? Or to feel like you are in a place you do belong (if not necessarily accepted), but are told you actually belong elsewhere. What if this confusion of identities *was* your identity?

These questions, among others, are what many second-generation immigrant narratives are concerned with. Born in one world but surrounded by the traditions and memories of another, alliances are fraught and confusing. Two such narratives are *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* by Maxine Hong Kingston and *Comfort Woman* by Nora Okja Keller. Both follow young Asian-American women (Chinese-American in Kingston's text, Korean-American in Keller's) who are the first of their family to be born in America, their mothers the first in their family to emigrate from their home.

The Woman Warrior was published in 1975; it was Kingston's first novel. The book intentionally confounds the line between memoir and novel over the course of five chapters that follow non-chronological episodes across the narrator's young life and her mother's, and, most importantly, their relationship. Over the course of the novel, the reader sees the tensions that arise between two generations, the mother with memories of China and the daughter only with impressions of it. The narrative focus will shift to one or the other for extended sections of text, so while the narrator is always the one speaking, the story is both of theirs. Ghosts infest the text in many different forms; the first chapter is titled after the ghost that haunts the narrator

throughout the novel, "No Name Woman." This is the most important ghost of the novel; she is a maternal aunt of the narrator who committed suicide in light of being excommunicated from her village for committing adultery. The third chapter, "Shaman," is largely devoted to experiences Brave Orchid had with ghosts when she was in medical school and the ones she sees all around her in America.

Comfort Woman was published in 1997; it was Keller's first novel, as well. It follows Akiko and Beccah, mother and daughter, respectively, the former being a first-generation Korean immigrant and former comfort woman. The chapters switch back and forth from being called either "Akiko" (who later goes by "Soon Hyo") or "Beccah." In the beginning, Beccah tells the reader that her mother is dead; the novel proceeds by oscilating between the present, Beccah's memories of her childhood, and Akiko's memories of her time in the Japanese camps during the Korean occupation. Beccah goes over her troubled childhood worrying for Akiko, who regularly goes into trances she claims are spirits speaking through her. Beccah grows up in these extreme circumstances without ever knowing, until the end, that her mother was a comfort woman. The most important specter in this text is Induk, the spirit that speaks to Akiko most frequently and guides her through most of her life. All spirits in the text are channeled through Akiko; she sees and speaks to them in the camp and until the day she dies, with Beccah as her only witness.

It was important to interact with the academic work that already exists on these intersecting topics, and I started by going over the work that had already been done regarding *The Woman Warrior* and its intersections with the topic of ghosts and mother-daughter relationships, among other relevant ideas. In her essay, "Authorizing Female Voice and Experience: Ghosts and Spirits in Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Allende's *The House of the Spirits*," Ruth Y. Jenkins explores the "significant connections between the supernatural and

female voice" in the two texts (61). Jenkins argues that these connections illuminate the "previously unaddressed place of female experience in such fantastic narratives written by women" (62). Jenkins argues that the presence of the supernatural accomplishes many things, but paramount among them is for how it "redefines and reinscribes female experience [as birth-giving and word-avenging warriors]…while weaving it into generations of female history" (66).

In "Cultural Translation and the Exorcist: A Reading of Kingston's and Tan's "Ghost Stories"," Ken-Fang Lee is interested in the forming of "a cultural identity for those who struggle between two cultures and/or languages…and how ghosts exemplify their "in-between" situation," arguing that "ghosts are exorcised by writing and translating the past to construct their future" (106). The simultaneity of these binary differences that embody ghosts becomes analogous to the themes of displacement that run through both novels.

Wendy Ho investigates the unique formal qualities of the narrative in *The Woman Warrior* that arise from its central mother-daughter relationship in the chapter "Desire in the Desert: The Self Talking-Story in Maxine Hong Kingston's Mother-Daughter Stories" from *In Her Mother's House: The Politics of Asian American Mother-Daughter Writing*. Ho sees the form that the narrative takes, the "self talking-story," unveils "complicated sites of conflict as well as opportunity for connection and alliance as women" (118). She argues that *The Woman Warrior* does not see mothers and daughters as "distinct, autonomous individuals," but instead creates an ""I" [that] is both self and Other, intimately linked to and separated from the (m)other in the formation of its own distinct talk-story narrative," and throughout this process allows the narrator to "[excavate and resurrect] the fragments of self and desire that have been lost or silenced" (118). There are many parallels in the rhetoric used to discuss diasporic mother-daughter relationships, ghosts, and the unique narratological circumstances that arise from each,

particularly how Ho discusses the dissolving of self and Other in the mother-daughter relationship.

Sheryl A. Mylan's chapter in the collection, *Women of Color: Mother-Daughter Relationships in 20th-Century Literature*, is titled, "The Mother as Other: Orientalism in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*." The piece takes an accusatory tone as Mylan sets out to argue that Kingston's narrator, "constructs a framework by which to judge [her mother]; her standards for judging her mother are, if not manifest Orientalism, at least latent or unconscious demonstrations of Orientalism" (133). But Mylan doesn't simply villainize Kingston, and later begins to explicate the reasoning or purpose behind the narrator's precieved Orientalism: Because of Maxine's need for personal autonomy, she aligns herself with Western culture, even though the West will always stigmatize her on the basis of race…She sees [her mother] as Other to carve out some psychic space for herself, both as a young Chinese American woman and as an artist" (135). I have done my best to not fall into any of the traps of Orientalism in the course of this essay, instead working to dissect the systems of knowledge that comprise it.

The essay "Ghosts of Camptown" by Grace Kyungwon Hong doesn't concern itself directly the two novels in question, but its considerations of ghosts in the memoir *Memories of My Ghost Brother* (1996) by Heinz Insu Fenkl is certainly relevant to my own. Early on, Hong claims that "the ghost…represents the unburied lingering effect of the everyday and pervasive experience of exacerbated death, or in other words, death that is not natural but is socially engineered, as a consequence of colonial and neocolonial violence" (49). Hong's interest lies in the form of the novel, pointing to the "embedding [of] fantastical stories within [a] narrative structure" when most of the content, which often deals with the cruelties inflicted on sex workers, in the novel is so incongruous (49). Hong establishes a metaphor that she then works

with for the rest of the piece, that the presence of ghosts "and their contradictory juridical states" are "exemplary, rather than anomalous, within contemporary geopolitics" (50). This essay continues, and largely agrees the conversation created by other pieces I've referenced, the conversation being the post-colonial thought that can be applied to the phenomenon of ghosts and specters, as well as matters of the oppressed feminine body.

The book *Death in American Texts and Performances: Corpses, Ghosts, and the Reanimated Dead* features a chapter, by Belinda Kong, called "When Ghosts Dream: Immigrant Desire in Samantha Chang's *Hunger*." The chapter, however, brings up *The Woman Warrior* explicitly and features a discussion of ghosts, "[forms] of remembering," and the roles of mothers in Asian American women's writing, making it an indispensable source for my own ideas (99). Her central claim is that a "spectral dreaming" can be regarded as a form of remembering that conflates past and future, all taking place within a space of insatiable desire (99). The act of remembering and dreams are two themes essential to *Comfort Woman*, the only places where mother and daughter can meet in the novel.

In Silvia Schultermandl's piece "Writing Rape, Trauma, and Transnationality onto the Female Body: Matrilineal Em-body-ment in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*," they focus on Akiko and Beccah's mother-daughter relationship, arguing that "despite the fact that the mother remains, at times, the cultural "Other"…a shared experience of rape and trauma…facilitates a means of understanding between mother and daughter and serves as a point of contact for the building of transnational feminist solidarity between women of different cultures" (71). Schultermandl frames her argument within the "debate of the movement for redress for comfort women," using that context to make insights about a "both/and narrative of the oppressed female body," as well as the "different aspects of power/privilege that play out in various cultural

productions" (79). Much of her argument is interested in the inherent politics and narratives that come with come with considerations of the female body and the sexual violence that can be inflicted upon it.

"The Violated Female Body as Nation: Cultural, Familial, and Spiritual Identity in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*" by Paula Ruth Gilbert is another essay that considers the female body in the novel as a metaphorical site for the larger political issue of real-world comfort women's rights. Gilbert analyzes the novel "within a framework of the representation of gendered violence" to come to conclusions about the "history of Korean comfort women/rape camps promulgated by the Japanese military during World War II" (487). This perspective of looking back at the incident aligns with the perspective of Beccah in *Comfort Woman*, who is eventually tasked with the duty of remembering the comfort women.

In "Re-Visioning Gendered Folktales in Novels by Mia Yun and Nora Okja Keller," author Sung-Ae Lee "considers three novels which relate traditional stories to gender issues…[and] challenge the inherited cultural and literary tradition and suggest ways in which history and tradition can be reread" (131). On the continuum of "gender issues," Lee is particularly interested in mother-daughter relationships, which is relevant to my own needs. The narrative technique of telling a story via re-telling is present and prominent in *The Woman Warrior* and *Comfort Woman*.

Jodi Kim is interested in the recitation of history in her article, "Haunting History: Violence, Trauma, and the Politics of Memory in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*," and it is this question that anchors her analysis of *Comfort Woman*: "How does one engage in such a recitation if the violently traumatic nature of the event exceeds the limits posed by linguistic attempts to represent it?" (61) She argues that Keller "[(re)inserts] into our collective memory"

the legacy of the comfort women in occupied Korea during World War II, and "complicates the very revision [Keller] imagines by employing a narrative strategy in which the trauma ultimately escapes or refuses adequate representation or resolution" (62). Kim's concern with memory and haunting makes it relevant to my own pursuits.

Among my theoretical sources was "Asian American Literature and the Resistances of Theory" by Christopher Lee. In the essay, he considers the implications, complications, and contradictions that come with applying theory, particularly post-structuralist theory by white Euro-Americans, to Asian American narratives. In his words, he "[focuses] on how theory operates at the disjunctures among the aesthetic (Asian American literature), the academic (Asian American literary studies), and the political (Asian American activism)" (22). It is the first two that suit my purposes best for my thesis. This text acts as a useful curation of a wide range of writings on Asian American literature that consider everything from "the problem of form" (24) to "social history" (26).

David Palumbo-Liu discusses the inadequacies of looking at ethnic literature through a postcolonial or postmodern lens in his essay, "The Ethnic as "Post-": Reading *Reading the Literatures of Asian America.*" He calls these theories "unable to address ethnicity and race and their relationships to cultural production," and constructing his essay around "[addressing] three essays that represent the problem of reconstructing ethnic literatures through the inadequately critical use of postcolonial and postmodern discourse" (161, 162).

In "Feminist and Ethnic Literary Theories in Asian American Literature," Shirley Geok-lin Lim uses the site of literature written by Asian American women to discuss the tension between the goals and voices associated with feminist and ethnic studies. In her words, the goal of the essay is to "unpack textual instances where ethnic and feminist issues have intersected, to

analyze how their diverging emphases necessitate an ethnic-cultural nuancing of conventional Euro-American feminist positions on gender/power relations and a feminist critique of ethnic-specific identity" (572).

Another piece that compiles many sources under one intellectual umbrella is "Gender and Sexuality in Asian American Literature" by Sauling C. Wong and Jeffrey J. Santa Ana. The goal of the essay is stated explicitly at the very top: "This essay aims to provide an overview of representations of gender and sexuality in Asian American literature and of the developments in Asian American cultural criticism that have made the study of such representations possible" (171). This work's primary asset is its substantial bibliography and the summaries provided of its content.

In my study of the specters in *The Woman Warrior* and *Comfort* Woman, I have turned to Jacques Derrida's lecture, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. To Derrida, the specter is meant to embody many contradictions within a single essence. A few examples: A specter is one who is dead, but has been reanimated. It is the image of a person who has passed (is past), but also a vision of the future, of our fate after death. It is only there because something is not, anymore.

There are a few terms in Derrida's lecture, and from his vocabulary generally, that require some explication, as I will be using them throughout this analysis. The first is "inheritance." Derrida calls inheritance an injunction, an order to "reaffirm" its existence, for "by choosing…[the injunction] always says 'choose and decide among what you inherit'" (16). It "[calls] for and at the same time [defies] interpretation," and demands that the "critical choice called for by any reaffirmation of the inheritance is…the condition of finitude" (16). Inheritance does not need to be material–it can be anything that is passed down. The meaning or substance of

an inheritance is decided completely by the inheritor, and to reach that meaning is a task of interpretation, of creating a single thing out of an infinite possibility of things.

It is important to understand that, to Derrida, the specter is emblematic of an anxiety for the repercussions associated with a manifestation history, and to discuss any specter is to mourn, "to ontologize remains, to make them present, in the first place by *identifying* the bodily remains and by *localizing* the dead" (9, emphasis by the author). To discuss the specter is to attempt to identify and locate it, tasks contrary to its essence but necessary to attempt if its function and effect is to be understood. In this text, Derrida uses the specter as a metaphor and uses the first line of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* as a jumping-off point to discuss what it means for a specter of an idea from the past to manifest in the present, a manifestation of the fear of history: "A specter is haunting Europe–the specter of Communism" (Quoted on 2).

Another important term that needs to be touched on is the "trace." The trace is best described by imagining a vapor trail: It is a mark that an airplane was once there but is no longer, and most importantly, is a thing in and of itself, a presence of non-presence. As Derrida puts it, "'No element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present'" (Derrida, quoted by Lucy, 144). The last term to go over is justice. Justice exists in opposition to law, and, to Derrida, it is important to understand the two terms as different from each other. Law is the institutionalization of justice that is presumed, falsely, to be objective and "true." To presume that courtroom decisions are just simply by their finality, as Lucy writes, "points to a distinction between the absolute undeconstructability of justice, on the one hand, and the actual deconstructability of law on the other" (63). The finality of the decision of law does not create justice because there is never a way to reach a definite ruling; it ignores the inherent subjectivity of how people judge each other's rightness. Therefore, society can institutionalize *a*

justice, but it could only be an interpretation because true justice would ideally be reached through a constant state of revision.

In my analysis, I will address the presence of ghosts in *The Woman Warrior* and *Comfort Woman*, both of which, in different ways, are stand-ins for the fear of history and generation, of the consequences of oppression and dislocation. In *The Woman Warrior*, the No Name Woman represents the anxiety of being displaced outside one's society, which, in the novel, is the circumstance of an immigrant family inhabiting a Chinese culture in America. The result of this anxiety manifests in Brave Orchid, who perpetuates patriarchal traditions taught by her village in order to be rid of the specter. In *Comfort Woman*, Induk represents the spectral nature of the comfort woman in the present day, their survival and present existence, being an ontological denial of the dominant narrative created by the conquerors.

In her text, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Avery Gordon discusses the specter more specifically in the context of social justice. She writes: "Haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with (slavery, for instance) or when their oppressive nature is denied (as in free labor or national security)" (xvi). Gordon argues that the specter is a visible mark of something that tries to be invisible, calling to mind Derrida's idea of the trace. She goes on:

> Haunting is not the same as being exploited, traumatized, or oppressed, although it usually involves these experiences or is produced by them. What's distinctive about haunting is that it is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence

> is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely…But haunting, unlike trauma, is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done. (xvi)

Gordon's argument for the inherent-ness of a "something-to-be-done" to the specter is particularly intriguing, as it suggests that all hauntings represent a moment whose time has come, a thing that is literally impossible to ignore. This provides a certain thrust to my own pursuits in the analysis of these novels, as it firmly placed me into the functions of the specter, as my job here is explicate how what the specters do has been done.

Both the No Name Woman and Induk are inherently female, and in both novels, the mother-daughter relationship is a theme paramount to all others. It is these relationships that provide and inform the conflict in the novel. In "Fluid Boundaries: The Mother-Daughter Story, the Story-Reader Matrix," Joan Lidoff investigates how the psychosocial relationship between mothers and daughters manifests itself in narrative. She defines the relationship between mothers and daughter as a fluid one, existing in a more complex state than self and Other. Lidoff acknowledges different sides of this discussion, some of which promote "flexible ego boundaries" while others "caution against identifying the feminine self with the fused self…[to the detriment of] mastery, desire, and ambition."

Lidoff herself is more interested in "[undoing] this very dichotomy" (402). She introduces her prevailing theory, which is "mutual empathy," a process wherein one gives up some individuality to feel with the other, while simultaneously retaining an awareness of oneself throughout the process of observing the other (403). Her point is that "this mutual empathy informs the mother-daughter story, a story in which mother and daughter take turns being figure and ground to one another, identifying with one another, and experiencing themselves" (403).

Mutual empathy provides a lens that complicates and enhances a reading of *The Woman Warrior* and *Comfort Woman*, for the intertwining narratives of both novels suggest a likeness of identity and voice. For instance, in *The Woman Warrior*, "The No Name Woman" is a story told by Brave Orchid to her daughter, thus inherently becoming a story the narrator is telling the reader. In *Comfort Woman*, chapters switch off between being told from either Beccah or Akiko's point of view at random, a feature that enhances the two voices' sameness. It would be naïve, however, to assume that either mother or daughter is ignorant of this phenomenon, or to think that it is less than purposeful, for it is analogous to the tradition of talking-story, a cultural tent-pole that is present in both novels. Talking-story is an integral tradition to Asian-American communities in Hawaii, where *Comfort Woman* takes place and where Kingston spent a significant amount of time writing *The Woman Warrior*. It is a process of sharing, altering, and learning from circulating stories. It is meant to be elaborated on, altered, and passed on by the recipient, and that is exactly what goes on in these texts.

Mutual empathy is achieved by the stories these women tell, and the stories represent a moment of simultaneity shared between mother and daughter that encapsulates seeming binaries like past and future, self and other. This circumstance is ripe for a discussion on the specter, a being that also binds binaries together. Like how mother-daughter narratives overlap and inherently address each other, the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed, the it and the trace, could also be called a mutual empathy, for they are all symbiotic systems, though, admittedly, with varying degrees of desire and intention given to the symbiosis. Unlike the mother-daughter relationship, there is no desire between the oppressor and the oppressed to understand each other. In fact, what exists between them is the exact opposite, the fear of history. It would be appropriate to call this "mutual fear."

This thesis is composed of two chapters, the first analyzing *The Woman Warrior* and the second analyzing *Comfort Woman*. Both will proceed in a similar fashion as I investigate the work the specters and mother-daughter relationships are doing on the text. I will parse out the origins of and tensions created by the similar-but-different specters that haunt mother and daughter in *The Woman Warrior*, identifying systems of abusive power that travel across generations and continents. The haunting in *Comfort Woman* arises as a manifestation and confrontation of the historical memory of genocide, and I will investigate how Keller manipulates this metaphor to make an argument about the consideration of comfort women in the current day.

CHAPTER 2: THE NO NAME WOMAN

There is a ghost at the beginning of *The Woman Warrior*. At the beginning of *The Woman Warrior*, there is a ghost. It is always already there. It is the ghost that haunts these memoirs of a girl who grew up among ghosts. But there are no ghosts in *The Woman Warrior* if there is not the No Name Woman, the source from which all other ghosts in the text are born. The No Name Woman exists because she is not allowed to. She is named for the sake of un-naming her. Kingston's work opens with an assertion that the No Name Woman cannot exist: "'You must not tell anyone,' my mother said, 'what I am about to tell you. In China your father had a sister who killed herself. She jumped into the family well. We say that your father has all brothers because it as if she had never been born'" (3). The No Name Woman is never born, but is instead reborn by being remembered for her given status of never-have-been. She is not allowed to be known, to be referred to; a symbol of transgression. We weren't supposed to be

reading this at all, a text that refutes its own non-existence, but by doing so, we are conjuring the specter.

What conjures the No Name Woman in the text? What elicits Brave Orchid to pass its haunting to her daughter? The No Name Woman is family; she is the narrator's aunt, a crucial characteristic that informs the specter's function in the text. The genealogical connection invites thoughts of inheritance, the task set out before the narrator at the beginning of *The Woman Warrior*. She inherits the No Name Woman (she is perhaps the first to do so) and must make the critical choice of interpreting her story.

The No Name Woman could only ever be female. She is conjured into *The Woman Warrior* by a warning Brave Orchid gives the narrator: "Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don't humiliate us. You wouldn't like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. The villagers are watchful" (5). In this chapter, and from this point on when I am referring to that text, I will be using the word "village" as a signifier of any given society and the hegemonic values found within. The village acts as a metaphor in the novel (though there is also a literal village) the same way it will act in my analysis.

Menstruation signals or triggers the No Name Woman to appear, and vice versa. Using the word "forgotten" is a tactful choice that disperses the blame of this punishment, the "real" punishment, according to the narrator**:** "The real punishment was not the raid swiftly inflicted by the villagers, but the family's deliberately forgetting her…she [will] suffer forever, even after death" (16). "Erased" is more appropriate because it is more honest about the intent, while "forget" tries to naturalize an unnatural effort. "Erased" makes no confusion about being a clear and distinct effort to remove something. The word is more apt in speaking to the specificity of

the punishment of being like you had never been born, a state that could, incorrectly, be conflated with dying. Quite simply, when you die your history is still intact, but if you were never born you were never there (or here) at all. But to intend to forget is a bit of a paradox, calling to mind the proverb, "A watched pot never boils." You'll never forget something you have to remind yourself to forget, and the No Name Woman is never more present than when her existence is being profusely denied, for as Derrida says, "Hegemony still organizes the repression and thus the confirmation of a haunting" (37).

Ruth Y. Jenkins, in her article, "Authorizing Female Voice and Experience: Ghosts and Spirits in Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Allende's *The House of the Spirits*," explores the gendered role of the specter in the text, writing that both texts "explore the authority provided by ghosts and spirits to articulate an alternative story from those endorsed by patriarchal cultures. [by] reclaiming suppressed histories like that of the 'no name woman'…both authors narrate and preserve authentic female experience" (61-62). When discussing Gordon, I elaborated on her definition of haunting to include the narrator's role in interpreting the haunting; Jenkins has something to include in this regard: "Paradoxically, [Kingston and Allende] gain authority to author history by translating the earlier silences into narratives of female experiences" (64). The narrator will translate the experience of her aunt, the No Name Woman, into her own narrative in the present.

Brave Orchid's account of the event that unnamed and erased the narrator's aunt is curt and action-driven. The catalyst is a moment when men become absent, where their not being there creates the condition and the context: "In 1924 just a few days after our village celebrated seventeen hurry-up weddings–to make sure that every young man who went 'out on the road' would responsibly come home–your father and his brothers and your aunt's new husband sailed

for America, the Gold Mountain'" (3). The men have left, leaving the women. Their existence only becomes visible in the presence of the men's absence, and it is a harsh, scrutinized existence. To do anything of note means that they have done something wrong. Much to the village's chagrin, women are essential to its preservation, but according to its interpretation of law and justice, they are also the only ones that could break it, for blame is always located onto them. In the case of the narrator's aunt, her pregnancy is perceived as something that has happened *to* her, reducing her participation in her own pregnancy; this incurs the wrath of her village:

> 'I remember looking at your aunt one day…I had not noticed before that she had such a protruding melon of a stomach. But I did not think, 'She's pregnant,' until she began to look like other pregnant women, her shirt pulling and the white tops of her black pants showing. She could not have been pregnant, you see, because her husband had been gone for years. No one said anything.' (3)

How Brave Orchid phrases the realization of her aunt's pregnancy is akin to the efforts of making it so that someone had "never been born." It is not a denial, for that term is too impassive (like forgetting), and it implies that the denier has an alternate belief or reality that they have adopted instead of what should be acknowledged as true. When Brave Orchid says that "she could not have been pregnant," she is not only saying that her sister was not allowed to be pregnant, but, also, that she *will not* have been pregnant, a prophecy of erasure that afflicts both past and future; to erase is to return to what was there and to make it what it will be. What is left, and has also always been there, is the specter, the No Name Woman.

The narrator's aunt has transgressed against her husband but, in a vastly more significant capacity, her family and her village. So now, in the present, she is not. If she is pregnant, she is not. If she has a name, it is that she has no name. It is, of course, not insignificant that it is a pregnancy that is the catalyst for the aunt's transgression. Pregnancy's role as a transgression in this context enacts a strange disconnect between sign and action that recalls the specter: The aunt is only pregnant because a man was *there* and because her husband was *not there*, but the man will remain anonymous and bear none of the punishment. So, the *meaning* of pregnancy falls completely on the aunt, transfiguring it to become a sort of bleak immaculate conception that signals betrayal instead of salvation. Later in the chapter, the narrator remarks that, because of the absence of a man, the child will have "no descent line," begging for purpose (15). This child is an integral part of the specter-ness of the No Name Woman for the fact that it is the purest manifestation of the idea of a meaning being born from the absence of something else (both its mother and father; like the specter itself, this child is an ontological nightmare). The child, synonymous with the No Name Woman, begs for purpose, and this will be the task of the narrator in her interpretation of her inheritance of these specters, for before her intervention, their meaning was to be the threat of meaninglessness.

"She could not have been pregnant" inflicts a non-being, and is a call for the action the village takes on the night the aunt is supposed to give birth. Like white blood cells, the villagers come to inflict their justice: "The village had also been counting. On the night the baby was to be born the villagers raided our house" (3). The villager's punishment is unremarkable, being mostly property damage. They kill the family's stock, throw rocks and mud at the house, go inside the house to destroy material belongings. "'Pig.' 'Ghost.' 'Pig,' they sobbed and scolded while they ruined our house" (5). Brave Orchid dedicates three sentences to the final fate of her

sister-in-law: “Your aunt gave birth in the pigsty that night. The next morning when I went for the water, I found her and the baby plugging up the family well” (5). The imagery here offers an impeccable metaphor for the ramifications of the moment. It is not just a well that is plugged, it’s the *family* well. The death of the aunt and her child has seeped into the source of life for the family, making her forever entwined. Now dead, whatever the aunt “meant” before has been dispersed with her death, and the No Name Woman will take her place.

Why does the village kill the aunt? It is a value it holds so dear so as to murder one of its members who have stepped out of line, a threat that is ever-present as evidenced by the last thing Brave Orchid says to her daughter in recounting the story of her aunt, said to inflict an absolute obedience to silence: “The villagers are watchful” (5). The village is a watchdog composed of fear, an injunction to live looking over your shoulder, and it punishes those who do not live accordingly. So, what does the No Name Woman confound? Kingston is excitingly explicit:

> The frightened villagers, who depended on one another to maintain the real, went to my aunt to show her a personal, physical representation of the break she had made in the ‘roundness.’ Misallying couples snapped off in the future, which was to be embodied in true offspring. The villagers punished her for acting as if she could have a private life, secret and apart from them. (12-13)

The No Name Woman is an open gash in the perfect roundness, the roundness that is reality, the reality that is *them*. It is the reassurance that they will continue to be as they are, “embodied in true offspring,” free of “misallying couples.” Their world is as insulated as it is, for

better or for worse, because it creates a controlled environment. When everyone plays their part, it creates a future they can see themselves in. A "roundness" begins where it ends and then begins again, though if we are to imagine the "roundness" as an act of circling, then each time around will not be exactly the same as the time before it or the time before that. In that way, it is like a family lineage, something that sustains, changes throughout time, but remains familiar. By committing adultery, the aunt has made a "break." Kingston tells us of the village's fear of the break: "Adultery, perhaps only a mistake during good times, became a crime when the village needed food" (13).

In its moment of struggle, the village's core values and needs are heightened and accentuated, so when their justice comes, it is all the more harsh, for the village must maintain itself, make sure that it survives. It will not survive if its members do not believe in its sanctity or if they put themselves first. When the village killed the aunt, it dispersed her meaning and its own as well in its institutionalization of justice, its law. This law will not give justice to the No Name Woman. So, she returns, with help from the narrator, to be for the first time, to interpret the dispersion of the village's justice and grant herself justice. This space of unknowability, of the simultaneity of opposing forces like present/future and here/there, of the interpretation of dispersion, is where the specter, the No Name Woman, lives. It is what the village fears. She signals a without-village, a dispersed future.

No conversation of the No Name Woman would be complete without considering the few moments she has with her newborn child. Here, the narrator describes the aunt's final moments before throwing the two of them into the well:

> "At its birth the two of them had felt the same raw pain of separation, a wound that only the family pressing tight could close. A child with no descent line would not soften her life but only trail behind her, ghost-like, begging for her to give it purpose…Carrying the baby to the well shows loving. Otherwise abandon it. Turn its face into the mud. Mothers who love their children take them along. It was probably a girl; there is some hope of forgiveness for boys" (15).

The specter has its own ghost, though of course it would. The child, more than anything else, is what the No Name Woman means. It is a thing (and non-thing) that is a product made purely as a circumstance of the village's institutionalized justice (law), the mechanisms of both its coming-to-life and death being the death and interpretation of the village's meaning. This, of course, does not mean that the village's meaning ceases to exist. On the contrary, this moment brings the meaning of the village entity into crystal-clear clarity, because up until now, "justice" and "law" were terms that meant the same thing to everybody, but at the same time, not the same thing at all. There was an unspoken understanding that law is law, justice is justice; the true idealization of each. But once these terms are put in juxtaposition of each other, what manifests if what those words will come to mean in their context. The village's justice deemed it right to erase the aunt and her child, but created their trace, their specter, in the process, which has its own meaning.

Whatever this child means, its "purpose," is what the narrator has decided to inherit, where she is to interpret a new justice. When Avery Gordon writes about the presence of the specter in a society, she argues that "what's distinctive about haunting is that it is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very

directly, sometimes more obliquely" (xvi). I would argue that the specter can only make itself known through the acknowledgement then participation of someone on the mortal coil, otherwise the unresolved social violence is, by the decision of those in power, utterly *resolved* social violence. This is what makes the role of the narrator so essential, for she re-opens the case of the specter, resurrecting the narrative of her aunt in order to redirect and resolve it as she sees fit.

Brave Orchid tells the story of her sister-in-law's suicide to preserve the belief that death is a blessing compared to living a life without purpose as ordained by the village. The No Name Woman is what exists in the absence of the village, a trace that represents, when interpreted by its source, a pointlessness by way of purposelessness. Until the moment the narrator makes the critical choice to reinterpret her, the No Name Woman meant an anxiety for the un-chartable future, a potent shame of being ungrateful for the path the village has paved for you, and an example for all others tempted to step out of line. The village meant a filial, patriarchal system that assures its privileged members a history. But the No Name Woman cannot be reinterpreted without the village going through the same process, as well, for the No Name Woman means whatever it is to be not in the village and the village means what it is to be not the No Name Woman, each of the two things defining themselves and the other simultaneously.

In the final paragraphs of the first chapter, the narrator states the goals of her interpretation and an acknowledgement of her inheritance. The moment she accepts this task is striking: "I have thought that my family, having settled among immigrants who had also been their neighbors in the ancestral land, needed to clean their name, and a wrong word would incite the kinspeople even here. But there is more to this silence: they want me to participate in her punishment" (16). Dually, silence is the village's punishment and its method of sustaining that punishment, and while ignorance of the village only enforces its system of oppression, to locate

it and then speak of it is the greatest threat to its hegemony. Jenkins reminds us, "The female with desire and voice finds herself in a double bind: remembrance is contingent on silence; authentic voice threatens being 'forgotten as if you had never been born' (5)" (64). There should be no question that the punishment of silence is a patriarchal one, a mode of suppressing a female desire that, it believes, poses as a mortal threat to the "roundness" of the village. Now, the narrator is no longer silent and language will be her greatest tool in dismantling this system, and she begins with an acknowledgement: "My aunt haunts me" (16). She is returning, and she is ready. The No Name Woman is conjured by the narrator "because now, after fifty years of neglect, [she] alone [devotes] pages of paper to her, though not origamied into houses and clothes" (16). With *The Woman Warrior*, the narrator is reinstating, refashioning, and most importantly, redefining "purpose" for the No Name Woman, the thing the village says it has deprived her of.

This specter does not always "mean [her] well. [She is] telling on her, and she was a spite suicide, drowning herself in the drinking water" (16). The narrator figures the specter is angry at her because she is "telling on" it. The No Name Woman has never known anything but shame and accusation by its own admittance, but it is still suspicious when called upon, for the village does not want us to forget our atavistic tendencies. But the narrator will conjure the No Name Woman, kicking and screaming, because she needs this alliance to assert her place, her purpose, within and without the village. The aunt was getting revenge for the village killing her, the narrator is jumping in after her to save the No Name Woman and herself. "The Chinese," writes Kingston," are always very frightened of the drowned one, whose weeping ghost, wet hair hanging and skin bloated, waits silently by the water to pull down a substitute" (16). The terrifying prospect here is not being pulled down, but to be replaced by this purposeless ghost

while they die in the well, tainting their family's drinking water. The narrator is pulled down into the well not to replace the No Name Woman, but for them to be together.

The narrator's relationship with her mother is where the specter exists. Brave Orchid is the village as a singular manifestation in the text, and at every turn the narrator attempts to reconcile her relationship with the No Name Woman and her relationship with Brave Orchid. For all the freedom the No Name Woman promises, it would not be worth the loss of her mother, without whom *The Woman Warrior* would not exist. The mother-daughter bond informs the entire text to the point where it is sometimes difficult to discern where the voice of the narrator ends and the voice of Brave Orchid begins.

The village's cruel persecution is what created the No Name Woman, but to define the village by this act would show a lack of dynamic thought and would limit this investigation. Instead, applying mutual empathy to the context of both the narrator/Brave Orchid and village/No Name Woman individually and their relationship to each other should demonstrate how an evolution of thought (here, the narrator inheriting the No Name Woman) can never, should never, detach itself from that which it evolves. For the specter is the past and the future, and the daughter will be the mother, and to ignore how these dualities interact as they exist as one would be missing the point. The sequential chapters "White Tiger" and "Shaman" focus first on the narrator, next on Brave Orchid. By investigating both, we will learn about each woman individually and their relationship to the other; simultaneously, by the logic of mutual empathy. Via this process, we will also learn about the interaction the village and the specter has with both their lives, an ideological arena that stands as an apt metaphor for the tensions that exist between first-generation immigrant parents their and second-generation immigrant children.

The beginning of "White Tiger" is devoted to a re-telling of the story of Fa Mu Lan. More than perhaps any other, this chapter stands as a testament to the power of talking-story to influence and inform a life, a fact made known by the first two sentences: "When we Chinese girls listened to the adults talk-story, we learned that we failed if we grew up to be but wives or slaves. We could be heroines, swordswomen" (19). Put next to each other, these two sentiments pose a bit of an obvious paradox, one that is addressed and articulated by the narrator the next page over: "[Brave Orchid] said I would grow up a wife and a slave, but she taught me the song of the warrior woman, Fa Mu Lan" (20). The giving and reception of the story of Fa Mu Lan will stand as an apt microcosm of the cultural inheritance that is happening between Brave Orchid, the narrator, and the No Name Woman. There is a gulf of difference between something being "said" to you and being "taught" to you, and the tension of that space will be represented in "White Tigers" and throughout the novel.

Wendy Ho writes about the implications of Brave Orchid sharing the story of Fa Mu Lan:

> "As a symbolic and public representation of society, she is empowered as the keeper of the private-domestic life, of family secrets and stories; a guardian of male kinship lines; and a performer of rituals, values, language, and culture. As an immigrant mother, Brave Orchid attempts to pass her knowledge and experience to her second-generation Chinese American daughter as part of a shared notion of identity, despite the inequitable circumstances for women within this patriarchal structure" (119).

Brave Orchid shares the story of Fa Mu Lan as a genuinely intimate gesture between mother and daughter, but her motherly duties are two-fold, for as a first-generation immigrant

who is so far from such a strict village, there is pressure to uphold and protect the cultural values of her family. Far from being a burden, these tasks are what give Brave Orchid strength, for they are what give her *purpose*, the most valuable gift of the village.

These are the values that Brave Orchid *says* to the narrator, but the narrator has chosen to be *taught* the story of Fa Mu Lan, herself a ghost for a period of time while she is training in the mountains. This being Brave Orchid's story (retold by the narrator), to be a ghost is to be purposeless, thus worthless to the family. This is reinforced by what her mother says to the man that marries her despite her absence: "'Thank you for taking our daughter. Wherever she is, she must be happy now. She will certainly come back if she is alive, and if she is a spirit, you have given her a descent line'" (31). This is all what the story *says*, but a close reading will reveal how she has interpreted this story to *teach* something else. The mechanism of this dichotomy is analogous to the narrator's interpretive task of inheritance. Like how she hears her mother's story of the No Name Woman and learns the specter from it, she will hear the story of Fa Mu Lan and reinterpret it to signify the value of herself and the pursuit of a new village that will appreciate that self.

The sentences that transition the narrator from the present reality to the perspective of Fa Mu Lan are, "The call would come from a bird that flew over our roof…I would be a little girl of seven the day I followed the bird away into the mountains" (20). "Would be" is a conditional phrase that indicates a fantasy, an event that would have occurred *this way* had it happened at all. The phrase and its repetition at the beginning of the story also conveys a sense that the upcoming narration has a set path, a way it will be, as governed by the narrator. Thus, how she tells the story will shed light on her goals in retelling the story.

For Fa Mu Lan to become herself, she must become a ghost. On page 31, years into her training, she says, "We will be so happy when I come back to the valley, healthy and strong and not a ghost." This contributes to our working definition of Kingston's specter, that it is an embodiment of separation and the loss of continuance that comes with it. However, there is a significant difference between our first example of a ghost, the No Name Woman, and Fa Mu Lan, and that is the difference of reaction between respective villages. On that same page, Fa Mu Lan is watching a vision provided by a magical water gourd and can see her family marrying her off even though she is not there. The mother says to the hosts, "'Thank you for taking our daughter. Wherever she is, she must be happy now. She will certainly come back if she is alive, and if she is a spirit, you have given her a descent line. We are so grateful.'"

Here we can clearly see the importance of the fulfillment of the descent line. The difference in reaction to the No Name Woman and Fa Mu Lan's specter-ness comes down to the intention that brought about their respective deaths. The No Name Woman committed adultery, demonstrating an aggressive autonomy, while Fa Mu Lan simply disappeared, an ethically neutral phenomenon. Given how we understand the patriarchal attitude towards girls as it shown in *The Woman Warrior*, an absolute disappearance is not that different from if she was still there (though of course, as a specter, this would be the case). She has done nothing to sully her value as a bearer of the family name and another member of the descent line, and when she comes back, she has fulfilled her filial duties; the last sentence of the story is, "From the words on my back, and how they were fulfilled, the villagers would make a legend about my perfect filiality" (45). The narrator is making a brave interjection into the narrative of the village by appropriating the story of Fa Mu Lan, using it to give an example of a woman who specter-ed for an ultimately good cause, to return and fulfil the village's greatest cause: filial duty.

But the narrator would like to find her own village to fulfill, one not so indebted to severe punishment. She may have fond memories of this story, but it, too, haunts her:

> My American life has been such a disappointment.
>
> 'I got straight A's, Mama.'
>
> 'Let me tell you a true story about a girl who saved her village.'
>
> I could not figure out what was my village. (43)

The narrator's desire is not to break free of the village, but to manifest her own village, a village where a girl can leave to be a ghost and return a hero. Her mother wants this for her, and herself, as well. Both feel disconnected from a sense of completeness, but they are going about different ways of pursuing a solution, and this juxtaposition creates tension. Brave Orchid's inheritance to her daughter is the village, manifesting, in part, in her stories, but the narrator's interpretation must necessarily differ, as the task of inheritance is one of interpretation, of making a subjective choice. The narrator's goal is to make a village for herself and the No Name Woman that she would have the merit to save.

Fa Mu Lan's parents brand her. Her mother and father explain: "We are going to carve revenge on your back…We'll write oaths and names…Wherever you go, whatever happens to you, people will know our sacrifice…And you'll never forget either" (34). The intense nature of the village's filial demands and familial oneness hits its peak here in the line, "Wherever you go, whatever happens to you, people will know our sacrifice." "You" and "our" are nearly interchangeable here, the only distinguishing element being the extra pressure put on the "you," who, like the No Name Woman, must now live first and foremost as a signifier of suffering.

The narrator states: "The swordswoman and I are not so dissimilar. May my people understand the resemblance soon so that I can return to them" (53). What she and the swordswoman have in common "are the words at our backs. The ideographs for *revenge* are 'report a crime'…The reporting is the vengeance–not the beheading, not the gutting, but the words. And I have so many words–'chink' words and 'gook' words too–that they do not fit on my skin" (53, emphasis in text). "Oaths and names" have been replaced with racial slurs, words for the narrator to never forget. The narrator is getting vengeance in the words that she writes with an intentionality akin to why "[she] alone devotes pages of paper" to her aunt (16). She lives in a world that so often tells her that she does not deserve to exist as a Chinese American woman. It wants to erase her, make another No Name Woman out of her. Her vengeance is in the powerful act of recording, making a thing out of what a system intends for there to be nothing. The specter is always returning, it is always there as soon as it is not. In her task of reinterpreting, she will get revenge for those words and exist as best she can on her terms.

The chapter "Shaman" introduces the reader to a new type of ghost, ones that Brave Orchid sees all around her in America. If "White Tigers" put the reader closer to the narrator's perspective, "Shaman" puts its focus on her mother. Lidoff's ideas regarding the narratological manifestations of mutual empathy are relevant here, for while the narrator is always sure to identify Brave Orchid as "my mother" throughout her telling, she ingratiates herself into the story with an impossible omniscience. Specific details are recounted and characters are quoted word for word, signaling clear embellishments by the narrator. This is only to be expected, as it aligns with the values of talking-story; as much as it is Brave Orchid's story, it is the narrator's, and vice versa. As with all the chapters in *The Woman Warrior,* we must be aware of this as a story *told* and *being* told, an inheritance and its reinterpretation, occurring simultaneously.

As a young woman in medical school, Brave Orchid is the ghost expert in her school. She "[relishes]" the "scare orgies" she has with the other girls, she's good at "naming" them, can "find descriptions of phenomenon in ancient writings," and "validate ghost sightings" (65). Brave Orchid wants the narrator to know that she was and is the authority on ghosts in all of their forms. But more importantly, she wants the narrator to know she is not afraid of these ghosts, not because she does not believe in them, but because she has mastered them, knows all their tricks: "'I hope I'll be able to recognize the ghost when I see it. Sometimes ghosts put on such mundane disguises, they aren't particularly interesting" (67). She alone among all her classmates go to the "ghost room" to spend the night (67).

In the room, the specter that visits Brave Orchid is called a Sitting Ghost. It lands "bodily" on her chest, "pressing her, sapping her" (68-69). When she tries to attack it, it has this effect: "Her fingers and palms became damp, shrinking at the ghost's thick short hair like an animal's coat, which slides against warm solidity as human flesh slides against muscles and bones" (69). The main characteristic of the Sitting Ghost, what generates fear, is how its there-ness is marked by the opposite. It exists by being inactive, yet that non-act allows it to take from another. Its interactions call to mind the natural state of skin sliding against flesh, perverting it, makes the natural unnatural. This is what Brave Orchid fears in the No Name Woman, a threat to her established traditions and culture. So, she tells her daughter the story of the Sitting Ghost, a more tangible, nameable, locatable specter that can be defeated. Her mother, who bravely spends three paragraphs cursing out the ghost and patiently waits for the sunrise, "[chanting] her lessons for the next day's classes," a model student (71).

When Brave Orchid's classmates come to see if she is alright, Brave Orchid expresses her deepest fear about the effect of the Sitting Ghost: "In case I lost any of my self, I want you to

call me back. I was afraid, and fear may have driven me out of my body and mind" (71). It is a fear of fear itself, of its ability to dislocate the self. This fear becomes more specific in light of what her classmates chant to counteract it and bring her back:

> Come home, come home, Brave Orchid, who has fought the ghosts and won. Return to Keung School, Kwangtung City, Kwangtung Province. Your classmates are here waiting for you, scholarly Brave Orchid…Your brother and sisters call you. Your friends call you. We need you…There's work to do. (71-72)

The effect of this cure is described as "abundant comfort," and her "soul [returns] fully to her and [nestles] happily inside her skin" (72). To Brave Orchid, the chant is the antithesis to the No Name Woman, an assurance of self, purpose, and future. Her classmates geographically and socially locate her, remind her of the duties that define her, duties that will go unfulfilled if her self does not return. The description of the moment her soul returns back is in direct response and juxtaposition to the description of how the Sitting Ghost felt sitting on her chest. In that case, the skin is mentioned in its numb function in its relationship to the flesh, how it exists solely to never be felt. But her soul is personified and conscious, a being that can be known to be right under the skin and is known to be happy to be there.

When Brave Orchid describes her return from "death," it is a reinterpretation of the circumstances of the Fa Mu Lan story. It is all so overtly fantastical: she tells her friends that she was gone for "twelve years" altogether, crossing the Gobi Desert and encountering Wall Ghosts (72-73). Unlike Fa Mu Lan, Brave Orchid sees the trials of being a ghost a place to leave rather than a place of possible growth, a place that can be returned from. She disagrees with the conceit,

seeing her purpose with the village. There is a cruel irony to reckon with here; according to her own story, Brave Orchid herself is a specter, as she returned from the dead. But this is only *her* interpretation of the specter, an interpretation wherein ghosts can be touched, spoken to, burned, eradicated, *erased.* This is a story she is telling her daughter to prove that ghosts, particularly the No Name Woman, do not exist. It is a reaction to a fear that only works to enforce the presence of the No Name Woman. You do not make up a story to explain something that does not exist. But when we look at the new use of the term "ghost" later in this chapter, more of Brave Orchid's intentionality becomes clear.

Back in the present, the narrator writes, "America has been full of machines and ghosts– Taxi Ghosts, Bus Ghosts, Police Ghosts, Fire Ghosts, Meter Reader Ghosts, Tree Trimming Ghosts, Five-and-Dime Ghosts. Once upon a time the world was so thick with ghosts, I could hardly breathe; I could hardly walk, limping my way around the White Ghosts and their cars" (96-97). These are names for the white Americans Brave Orchid lives with, their names working as metaphors to strip their identity, their ability to signify. Wendy Ho writes on the purpose of the ghosts found in America:

> The Chinese immigrant mother preserves her family and traditions against the dominant culture of Western 'ghosts' in the United States–often perceived as a greater common enemy to the family collective. Euro-American "ghosts" introduce a different value system, language, and culture found in the United States. Brave Orchid herself knows well the hardships suffered by her family and community, as well as the caveats of a white capitalist patriarchy that imposes silence on Chinese women and men. (119)

The specter is still a threat to Brave Orchid in this new environment, but more importantly, it is a threat to Brave Orchid's family. Of course, the White Ghosts do not exist without the fear of the No Name Woman, but contextually they hold slightly different positions. The No Name Woman stands as an internal threat moving out, the hidden potential within any member of the village to step outside of its values and destroy the integrity of its ideals, and the White Ghosts (a name I will use to epitomize the different ghosts in the U.S.) are an external threat moving in, bringing foreign values that have the same capacity to destroy a village. If the No Name Woman haunts the village, these White Ghosts analogously haunt the U.S., a country that, for Brave Orchid, only exists in the absence of the home ("Whenever my parents said 'home,' they suspended America" (99)) she immigrated from. It is the dangerous future for her family as well as a memory of a slowly fading past.

The invention of the Sitting Ghost and the White Ghosts are part of the efforts of the erasure of the No Name Woman, for they are each also *that specter* but have been reinterpreted by Brave Orchid to be located and handled for the sake of her daughter and her family. But what she does not understand yet is that her daughter cannot afford to ignore these specters or have their weight taken off her shoulders. It is a choice she made to engage with these specters, partly out of necessity, because she, too, lacks what these ghosts lack, what Brave Orchid fights so hard to preserve: a home in China. The narrator has decided that her girlhood was one among ghosts, and she will learn from and interpret them in order to live.

More than any other chapter in *Woman Warrior*, "A Song for A Barbarian Pipe Reed" presents parts of itself as a traditional memoir, an impression conveyed by the plain-spokenness of the diction. There are more episodes of the narrator's girlhood amongst ghosts, and now more than ever, she is comfortable being a ghost herself: "My mother says that we [the children], like

the ghosts, have no memories" (167). The No Name Woman forgets her history to transgress, but the narrator (included in a "we" of second-generation Chinese Americans) would argue she has no history to transgress, or at least not a history that feels true to her, a history that she has chosen. That is probably not what Brave Orchid meant by saying that to her, but it is what the narrator means by it being told to her. At one point the narrator and her siblings ask Brave Orchid an essential question: "'What do our villagers do?' They would not tell us children because we had been born among ghosts, were taught by ghosts, and were ourselves half ghosts" (183). They do not belong to the village any more than the No Name Woman, spared from full ghosthood only by blood. They possess the potential, at any moment, to be erased, but as they grow and interpret their own villages, that will become less and less of a threat.

The narrator wants justice for the No Name Woman and revenge for herself. By taking the No Name Woman out of the system of law that condemned her, inheriting her status as ghost and living with it, she has put her aunt's ghost in the process of justice to come (it is always to come). As the narrator lives, writes, and reinterprets, so will the No Name Woman. The narrator gets revenge by writing these pages, a declarative act that goes against societies that want her silent: "Sometimes I hated the ghosts for not letting us talk; sometimes I hated the secrecy of the Chinese" (183). In either instance, there is silence. In "White Tigers," she tells us that the ideograph for "revenge" is "to report a crime," and that the vengeance is the reporting, that the act of telling will inflict the necessary harm on those that have done wrong (53). To both the ghosts and the Chinese who want her silent, *The Woman Warrior* will be vengeance enough, a record that the narrator exists. The village will do anything to remove its own trace, a process the narrator would comply with if only the process wasn't so violent and she had another village to turn to.

There is one final story to be told in *The Woman Warrior*: "Here is a story my mother told me, not when I was young, but recently, when I told her I also am a story-talker. The beginning is hers, the ending, mine" (206). It is a story told for the narrator as she is now, not as she was. As is with their inheritance, the mother will begin it and the daughter will end it. Of course, *The Woman Warrior* has been a story that Brave Orchid and the narrator have been telling together, regardless of how much either party was aware of it. Brave Orchid's story in this chapter is short: In China, the narrator's grandmother loved the theater and wanted everyone in her family to go with her, but they would not because they were afraid that bandits would loot their home. The grandmother orders that the doors be left open in their home out of spite, and everyone comes to theater. Ironically, the bandits hit the theater that night. The bandits almost take Lovely Orchid, the narrator's maternal aunt, but see a prettier girl and leave her be. The grandmother becomes convinced that going to plays is good luck for the family, so they all go to plays a lot after that (206-207).

Even as it is Brave Orchid's story, it is told as the narrator's, signified throughout by calling the character of Brave Orchid's mother "my grandmother." It involves the narrator just as much as it reminds the reader of her role as a recorder, a re-narrator. Why tell the narrator this story recently, after receiving the information that her daughter is also a story-talker, knowing that this story will be told again? In Brave Orchid's story, the family does not go to the theater with their mother because of a fear of bandits, but it is only when they go and are confronted by the bandits that they discover a new source of luck. The moral is twofold: one, obey your mother, and two, luck will only be found living opposed to fear, in a way that is natural and among family. The latter can only be achieved by adhering to the former. Brave Orchid wants the narrator to let the reader know that if ever the mother "character" in *The Woman Warrior* seems

frivolous or silly, she does what she does to bring her family into the natural luck they deserve. And even when these actions seem like the have brought the family straight into danger, it will, in the end, only be a reassertion of her wisdom. This may be the closest the narrator gets to an apology, not that she is necessarily owed one.

The cutting-off point from Brave Orchid's end to the narrator's beginning is signified with a dreamy, "I like to think that…" on (207). It is interesting that the narrator calls her part an "ending" to her mother's story when it is more of a tangent, or an elaboration. She imagines that "at some of those performances, they heard the songs Ts'ai Yen, a poetess born in A.D. 175" (207). The segue is fairly flippant, almost reading as an excuse to change the subject. Like in life, she mines her mother's life for her own story, though in a way not divorced from a history that they share.

It is easy to see the parallels between the story of Ts'ai Yen and the narrator's story of her own life. Captured by barbarians, she spends twelve years with them (the same amount of time Brave Orchid was dead in "Shaman"), and has two children who do not speak Chinese (208). The climax of the story comes when, after hearing the barbarians' music that "[makes] her ache," she sings her own song (208). "Ts'ai Yen sang about China and her family there. Her words seemed to be Chinese, but the barbarians understood their sadness and anger. Sometimes they thought they could catch barbarian phrases about forever wondering" (209). Among foreigners, a ghost herself, Ts'ai Yen transcends language (for the most part) to express the loneliness of her dislocation. The songs came back from "those savage lands" and one of them that was passed down, "Eighteen Stanzas for a Barbarian Reed Pipe," is a song "that Chinese sing to their own instruments. It translated well" (209).

This is a story that represents what the narrator hopes for; that, despite divorcing from the village and aligning with the ghosts, she will one day be *understood*, that the barriers of language, culture, location, and all the complications that come with their intersection will somehow be transcended to a new place of belonging. This is an ending to her mother's story in that is her definitive response. If her mother hopes that her daughter one day understands the ends to her means (even when she, in the moment, is completely sure), the narrator hopes that the story they have told in *The Woman Warrior*, will, one day, translate well.

CHAPTER 3: INDUK

The specter that haunts Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman* is perhaps more literal than the one found in *The Woman Warrior*, or at least represented as the more popular notion of what a ghost is: an undead manifestation that can haunt directly, a bit less purely ideological. The specter is associated with the character Akiko. In *The Woman Warrior*, the specter of the No Name Woman can also be located back to a single character, the narrator's aunt, but, appropriately for a specter, she exists only as a memory in the "present" of the text, any agency occurring via the narrator. What makes the specter unique in *Comfort Woman* in comparison to *The Woman Warrior* is its possession of Akiko, the line between what is flesh and what is ephemeral often blurring to the point of erasure. In this chapter, I use the word "obituator" as short-hand for "obituary-writer" and, in a broader sense, the role of one who must record the lives of the dead. Late in the novel, there is a moment where Akiko begins being called Soon Hyo, a moment, obviously, with significant connotations. When I am referring to parts of the text where she is being called "Akiko," I will call her the same; I will do the same with "Soon Hyo."

A multitude of specters pass in and out of the text, and many of them will be touched on, but the one of primary interest is Induk, "the Birth Grandmother" (5). Induk's haunting of Akiko and, by proxy, her daughter, Beccah, works as a metaphor for the dispersed identity of the immigrant comfort woman. Like the narrator in *The Woman Warrior*, the daughter, as a second-generation immigrant, is an inheritor of a haunted identity. She will look for justice for her mother by working to locate her mother's memory, existence and her relationship to both. This process is marked in the text by mother and daughter frequently responding to and interpreting the other from chapter to chapter, often through the medium of dreams. By finally mourning her mother, Beccah affirms and locates her as an identity with a history, a change also marked by "Akiko's" chapters being properly named "Soon Hyo."

The main characteristic of Akiko's narrative is how chronologically fractured it is; the first chapter sets the precedent by the narrator remarking on various moments in her life in a random sequence: the birth of Beccah, her own "death", arriving at the missionaries' camp, her childhood, and her own mother's death (15-17). This structure, or lack thereof, places *Comfort Woman* within a tradition of trauma narratives that scatter its chronology to simulate the fragmented memory of a trauma victim. The image of collecting fragments is also an apt description of Beccah's role as inheritor, one who must first "reaffirm by choosing" this inheritance, then "filter, sift, criticize" the inheritance to give it any sense of "presumed unity" (Derrida, 18).

The work of sifting through these memories will result in a working understanding of the deaths of Akiko. On page 15, she gives an outline, a map of sorts, that will help locate her deaths as the narrative evolves and elaborates. Her first words to the reader are: "The baby I could keep came when I was already dead. I was twelve when I was murdered," she continues, "fourteen

when I looked into the Yalu River and, finding no face looking back at me, knew that I was dead…My body moved on. That is why, twenty years after it left my spirit behind at the recreation camp, my body was able to have this baby" (15). Two clear distinctions are being made between subjects that are usually conflated together: murder and death, body and spirit. Putting together the logic of the passage, Akiko is claiming, first, that her "murder" was not the immediate agent of her "death," and, second, that it was only after her spirit left her body due to her "death" that she was able to have "this baby."

The first claim is easy to parse out; Akiko judges that "[her death] must have been in stages, beginning with my birth as the fourth girl and last child in the Kim family, and ending in the recreation camps north of the Yalu" (17). "Murdering" here means creating the *inevitability* of her death, a moment reflected in the choice her sister makes on page 18. The second claim will take some explicating, but both are effects of Akiko's displaced identity. Creating distance (physical and temporal) and confounding the relationship between our understanding of birth and death, life ("spirit") and death, and murder and death replicates a non-thereness also inhabited by the specter, making Akiko an apt conduit. As discussed previously, the concept of "death" is very significant to Derrida, as it represents the moment the meaning of a thing is dispersed, much like Akiko's identity and purpose are dispersed due to her "death" in the camp; it was a death of self-hood. Metaphysical and ontological violence has been inflicted on her as a consequence of her time in the Japanese camp as a comfort woman.

Akiko's identity is as fragmented as her history, brought into sharp focus by her relationship with the spirit Induk. Sorting out which names belong to which entity will take some logistical work by the reader, simulating Beccah's own work as inheritor and obituator. Like with Akiko's history, the dispersed range of names she inhabits is the mark of imperialism, a

system of oppression that un- and re-names her. In this vein, the name "Akiko" acts as a function of oppression, a violent re-designation of identity. Akiko refers to Induk as "the woman who was the Akiko before me," confirming "Akiko" as more of a role or state that someone occupies (*the* Akiko) than a name that they belong to (20). Akiko is a mark of death that has killed many; Akiko calls herself "Akiko 41," placing her in a list of imperialized subjects (21).

Induk was a living woman before she became a specter, being summoned by her own death and the subsequent dispersion of her identity; in the text, she becomes the symbol of the desire for a centered, collected identity, signaled by the proud Korean nationalism and pronounced selfhood that gets her killed: "In Korean and 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" (20). The Japanese kill Induk, leaving her "skewered from her vagina to her mouth," (that these are the two body parts specifically described cannot be ignored) and in this moment Akiko knows that "the corpse the soldiers brought back from the woods wasn't Induk. It was Akiko 41; it was me" (21). Induk means a certainty of self, a series of proud "I am"s that locate and define her. When the Japanese kill Induk they are not killing this meaning, they are replacing it with the meaning of "Akiko," that is, a colonized, subservient object. When Akiko says "it was me," she is also saying that the corpse *was not Induk*; meaning, the death of Induk, both corporeally and symbolically, is what manifests Akiko in those modes as well. But Induk comes back in a ghostly form to Akiko, and this is where her proud, name-claiming meaning transcends her body and gives Akiko strength.

In "Writing Rape Trauma, and Transnationality onto the Female Body: Matrilineal Em-Body-Ment in Nora Okja Keller's Comfort Woman," Silvia Schultermandl writes about the way

that Keller's approach to Akiko's experience in the camp firmly recognizes rape as a political weapon. Schultermandl agrees that Induk stands as a symbol of "counter-monolithic discourse," and that due to Induk and Akiko's intrinsic relationship, Akiko's narrative "thus [promotes] female and national freedom in honor of Induk's martyrdom." She goes on: "Keller's writing about the loss of individuality through rape and sexual molestation restores the memory of a portion of history that has been largely suppressed by Eurocentric, patriarchal, and colonial discourses" (83).

I would push back on the idea that Keller's text is "restoring" memory of the comfort woman because that would imply that there was a point where a coherent "true" narrative was being produced. This ignores the reality of the way colonialism, especially in this particularly violent case, controls the production of knowledge; part of its violence comes from how it creates a memory and directs a narrative for those colonized. It's not that the memory of the comfort women was replaced, it's that it never existed in the first place. The ontological impracticality of Beccah's task to recover a memory that never existed conjures the specter into Keller's text, manifesting as Induk, a ghost that represents both the dislocation of the memory of the comfort woman and its return, as facilitated by Akiko and Beccah.

As Induk proceeds to haunt Akiko throughout *Comfort Woman*, it becomes clear that the specter is meant to represent a collected self that is free from imperialist oppression, made possible only through a "death" that separates spirit from body. In *Comfort Woman*, the death of self and the death of the body are two different things, a method of self-preservation in the face of the specific cruelties endured comfort woman. In literature, when rape is portrayed, often what is talked about is an out-of-body experience where the inflicted party no longer feels an association with their own body. As an effect of her trauma, Akiko feels that she, her self, has

been killed, even as her body is able to move on, the one glimmer of hope. Induk sees her "empty body" and "[invites] herself in" (36). In the end, it is through her daughter, Beccah, that the marriage of self and body is possible.

When Akiko talks about Induk with Beccah, she calls her the "Birth Grandmother, the spirit assigned to protect and nurture the children of the world…[Beccah is] taught to pray to her, calling her by name–Induk–if ever [she is] in trouble or frightened" (49). The before-discussed power of names comes up here as Akiko teaches her daughter to call this spirit Induk. Akiko conflates her meaning of Induk as Korean identity with the Birth Grandmother, who protects and cares for children. These are the two core values of Akiko and the text itself, and to see how they manifest in the relationship between mother and daughter will speak to what Akiko is trying to pass down to Beccah and what Beccah is trying to inherit, which are necessarily not the same thing.

The passage elucidates more about the role of Induk's in Akiko's present life, as well as her role in Akiko and Beccah's relationship. First, Akiko's description imparts the significance of children and birth within the text. A majority of Akiko's chapters begin with her recalling moments with her daughter, from the day she was born (35), to a night when she could not get to sleep (99). The difference in the presentation of the authorial voice in each section, too, reveals the significance of Beccah's birth to Akiko. Page 35 begins with, "I was strapped down when my daughter was born too." Page 99 begins with, "When my daughter cries in her sleep…" Both are in the past tense, but the second example is a more active past-tense, commenting on something that *does happen* rather than something that has *happened*. What this reveals is how Akiko has situated the birth of her daughter as the focal point of her life, the moment by which everything else is either before or after.

This passage also betrays a temporal misalignment between Beccah and Akiko's chapters; Beccah's chapters cover only her early childhood up to the immediate present of the novel, which are the days immediately prior to Akiko's death, while Akiko's chapters range only from her early childhood to Beccah's infancy. The two women's stories together make a whole, the lack of overlap between them only reinforcing the importance and necessity of each. By "whole," I do not mean a cohesive narrative, for one cannot be found in *Comfort Woman* and it is not trying to produce one. Instead, I mean "whole" as a collected, affirmed memory (which still does not adhere to any homogeneous form), possible only by these two lives being in proximity to each other.

Like the narrator in *The Woman Warrior*, Beccah's story takes the form of a *bildungsroman* at points; both women recount their coming-of-age and, in their cases, how their mothers informed the process. Much of the tension between Beccah and Akiko in the novel arises during moments where Akiko is trying to guide her daughter into womanhood but within a Korean tradition that, as a second-generation immigrant in America, only serves to embarrass Beccah. Femininity and birth are extremely important to Akiko, as demonstrated by her reverence for a spirit that she refers to as "The Birth Grandmother." Startled when she hears that Beccah is not interested in having children, she scolds, "'Beccah, how will you know how much I love you if you don't have your own children?'" (128). Akiko finds she is best able to articulate her love for her daughter through their matrilineal connection. It is also through her role as mother that she enacts, and hopes to pass on, her Korean identity, an identity she is trying to bring to birth in her daughter, so to speak, after it was killed and silenced in the camps. When she speaks, it is a specter's voice, her lessons to her daughter turned into a sort of haunting. Induk, "The Birth Grandmother," is so personified by womanliness because it is how Akiko understands

the inheritance of her Korean identity to Beccah, as a woman's duty, a birth, a birth after death. In the novel's moment of final catharsis, Beccah describes the climax of her dream as putting her in a position where she is "waiting to be born," a phrase that, in this instance, means to be in the threshold of a complete understanding, accentuating the deep, resonating symbolic power of birth in the text (213).

In a stroke of pure poetry, Beccah's occupation is that of an obituary writer, putting a cruel ironic tint over her task of inheritance, which is also to "record the lives of the dead" (25), for every time a word is interacted with or used, its purest "meaning" dies, and in that space between death and engagement is where interpretation occurs. "Record" is an important word here, connoting the replication of something that has "true"-ly *happened*; a record is the final say in the authenticity of an event. Beccah recalls approaching the task of the obituary with an amount of imagination, "creating adventures…picturing the grief…feeling satisfaction when someone died old…" (25). Yet when it comes time for her to write the obituary of her mother, she confesses that she "did not know how to start imagining her life" (26). The juxtaposition between "imagining" and "recording" is doing a lot of work here, as the former is rooted in conjecture, the other in fact.

Beccah wishes to record for her mother. Inheritance, Beccah feels, is a task of record, not imagination when it comes to the case of her mother, because she feels she can only inherit what she knows is there, what has been authentically recorded. Granting her mother justice can only be achieved through processes based off what has been authentically recorded. This troubling of the task of the obituary and of writing one as a daughter is Keller's symbolic way of demonstrating the convolutions of the memory of the comfort woman. Justice is best achieved by

a "true" record, but what has been recorded has been done so by the colonizers and fragmented by trauma.

Imagining, then, will not be enough because event the small amount of knowledge she could recover has been tainted by a colonialist narrative. Beccah must find an authentic (necessarily imperfect) source of knowledge about her mother: Soon Hyo herself, the truth of her life being inherent in her inheritance to her daughter. This denial of the colonizer's "truth" is how Akiko embodies the specter, because according to them, she does not matter at all. The specter is, in part, a fear of history made present, and Induk and Akiko are surely representative of a history to be feared, a living reminder of human genocide. There is power found in Akiko's acknowledgement of her status, for once history is put to task, the future becomes more tangible for those that must live it. The specter will never be pinned down for the same reasons that Akiko will never have a true record; she and Induk are an ontological denial of the colonizer's "truth." Thus, Beccah's role of daughter, inheritor, and obituary-writer are the same.

While much is left to the imaginary for Beccah, it is not so far for the reader, who has access to Akiko's accounts, which then begs the question of who is hearing the story she tells in her chapters (we are invited not to think of these accounts as necessarily true). Only through the context of her chapters does the reader gain a sense of who her narrative is directed towards in its telling, though we are certain she is often talking *of* her daughter. Akiko is talking to herself, the only one who will listen other than Beccah, and the only one she could be talking to given that the "present" of her chapters is when Beccah is just a newborn. Oppositely, the "present" of Beccah's chapters is after Akiko's death. Both of their words could only be for the other, but they are not fully present in each other's lives in the time that they narrate their stories. This structure stresses the struggle for this mother and daughter to connect, a distance embodied by

the difference between a birth and a death; therefore, the novel creates a space of ontological ambiguity wherein the specter thrives.

The only place where they can meet is a place as ephemeral as dreams, where metaphysical rules can be sidelined during their interpretation, a place where mother and daughter can meet as one. In *Comfort Woman*, dreams do work in informing reality, staying in line with the commonly-held conviction that there is a purer truth that dreams represent, untainted by our subjective conscious. Characters have a large amount of faith in their dreams, their power and influence palpable, thereby making their interpretations hugely significant. This process is analogous to Beccah's interpretive task with her mother's life, which is to her as intangible and unshakable as a vivid dream.

In the novel, dreams also act as misleaders, creating either pleasant or unpleasant surprises for the dreamers. This sense of disillusionment pervades the text, evoking the confusion of truth and reality that exist between Akiko and Beccah's narratives. Akiko has a dream that she believes is a sure sign that she will give birth to a boy. It is a violent dream where she is shot by Japanese soldiers. She calls it "tae mong," "the first birth dream" (116). Her interpretation of the dream, when it proves to be wrong, is significant in how it takes the elements of the traditional interpretation and subverts them to create her own meaning out of it. The parts of her dream that convinced Akiko that her child would be a boy were "fire and dragon and sun…all yang…I am having a boy" (116). Then, when Beccah is born, she uses these same words to articulate her surprised joy: "I still feel that joy as if it were brand-new, so hot that it hurts, burning blue-white and brilliant, sharp as dragon's teeth" (116). By appropriating the traditional meaning of the dream, it becomes true to the dreamer regardless, a process analogous to dismantling long-standing oppressive narratives

The troubling of the traditional narratives attached to dreams to better suit personal experience occurs again in Akiko's assessment of the U.S. after first arriving with her new husband. She feels that the U.S. is the kind of dream that seems to be one kind at first, then turns out to me another, the classic bait and switch: "When you see it for the first time, it glitters, beautiful, like a dream. But then, 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). In this instance, "dream" is being used to describe something as idyllic rather than a literal dream. The first example showed Akiko re-interpreting a narrative that she previously subscribed to; this one shows her approaching the famous American Dream with a skepticism informed by her own experience. The U.S. does not accept her and, worse still, perpetuates the oppressive systems that erase her identity, takes her face. In the U.S., the direct perpetrator of this oppression shifts from the Japanese to Akiko's husband, who demands that she submit to him. She is *there* but has no *place*, a ghost in her new country.

In Beccah's case, there is one dream in particular that holds significance. Like the two previous examples, Beccah's dream appears to be the one thing until it is another, this time triggered by the catharsis of finally *knowing* her mother–or at least knowing her as authentically as possible. The first mention of this dream comes at page 121, its significance signaled by its position before the section break, and that it precedes an account of the moment she found her mother's body. It begins, "Since my mother died, I dream the dream from my childhood" (121). This statement stretches her temporally, there being many different times all associating: her mother's death, there is little shared temporality between Akiko and Beccah's chapters. But this dream acts as a bridge that closes the gap between them. As argued before, dreams are a shared space for the women.

In Beccah's dream, she drowns. She says that "something pulls me under. I begin to feel dizzy with the effort of not breathing, and when I know I will drown, I wake up, gasping for air" (121). It is significant that it is the moment of *knowing* that wakes her, an idea that alludes to the superstitious fear that that if we ever died we would never wake up again. The knowledge of ones' death is the final threshold before it happens, but the tricky thing is that she does not *truly* know that she will drown because she never gets to the point of breathing in the water. While this may seem like a nit-picky point to make, it becomes crucial in context of the final passage wherein Beccah has the dream again, but makes it past the moment of knowing she will drown.

It turns out that what she thought she knew was wrong, for the "something" that pulls her down in the dream is revealed to be her own mother, causing her to yield: "I opened my mouth expecting to suck in heavy water, but instead I breathed in air, clear and blue" (213). Like how Akiko appropriates the rhetoric of her male-implying tae mong to fit the birth of her daughter, Beccah does the same with water and air, describing the air she breathes as "clear and blue." What all the dreams in *Comfort Woman* do is make the dreamer challenge their etymology, how they know and why they think they know it, an ethic analogous to Beccah's responsibility in remembering her mother. It is a path of deconstruction that finds justice for the comfort women.

Beccah's realization of the truth of her mother's identity is the moment when her role of obituator is fulfilled. She finds a tape with her name on it, among other objects of documentation, that Akiko had hidden in a jewelry box. Usually, these tapes are meant to record her "ceremony, capturing the voices of the spirits as the spoke through her" (171). The significance of the moment is predicted by the passage that precedes it: "I find myself second-guessing my interpretations of her stories, and wonder, now that she is dead, how I should remember her life" (171). The specter is here in the opposing notion of remembering life in

death. It arrives in the creation of history in the present. The ceremony Beccah refers to is the business she runs, with the management of Auntie Reno, of communicating with the ghosts of loved ones of the clients. This essentially is a reality to stand in juxtaposition of the delicate interpretive task Beccah has. It is a pointed glare at those who fetishize and take advantage of trauma, as well as those who demand a "true" reconstruction of traumatic events, a search for a truth that is still only self-serving.

The specter is the most useful tool in understanding this problem, here represented literally by Akiko's conjuring for clients. Beccah describes her mother's clients as "all waiting for my mother to tell them about the death and unfulfilled desire in their lives" (10). "Unfulfilled desire" is an important concept to *Comfort Woman* and *The Woman Warrior* alike; each expresses an anxiety of purposelessness. The No Name Woman is *The Woman Warrior*'s manifestation of this. In *Comfort Woman*, it is the "yongson." Before she comes across her tape and the other documents left to her by Akiko, she imagines her mother's funeral and realizes, once again, "Not even I, her daughter–the only person who loved her, at least part of the time–really knew her…We are having a funeral for a yongson!" (140).

Beccah defines a yongson as "the ghost of a person who traveled far from home and died a stranger" (140). Again, the yongson is closest to the No Name Woman in meaning, but it is the antithesis of the specter central to *Comfort Woman*, Induk, who haunts as a form of preservation. One becomes a yongson by dying far from home–what is home? In this moment, Beccah believes that, for Akiko, it was Korea, that the U.S. never let her in, that the dream was a truly hollow. If Beccah can manifest a home for Akiko in the U.S. postmortem, she finds justice for her mother and saves her from being a yongson, for she has died at home. At this point, it does not matter whether Akiko herself ever believed that the U.S. became home, because as the

obituator, it is Beccah's power and weighty responsibility to conjure the life of the dead. It demands restating at this point that the cornerstone of both justice and inheritance is the act of interpretation. Justice and inheritance only fail until they do not, when the individual takes it upon themselves to craft a purpose and meaning for the terms (a subjective process, of course; even the oppressor takes this route). In *Comfort Woman*, that meaning is home. Home represents safety, contentment, and a catharsis for unfulfilled desire–you can only be at home when it *feels* like home. Home is where everyone knows your name.

On pages 172-173, when Beccah is sorting through what Akiko left to her, she translates a document from Korean to English and realizes it is a missing persons' report. It is addressed to "Soon Hyo," and it hits Beccah that this is her mother's true name. Realizing this, she goes through the names in the report and realizes they are the names of her aunts, never accounted for again. She reflects, "My mother once belonged to a name, to a life I had never known about…my mother, once bound to others besides myself, had severed those ties–my lineage, her family name–with her silence" (173).

To belong to a name, to belong to a life instead of vice-versa is not normally how our ontology is understood, and it demonstrates the un-locatability of the specter, of the lost identity of the comfort women. For the essence of a name to belong to it, there implies a certain order where the name comes before the essence, and that a life comes before the self. For Soon Hyo and those who knew her in Korea, her essence and identity belonged to "Akiko," the name given to her by the Japanese. In the U.S., she did not escape these attempts to dislocate her from her identity via her husband's whitewashing. But with the birth of Beccah, inheritance gives Akiko the hope to be known anew as the self she should have been, the self she was when she was with her family, when she was *home*. Beccah could only begin this task once Akiko was dead because

a death is the only appropriate time for a reinterpretation–it wipes the slate clean. Similarly, Induk was nothing until she distinguished herself through death: "That is what, in the end, made Induk so special: she chose her own death" (144). Induk found home and fulfilled her unfulfilled desire by Akiko interpreting her death as she did, by making her a symbol of femininity. Now that Akiko is dead, there exists the potential that she can be Soon Hyo again. With this realization, Beccah thinks, "I had always been waiting for my mother, wasting time in the hallways of her life, waiting for an invitation to step over the threshold and into her home" (173). The invitation is death, and her home does not exist without it, sadly. As much as Becah feels that she was waiting for her mother, her mother was also waiting to come home.

The first and final chapter that is properly titled Soon Hyo, as a whole, is not radically different from the "Akiko" chapters before them. Keller allows the monumental moment of the name change do work in re-contextualizing the contents, which, in this chapter, are already illuminating in their own right. A grand synthesis of generations of women occurs, revealing and outlining the processes of death, love, and inheritance that has been passing between them for years and years, a lineage of storytellers engaging in mutual empathy.

There is an implied parenthetical at the beginning of the Soon Hyo chapter when she says, "My mother died more than once in her life;" at the end of the sentence could have been added, "like me" or a "like us" at the end (175). This sense of shared experience comes up again in the next paragraph when Soon Hyo reflects on her own mother dying in her arms (her second death), and says that inside her it created "an emptiness so big I would never fill it in until the birth of my own child" (175). The specificity and distinguishing work of "my own child" implies that there were children before and there will be children after, all with their own deaths and their own emptiness to fill. Because of the generations of oppression, this cycle has been taken as a

given for Beccah's family. It's what Soon Hyo alludes to when she says to her daughter with conviction, "Beccah, how will you know how much I love you if you don't have your own children?" (128) Fulfilling unfulfilled desire, filling emptiness, finding home: this has been the task of inheritance for this family, and while the exact circumstances of each woman varies, each is a cycle violently forced into action by the forces of oppression, each instigating a first death that robs identity before the body dies later.

For Soon Hyo, it was the moments when her sister sold her away and her induction as "Akiko" after the death of Induk. For her mother, it was a protest march during the March 1st Movement. She goes to a demonstration in Seoul with a boyfriend, completely unprepared for the massacre that breaks out. Her boyfriend is shot and she falls to the ground next to him and stays there. When she awakes, her grandmother is "wailing the death chant," holding her hands and clipping her nails. When she tries to rise to protest that she is not actually dead, her grandmother pushes her back down and whispers, "Yes, you are…Stupid girl, I'm saving your life" (179). Soon Hyo explains: "In order to protect her, my grandmother killed her daughter off. She sent my mother north, to Sulsulham, to marry my father…It was because she loved me so much, my mother explained" (179).

Love and death are intertwined, where love is giving life and life is given through death. As the chapter proceeds, Keller's purpose reveals itself to be to show the transcendence of experience between generations, the experience of the war between love and oppression, existence and erasure. Keller does this by having Soon Hyo talk about her own mother for the first time in the novel, thus revealing the litany of traditions that are passed down and drawing a relationship between what is conventionally understood as an inheritance (property, material goods, currency, etc.) and the idea of experience being inherited.

For instance, there is a patriarchal attitude towards marriage that is inherited, laid plain by Soon Hyo's mother-in-law: "Marriage is not about love but about duty. About having sons. About keeping the family name" (180). Each generation we see in *Comfort Woman* suffers oppression in a domestic, private sphere and a political, public sphere. For Soon Hyo, Induk has helped her find definition in those spheres while also demonstrating how the boundaries of those spheres are not as defined as to be mutually exclusive. We can see this on page 153 when Soon Hyo describes a look she recognized in the eyes of both the Japanese soldiers and her husband, a recognition granted after Induk came to her. It was a look of fear: "His fear that instead of saving me, he had damned himself. That he could not pass the test his God devised for him" (148). This is in regards to her husband, a Christian missionary, but she draws a direct comparison to the Japanese solders' fear of death and disease in the camps. Beccah experiences her own domestic abuse of power in her sexual relationship with her boss, Sanford, an older man.

Induk gives Soon Hyo the interpretive power to use an interpretive lens in the oppressor, a fear of the war started in Korea, a fear of the Korean woman brought to America in her husband. Instead of channeling of exoticism, Akiko provokes the difference between her and the oppressor, exploiting the fear that is inherent in such systems. History is upon them, embodied by Induk and the pride and strength she finds in the identity that is being assaulted, a refusal for them to have their own way in constructing their narrative. It is what Akiko argues "made Induk so special: She chose her own death, Using the Japanese as her dagger, she taunted them with the language and truths they perceived as insults…She used them to end her life, to find release" (144). She made sure that she was Korean, paramount over everything.

Soon Hyo also inherits her own box from her mother where "she stored treasures from her past life or for her daughter's future ones" (179). The use of the word "or" is significant

because it equates the two possibilities of the already-happened life of the self and the future life of an Other, and not just the possibility but their nature, as well. This idea of the mother's past meaning the same as the daughter's future speaks to the narratological structure of *Comfort Woman*, where the present of the two narratives do not exist at the same time, yet are completely about each other. More than anything, this demonstrates not just the strength of their matrilineal bond, but that the mother *knows* the nature and strength of this bond, that their lives, even as one exists in retrospection and the other in prospection, could be the same. The fact that it is "from" the mother's past life and "for" the future daughter's life further synthesizes their lives as it implies that in more than one way, a daughter needs her mother to have lived for her to live as well. And in this particular instance, the dispersion of a single identity across two persons act as a resistance to an oppressor whose systems depend on the actions of locating and erasing within a certain time and place, that certainly has long-lasting effects but cannot do the temporal gymnastics of dispersing both backwards and forwards.

Another social violence that each generation of women has experienced is the erasure of names, an event Soon Hyo experienced in the Japanese camp and that her mother experienced when she was married, the moment she "never heard her name again" (180). And when Soon Hyo ponders the day that her own daughter will go through her own box, she knows that she will "come to know her own mother–and then herself as well…I speak for the time when I leave my daughter, so that when I die, she will hear my name and know that when she cries, she will never be alone" (183). She will never be alone when she cries because suffering is life, life is love, and they are each other.

As has been mentioned, an essential part of inheritance is the recipient's participation, that they affirm the inheritance as a thing that exists, interpreting its infinite parts into a cohesive

whole. Now, one may ask why anyone would accept this violent inheritance if they are given the choice to affirm it. The answer to this lies in the symbolic hope of the daughter, the drive to fill the "emptiness so big." For these women, the only way to begin to heal these wounds is to share them with their kin, a process of learning and adapting until the evil is weened out. This is what Induk represents, the paradox of violence and catharsis, of promise and despair, as well as the essences of her essential values such as femininity and Korean identity. It seems to be an unfair task to ask, or rather expect, of them. But, in a bittersweet way, it is natural. The process of learning and adapting is done, in part, as *Comfort Woman* has argued, through a love as persevering as the one that exists between mother and daughter, a perpetual cycle of sharing and inheritance that would exist regardless of oppression, but just so happens to be the perfect resistance. The specter represents the plight of generation of women, Beccah included, her experience as a second-generation immigrant supplying its own trials and tribulations.

But while Akiko's chapter was appropriately titled "Soon Hyo" after the truth was revealed, the final two chapters are still titled "Beccah." That is because, for Beccah, there is less "truth" in the name "Bek-hap" than Soon Hyo finds in it, reflective of the discomfort she finds in the Korean-ness Induk brings into her life. As much as she holds a Korean identity, she holds an American one, as well. The decision to stay "Beccah" is not a denial, but an affirmation of her own intersectional identity, to love and remember her mother while keeping the Western name that she has been called and known her whole life. It would also be entirely fair to identify some personal reticence coming from Beccah in the consideration of this "true name." She has spent much of her life struggling to understand and live with Akiko, who is a sympathetic figure to be sure, but certainly does not make life easier for Beccah, more preoccupied with her daughter as an individual than her life out in the world, her American life.

Akiko's name for the tension produced by Beccah's resistance and shame for her is *sal*. *Sal* is a part of a collection of terms that oppose Induk, including Saja the Death Messenger and the Red Disaster. While Akiko reveres her daughter and her journey towards womanhood, the process also produces anxiety, understandably, as it represents as burgeoning sexuality that is traumatic for Akiko, as a former comfort woman, to consider. It is also traumatic for the reason that it represents a potential for colonialization, which Akiko experienced in two waves in quick succession, first in the camp as a comfort woman, then in her marriage to a Christian missionary and immigration to the U.S.

The father haunts Soon Hyo and Beccah in his own way, representing the more domestic, but equally lethal, threat of the erasure of Soon Hyo's Korean identity. Soon Hyo blames Beccah's *sal* on her father (82), though Beccah herself at the beginning of the novel has dreams where she imagines him as a guardian against the ghosts that haunt her mother: "My daddy, I knew, would save my mother and me, burning with his blue eyes the Korean ghosts and demons that fed off our lives" (2). There are clues here that suggest the father's colonial essence, signaled by the W.A.S.P-signifying "blue eyes" and the fact that the ghosts and demons he is banishing are explicitly Korean. But by the end of the dream, his façade is lifted, and "the blue light from his eyes grew so bright it burned me, each night, into nothingness" (2). Here, the reality of the role of the husband in Soon Hyo's life becomes clear; to Beccah he was a benevolent, "normal" figure, but to Soon Hyo he only ever wanted to burn her Korean identity, and by extension, also his daughter's, into nothingness.

Soon Hyo puts herself in opposition to Beccah's father and maleness in general throughout the text, believing them to be an evil presence. The novel begins with her admittance to killing her husband, a long process that took years of "death thoughts," as she describes them

(13). She believes that she could not give birth, an act she reveres so much, "for almost twenty years" after leaving the Japanese camps due to being "imbalanced with male energy." The doctors do not necessarily disagree, as she tells us that they told her that her "insides were ruined from so many men, so many times" (37). Soon Hyo also tells Beccah that the doctors who delivered her with "their male eyes and breath" caused *sal,* "evil-energy arrows," to enter her daughter at birth (73). Like the No Name Woman in *The Woman Warrior*, the specter in *Comfort Woman* was produced by male violence, different and more specific from patriarchal violence (though both have a role here), which can be enacted by anyone regardless of gender.

Soon Hyo's anxiety about *sal* is an example of the extent to which Induk haunts Beccah as well, representing a strange presence that brings Korean-ness to this new place that does not want it. The *sal* begins to work its way out during Beccah's puberty, and she tells the reader tells the reader, "I often wished the *sal* had killed me outright so that I would not have to endure my mother's protection" (73). But endure it she does, until the day the seal of protection breaks and she bleeds for the first time (186). In *Comfort Woman*, blood plays an incredibly important symbolic role in a number of ways. First is the one provided by Soon Hyo which is most common in the novel: "According to my mother, the rituals that accompanied the major transitions in a woman's life–birth, puberty, childbirth, and death–involved the flow of blood and the freeing of the spirit…Necessary but dangerous, these were the times when the spirit could spin away forever, lost and aimless, severed from the body" (185). Soon Hyo tells Beccah that the threat is not just that the spirit could leave, but that a yongson spirit, the wandering homeless spirit, could come in. This process represents the volatility of their identity, for better or worse, in these transitions. This is shown in part by the perspective-altering significance of the birth of Beccah.

Each cycle, the spirit evacuates with the blood flow, so when it returns it must recognize its host as home, being an antithesis of the yongson, the wandering spirit. Symbolically, the idea of blood is inextricably linked to family lineage, but here, its verb of "flowing" also relates it to a major visual theme in *Comfort Woman*, which is that of the river. Rivers run throughout the text, as present as blood. When Soon Hyo is first found by Induk, she is "sprawled next to an unnamed stream above the Yalu, the place where I had discarded my empty body" (36). Soon Hyo is suspected of a suicide attempt by drowning herself in in the Ala Wai Canal (47). Soon Hyo describes her baby's head as "round as a rare perfect river rock polished by the force of water" (149).

Two of the most crucial climactic moments in the novel occur with the participation of a river; when Beccah gets her first period and when she scatters her mother's ashes. The river is a force, its power derived from the movement of its water, how it is always itself but also constantly changing in composition. Thinking about it in comparison to blood flow, both are always flowing out, being subsequently replaced by itself, new blood and new water. These moments of "flow" are so significant because they best simulate the process of *becoming*, becoming a woman. When Soon Hyo expresses concern for these times because of the risk of Beccah losing her spirit or a yongson making its ways in, recognizes the inherent vulnerability of becoming, a process that does not always end favorably, especially for a woman.

As we have seen time and time again, from Soon Hyo's time as a comfort woman and beyond, that at the times of transition, she experienced a violent becoming that was not her accord: being sold to the camps, her first period, her first (unsuccessful) birth, and an un-consensual conception. These are times of potential, for better or for worse, and captures the temperament of the flows that mark these women's lives. Change is constant and forceful, but

holds the promise of an inevitable cleansing. The simultaneous multiplicity and singularity of the river and "flow" and its promise of cleansing through time is analogous to the generations of mothers and daughters.

The inextricable link between the flow of blood and rivers becomes clear in Chapter 17, when Beccah remembers when she first got her period. The episode is preceded by a dream wherein Beccah "[rides] the waves of [her] first cramping," travelling in and out of dreams until she finds "a beautiful woman waiting for [her]" (188). The next passage deserves to be quoted in full:

> 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)

If I wanted to be particularly cheeky, I would call this moment the christening of the Mother, Daughter, and the Holy Specter. The boundaries of self and Other completely dissolve between the three parties, and total empathy ensues. The presence of Induk signals the femininity of the moment, and the declaration she makes through Beccah's mouth signals the specter in its ontological and temporal transcendence, as well as the presence of history (matrilineal, violent, feminine, comfort woman). She catalyzes the moment of transition, where as she identifies herself (as she did in the moment of her own death, another transitional moment marked with blood, boundaries blurred) as Induk, Beccah moves outside of what she used to consider her self into a new body that claims itself as Induk.

As previously discussed, dreams in *Comfort Woman* are first and foremost places of interpretation, where what happens in the dream is less important than how the dreamer eventually understands and adopts the narrative of the dream. To Beccah in this moment, this dream is mostly disorienting, a symptom of her first period. But to the reader and the present-day Beccah recounting the dream, it is recognized as an identity-affirming memory of singularity, where time collapses, selfhood disperses, and the weight of oppression can locate and quench, all under the essence of the transcendently feminine. The last thing Induk says in the dream is, "You must come back across running water;" the next morning, Soon Hyo says to Beccah, "You must return across running water" (189).

They travel to the river and Beccah is embarrassed. Soon Hyo tells her daughter to dance, and Beccah looks around, afraid that "someone would see my mother as I saw her: flying unanchored to reality, her own dark waters soaking though her tunic until the lines of her used woman's body…sharpened under the wet clothes" (190). There is not much to interpret from Becca's shame; it is not necessarily right or wrong. She is, in part, a product of the American Dream, a thankless standard that others Soon Hyo to her own daughter. Her comment her mother is "untethered from reality" is a perfectly double-edged comment in the way it describes the affliction of oppression, how it segregates and creates narratives of "reality."

Soon Hyo cuts the tip of Beccah's finger with a knife to draw blood and instructs her to put it in the river; she yells, "Spirit, fly with the river, then follow it back home." Beccah drinks the river water and Soon Hyo tells her, "Now you share have the river's body…Its blood is your blood, and when you are ready to let your spirit fly, it will always follow the water back to its source" (191). She is telling her daughter that now, at any transition in her life, she will be able to come back to their home that they created.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

The idea of haunting as an expression manifests as specters that represent products of and memory for social violence in *The Woman Warrior* and *Comfort Woman*. The No Name Woman was created by the aunt's suicide, which was caused by the village's zealously violent reaction to her unremarkable adultery. She haunts the narrator as a symbol of this unresolved violence. It is unresolved because the narrator, in America, stands in the same position of danger as her aunt did. As a second-generation immigrant living with the shadow of tradition looming over her, she carries the same potential to diverge with the village's values. She would likely not end up in a well (though who's to say), but there still exists a clear threat of an analogous punishment, a suicide of a different nature. *The Woman Warrior* is essentially a conversation between the narrator and the No Name Woman as they navigate the tensions existing between then and now, here and there, the power structures that construct them, and how the mother-daughter relationship represents it all.

This cultural haunting exists in *Comfort Woman*, as well, but it also manifests in a more singular, material fashion as Akiko. As a former comfort woman, she is a living memory of the social violence of colonialism and genocide, a very literal interpretation of Gordon's thoughts. Induk performs a cultural haunting exists in *Comfort Woman*, acting through the conduit of Akiko. As a former comfort woman, she is a living memory of the social violence of colonialism and genocide. Induk represents the persistence and pride of the identity of Korean comfort women and all those who are oppressed. She hides this trauma, this evil inheritance, from Beccah until she dies, trusting her daughter to learn of her and record her, to bring her memory to a home, a space in history where she is known instead of feared. But while she is alive, she

teaches Beccah everything she knows about how to preserve and love the intersectional aspects of her identity, and, most importantly how to return to the same home as her mother. These lessons are met with some reluctance as Beccah navigates the trials of growing up in America with a Korean ghost haunting her home.

In their different ways, Kingston and Keller use haunting to discuss social injustices, tapping into the ontological and epistemological contradictions of the specter to convey the feelings of displacement and abuse that dominant systems inherently inflict upon marginalized people, specifically, as we see in these novels, women and immigrant women. But both authors find their space of resistance in the relationship between mothers and daughters. This resistance comes out in part narratologically, as both novels blur the line between the mother and daughter as individuals, instead presenting them as two parts of a whole story. If the specter is the best metaphor to represent these women's struggles, their enactment of mutual empathy is the best resistance for it because of how it locates each person in context of the other, and the other will never go away, so each will always be able to find their self again. It is not a perfect love in either text– it doesn't have to be.

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