

EXCEPTIONAL EMPIRE AND EXCEPTIONAL SUBJECTS:
BIOPOLITICS AND THE TRANSNATIONAL MAKING OF
THE KOREAN/ASIAN/AMERICAN THROUGH THE COLD WAR

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Abstract

This dissertation explores how the contemporary Korean American and Korean diasporic literary productions imagine and respond to the nexus between the “exceptional” American empire and the exceptional juridico-political subjects it produced and managed in South Korea and across the Pacific through the prolonged Cold War. Drawing on critical biopolitical studies, this project frames the Cold War U.S. military and humanitarian interventions in Asia as neoimperialist governmentality, which not only created excessive, doubled sovereignty and states of exception but also produced and displaced exceptional subjects in the areas affected. My research on the historical, political, legal, and cultural discourses on these displaced subjects evinces that they were not simply excluded as a demographic exception to the Korean and American nation-states, but included in their Cold War geopolitics and biopolitics. This dissertation proposes that the transnational making of the exceptional Korean, Asian, or Asian American subjects through the Cold War provides key sites for understanding the transnational history and dimensions of the post-World War II formation of Asian America as it illuminates the links between U.S. foreign policy in Asia and domestic racial liberalism during the Cold War. Tracing the origin of the transpacific exceptional subjects and their transpacific links, the project also draws a genealogy of a forgotten Korean diaspora that still haunts the modernity of two nation-states.

I argue that the selected cultural memories and imaginaries produced by Nora Okja Keller, Heinz Insu Fenkl, Jane Jeong Trenka, and Chang-rae Lee expose and intervene in the complex biopolitical operations and technologies of U.S. sovereignty and governance within and across its national border and the logic of exclusion and inclusion

by verbally enacting scenes of multiple subjectifications of the exceptional figures in Asia and America. Chapter by chapter, the dissertation attends to the particular conjunctures of local and global biopolitics in which the exceptional subjects emerged and were nationally and transnationally subjectified. It also demonstrates how each of these texts in a unique and experimental way disrupts the normative codifications and configurations of the exceptional empire as a global peacekeeper or humanitarian force and of the exceptional subjects as undeserving racial aliens or exceptionally deserving model citizens. Collectively, these literary texts create an aesthetics of the stateless that imagines alternative models of politics, subjectivity, and cross-national and interracial community to move beyond biopolitics and towards a decolonized future.

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INTRODUCTION

“This Empire... And indeed, do you not see how ostentatiously these gentlemen have just unfurled the banner of anti-colonialism? ‘Aid to the disinherited countries,’ says Truman. ‘The time of the old colonialism has passed.’ That’s also Truman. Which means that American high finance considers that the time has come to raid every colony in the world. So, dear friends, here you have to be careful! I know that some of you, disgusted with Europe, with all that hideous mess which you did not witness by choice, are turning...toward America and getting used to looking upon that country as a possible liberator. ‘What a godsend’ you think. ‘The bulldozers! The massive investments of capital! The roads! The ports!’ ‘But American racism!’... So, once again, be careful! American domination—the only domination from which one never recovers. I mean from which one never recovers unscarred.”

-- Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*

“It seems [...] that Cold War epistemologies and military architectures do enjoy a protracted afterlife. As pithily observed by Tobin Siebers, ‘The history of the Cold War is in part a history of false ending.’ [...] “[E]nds’ point to fragments and remnants, whether the physical remains and ruins of Cold War violence [...] or the necessarily fragmentary attempts to grasp, remember, and narrate Cold War history.

-- Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire*

“What most Americans know about Korea has been told from the point of view of a U.S. military member or a missionary, about prostitutes, beggars, and orphans, many of them mixed race children, never speaking but always spoken for and about, souls being saved by the civilizing missions of neocolonialism and evangelism. No doubt they would have found it difficult to imagine that one day the voice of the native, having returned to the imperial center, might speak back—in English—from its very different positionality.”

-- Elaine H. Kim, “Myth, Memory, and Desire: Homeland and History in Contemporary Korean American Writing and Visual Art”

Camp Arirang, a 1995 documentary about U.S. military prostitution in Korea by two Korean American independent filmmakers, Diana S. Lee and Grace Yoon Kyung Lee, critiques the mobilization of thousands of Korean women as “special entertainers” for the soldiers of United States Forces in Korea (USFK) by the R.O.K. government and the U.S. military. The film shows how these military sex workers were required to take and pay for regular VD exams and carry VD cards, following rules both states made. It presents the contrasting images of Korean military prostitutes constantly harassed on the streets by the U.S. military police and Korea “military brides” engaged or married to American soldiers enrolled in cultural education programs—so-called “the U.S.O. Brides School”—to learn basic information, provided by a U.S.O. (United Service Organizations) office, about American life, conversational English, and American

cooking to serve their GI husbands.¹ While presenting the plight of the Amerasian children born out of wedlock between Korean women and American soldiers, the film features a scene where a group of mixed-race children of Korean camptown sex workers is gathered in a makeshift home day care/education center run by a former camptown sex worker Yon Ja Kim, where they learn English from student volunteers. At one point, a Korean teacher asks the class, “Where do you want to live, America or Korea?,” to which the whole class enthusiastically and almost automatically respond, “America!” These Amerasian children could neither go to regular Korean schools as they were not legally or culturally recognized as Korean citizens, nor could they go to American schools in Korea provided by the U.S. military. Up until 1997, when the government revised the Korean Nationality Act and abolished patrilineal and gender discriminating rules, children of Korean mothers and foreign national fathers could not be granted Korean citizenship at birth regardless of their birth place. As children born abroad and out of wedlock to Korean mothers and American fathers, they were, and still are not, granted birthright U.S. citizenship. Denied national membership from the two nation-states and thus rendered stateless, these children lived in a transnational limbo or a surrogate asylum, waiting for transnational adoption.² Even though not all of them would be sent to the U.S., “America” is imagined as synonymous with the West, a collectively desired “better” place where they would want to eventually arrive and thrive. What makes this scene striking is that it illustrates how the children were becoming American or Asian American subjects, internalizing the U.S. biopolitical order fostered and transnationalized upon the post-World War II by the U.S. global political and economic hegemony, even

before their immigration began, in a squalid Korean camptown, one of many highly militarized, neocolonial zones surrounding U.S. camps scattered across South Korea.

A similar work of making Koreans into Americans is visualized in the 2009 drama film *A Brand New Life* written and directed by a Korean French director Ounie Lecomte, and produced by a prominent Korean filmmaker Lee Chang-dong. Set in a Korean Catholic orphanage, presumably in the late 1960s or early 1970s, the film portrays the traumatic, heartbreaking transformation of Jinhee, a little girl abandoned by her father and her stepmother, from an ordinary girl of a Korean father to an orphan and to an adoptee, roughly based on the director's own life experience as a Korean French adoptee. The film presents a *mise en abyme* where U.S. soldier orphanage volunteers provide a puppet show for the Korean children. One performs a happy blond American girl named Sally who has come to meet the Korean children. In the play, she dances with his mother and father, and bids goodbye to them to go back to America. At the end of the show, the GI/Sally asks the children, "Wanna go there, too?" and the children all together shout, "Yes!" This scene reveals how the desire for America is embedded within the children's everyday life and collective unconscious in the orphanage, subjectifying them into potential American-loving and grateful subjects.

The film traces Jinhee's struggle at the orphanage as she rejects eating, denies her orphaned status, and keeps waiting for her father to take her back home. Jinhee defiantly claims, "I'm not an orphan. This is a place for kids without parents," but she is informed by the director/pastor of the orphanage and a doctor that "not everyone [at the orphanage] is an orphan" and the reason why they are there is because their parents want them "to live in a better home," meaning an American home. Her waiting still continues, resisting

the American dream promoted by authority figures and that the other children have. Yet, when she eventually realizes that her father is not coming back, she performs a ritual of self-burial, enacting her social and psychological death. Only after this ritual, Jinhee succumbs to her “fate” (*p'alja*) and becomes an orphan, severed from her past life and moving on to her “brand new life” as a transnational adoptee. This is soon followed by Jinhee’s adoption by an American couple and a move to America, the beginning of her life-long journey, as the Korean title of the film, “Traveler,” suggests. Put differently, Jinhee’s new life as a transnational adoptee is only possible after the death of her former self as a Korean daughter and the birth of a virtually stateless orphan.³ The abandonment of Jinhee by her father, not by her mother, also emphasizes her orphaned or stateless status through the loss of her normative legal Korean lineage.

The film further dramatizes the death or unmaking of her old Korean subjectivity and the birth or making of an Asian American subject and how the success or failure of this work of transformation from a “stubborn” subject to a “good” one determines their “fate” either to be adopted by Americans or to end up like Yeshin. She is the oldest girl at the orphanage, for whom the only options left are either to be “adopted” by a Korean couple, not as a daughter but as a housemaid, or to kill herself. A caregiver at the orphanage admonishes Jinhee, “You have to be good to get adopted. Stop being stubborn!” The film presents a scene where an American couple visits the orphanage to hunt for their adoptive child, choosing from a roomful of children who introduce themselves, answer questions, and sometimes compete with each other. When the most well-behaved child is chosen, the first thing she needs to do is learn English from her potential adoptive parents, not the other way around with the adoptive parents learning

Korean. The film exquisitely captures how the work of making “good” Asian Americans is premised on the work of unmaking Korean, through first rendering children stateless. With skillful cinematography including slow, close-up shots, this presumably “natural” process towards a “better life” through the adoption process does not censure or demonize any individual party involved in transnational adoption, including the Korean parent(s), the orphanage, American parents, or the adoption agency. Still, the film depicts the ineffable affects of the tragic loss of her father, family, and former self on Jinhee’s face. Though the film consistently remains observant, it begs the question. How can we remember and grieve at the involuntary loss of her family, former self, and culture, and her diasporic uprootedness? To whom or what should we turn to acknowledge and prevent such a loss?

By noting these two films, I begin the discussion of the complex formations of Koreans and Korean Americans as exceptional politico-juridical subjects across the Pacific in a state of emergency created by the post-WWII “exceptional” American empire that my dissertation aims to unpack and interrogate. The films display the formation of stateless subjects in post-1945 Korea produced under exceptional U.S. global military and economic domination, who belong neither to Korea nor America. They also demonstrate the process by which such subjects are re-formed into “good,” English-speaking, deserving Asian American subjects, whose stories pay homage to America’s supreme geopolitical, economic, and cultural power. My dissertation, *Exceptional Empire and Exceptional Subjects: The Making of the Korean-American through the Cold War*, traces a genealogy of the Korean diaspora, comprised of transpacific stateless subjects from camptown sex workers to Amerasians and orphans/adoptees in Nora Okja Keller’s

novel *Fox Girl*, Heinz Insu Fenkl's autobiographical novel *Memories of My Ghost Brother*, Jane Jeong Trenka's adoption memoirs *The Language of Blood* and *Fugitive Visions*, and Chang-rae Lee's novel *A Gesture Life*. This dissertation does not intend to establish or prove the exceptionality of the American empire or a certain *populus*, but, on the contrary it interrogates what it means to be exceptional—what type of normalcy or rule an exception is posed against, and how, and in what specific conditions, the exception has been constructed, emerged, allowed, and maintained. I argue that these literary texts first register the production of Koreans and Korean Americans as exceptional sovereign subjects in the geopolitical and biopolitical making of the American “exceptional” empire and state during the Cold War, hand in hand, and in tension with, South Korea's own biopolitical nation building. Second, each of these texts, in a unique and experimental way, enacts scenes of subjectification of stateless figures within and beyond the U.S. in order to intervene in the normative configurations of the exceptional empire as a global police state or peacekeeper fighting for freedom and peace against savage totalitarian enemies for the sake of humanity and of the exceptional(ized) subjects as undeserving racial aliens or deserving good citizens.

Although these stateless subjects played critical roles in the material and ideological empire and nation building and in the Korean diaspora in the post-WWII era, they have been largely absent, overlooked, or otherwise misconfigured in American hegemonic historical and cultural narratives of the Korean War and the Cold War, as well as public and academic discourses as unassimilable alien others, unworthy of living, or as an over-assimilated model minority. In Korea, they have been forgotten and repressed as a threat to the myth of the homogeneous unilinear ethnic nation, a national shame, or a

physical reminder of the traumatic histories of colonization, civil war, and division. The selected Korean American and/or Korean diasporic cultural texts this dissertation analyzes bring back these transpacific stateless subjects, rendered forgotten but still haunting the modernity of two nation-states, in the center of their works. In so doing, they, on the one hand, lay bare how America's postwar geopolitics or military intervention and occupation in Asia are neoimperialist endeavors that fundamentally change and condition political, economic, and cultural topographies, often embroil regions in civil or international wars and militarized modernization, and generate extensive displaced populations. On the other hand, they show the human costs of building such an exceptional global sovereign state and empire, emphasizing the transpacific nexuses between U.S. foreign policy in Asia and the domestic juridical and cultural construction of a racially integrated America during the Cold War, and the movement of lives across the Pacific. These works illuminate the largely unseen cross-border intimate or private sites of life—such as sex, marriage, reproduction, family formation, child-caring, and adoption—created and regulated by the liaison of geopolitics and biopolitics of the U.S. and the R.O.K., from the perspectives of the natives in the periphery “having returned to the imperial center” as Elaine Kim puts it. In so doing, they critically expose the coordinated construction of the R.O.K.'s economic “miracle” during the prolonged Cold War period and their lineal national narratives of development, cooperating and co-ascending with the U.S. empire building, at the expense of vulnerable, disenfranchised lives, bodies, and labor of Korea. Such exploitation continues in the present era of neoliberal globalization. This dissertation's critical analysis loci mostly lie in the “peacetime,” everyday biopolitical sites and scenes of control, violence,

and subjectification particular to each literary text, where exceptionalized subjects, whether fictional or actual, negotiate their daily survival, status, and desire to attain power and autonomy. It demonstrates how within these sites the texts situate unique, creative representations of critical and non-conforming stateless subjects, who negotiate and pose tension with the terms, forms, and conditions by which they, as Koreans/Asians or Korean/Asian Americans, have been subject to and rendered legible in the U.S., Korea, and elsewhere. It also argues that these diasporic cultural productions imagine alternative counter-politics to the national and transnational biopolitics of the U.S. and the R.O.K. by re-configuring and re-signifying their racialized and/or gendered bodies, whether corporeal or spectral, as an embodied site of political, ideological, and cultural domination and contestation.

To unpack what I call “exceptional empire” and “exceptional subjects,” my dissertation engages with critical studies on biopolitics and stateless subjectivity formulated by many political theorists, including Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, as a key theoretical framework. I will discuss the notion of biopolitics in a separate section of this introduction. For now, I first want to attend to the notion of exception. Written “as a response to the bloody mystification of a new planetary order” of U.S. biopolitical sovereign power (11), Agamben’s *Homo Sacer* characterizes the mechanism of modern sovereign biopolitics in terms of the structural relation of the “exception.” Taking a cue from Carl Schmitt’s and Walter Benjamin’s notions of law and violence,⁴ Agamben proposes that the modern sovereign power stands on the capacity to establish itself as an exception to the law, and therefore to declare a “state of exception” and place itself at once inside and outside the law. Following Foucault, Agamben claims that this

exceptional or excessive sovereign power captures the life of its subjects through (bio)power and abandons what is perceived as excess, thereby producing exceptional sovereign subjects, namely, populations rendered outside the law and reduced to mere biological life without political or legal rights. However, he contends, these stateless subjects are not simply abandoned by the state or excluded from the political life, but exclusively included as exceptions to the state. Whereas certain marginalized subjects become the “examples” who are excluded from the set insofar as they have some prior claim to belong to it, the exception is included in the normal case precisely because it pointedly does not belong to it (Agamben 22). In short, the example acts as “an exclusive inclusion” and the exception as “an inclusive exclusion”; these are correlated and interdependent as the one is produced by the other (Agamben 21, 26). Nonetheless, he argues that in the state of exception, where the distinction between rule and exception, law and lawlessness, and example and exception becomes blurred, the exception functions as not only normative but also as exemplary or paradigmatic, and vice versa.

Agamben’s discourse on the relation of exception and law in the operation of the sovereign (bio)power offers a critical insight into understanding the post-WWII construction of the U.S. imperial state as “exceptional”—an exception to the normative or existing empire/imperialism and exemplary—and its production of “exceptional” national or state subjects—an exception to the nation-state—in Korea and making them into exceptionally exemplary members of the nation-state. By reading Korean diasporic cultural memories and imaginaries of transpacific migration and subjectification through the idea of exception, this dissertation seeks to show how the exemplary American empire and the exceptional state subjects it produced, whether excluded as unsuitable or

included as extraordinary, were constructed and functioned within the same biopolitical structure of exception. Certain transpacific exceptional/exemplary Korean/Asian American subjects were made *through* the U.S.-led Cold War in Asia.

The exceptional U.S. empire and exceptional state subjects in Korea and across the Pacific emerge within this transnational history. Here, the Cold War does not just refer to the actual armed conflicts such as the Korean War and the Vietnam War, but to the long era of extensive U.S. foreign and domestic efforts to transnationalize its sovereign power and assure its dominance over Asia through various technologies of power and knowledge against the U.S.S.R., China, and other communist states. The Korean American literary texts I analyze explore the ways in which interstate political, security, and economic alliance and diplomacy have conditioned not only the material and ideological construction of the postwar U.S. exceptional empire but also the R.O.K.'s "miraculous" economic growth. These texts expose the symbiotic construction of U.S. empire and R.O.K. national identity and frame the U.S.-R.O.K. neocolonial alliance as a paternalistic rather than a simply redemptive or exploitive relationship. This special partnership between domination and collaboration and the doubled sovereignty in South Korea generated hundreds of thousands of stateless subjects. In the Cold War state of emergency, these people were not only excluded from both nations, but also exclusively included as exceptional subjects to physically and/or ideologically serve U.S. interventions in Asia and the image of a multiethnic, multicultural reconstruction of U.S. nationhood, as well as South Korean ethnic nationalism, security state, and economic development. This dissertation maps out the transnational charting of political and legal frameworks that produced, managed, and mobilized these populations. Therefore, it

further seeks to interrogate the ways the stateless subjects were mobilized and exploited for the individual and mutual empire and nation buildings of the two nation-states in times of the Cold War and also in the current neoliberal era, and the ways their life and labor have been sacrificed and exploited in the process, as portrayed in the selected literary texts. Although my work emphasizes the ontological and epistemological statuses and conditions of the exceptional subjects, it does not intend to limit or categorize the populations into a social identity, especially a victimized one. This project rather seeks to recognize the national and transnational frameworks that produce exceptional sovereign subjects, as well as the regimes of power/knowledge that subjects them as such but not homogeneously. It, therefore, understands them as historically and discursively materialized subjects and figures, constituted as a non-transparent effect of knowledge/power that cannot be solely contained within such regimes.

Alongside these theoretical and historical accounts of biopolitics, empire, and statelessness, this dissertation engages with other critical and scholarly discourses of postcolonialism, transnationalism, diaspora, trauma, and performance, considering the narrative and aesthetic strategies each text takes and attempts to weave multidisciplinary studies into Asian American cultural critique and racial studies. Asian American cultural texts and studies have made invaluable contributions to revising the white-dominant, colorblind U.S. history and literary practice from the perspectives of Asian American subjects as minor racial Americans and/or immigrants, by offering their dissonant experiences of racial exclusion, discrimination, and marginalization and critiques of wide-ranging racial stereotypes from an alien enemy to a model minority. Cherishing the critical edges and angles of Asian American cultural critique, my dissertation turns to the

transpacific formations of Asian and Asian American races, especially in the context of the U.S.'s transnational biopolitical sovereign power exercised in Asia. My work, therefore, is aligned with emerging interdisciplinary work in contemporary Asian American cultural studies on critical biopolitics, including *A Race So Different: Performance and Law in Asia America*, pioneering work by Joshua Takano Chambers-Letson and *The Exquisite Corpse of Asian America: Biopolitics, Biosociality, and Posthuman Ecologies*, award-winning work by Rachel Lee.⁵ This body of nascent but compelling scholarship recognizes the increasing significance and challenges of the biopolitical paradigm in modern and contemporary political space in the U.S. The above-mentioned works read racialized, gendered, sexualized, diseased, and/or disabled bodies in pan-ethnic Asian American cultural productions through the lens of the U.S. sovereign biopolitics, body politics, performance studies, gender and sexuality studies, legal discourse, and/or biomedical and biocultural discourse.

Largely indebted to their critical and ingenious insights on the performative and fragmented racialized Asian American bodies, my dissertation undertakes a comparative analysis of national and transnational ethnic/racial subjectification of Korean diasporic subjects across the Pacific by examining the dynamic interplays of the U.S. and South Korean geopolitics and biopolitics upon the uneven world platform. In so doing, my work seeks to attend to the particular conjunctures of local and global biopolitics rather than focus on American biopolitics operating across national borders, geographically and historically situating it in the U.S.-R.O.K. neocolonial relations and diaspora and the Cold War era. Restated, it aims to demonstrate how American domestic racial politics and immigration law during the long Cold War, which Jodi Kim articulates as enjoying

“a protracted afterlife” in the twentieth-first century, have been shaped by its foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific, as well as by the terms of race, ethnicity, and the nation and the sociohistorical conditions of the other sovereign states outside the U.S., especially of those the U.S. is deeply involved in, such as South Korea, and vice versa. As Kim argues, the Cold War was a “Western interimperialist war,” or “a civil war within the West taking place amidst and against global decolonization movements as well as struggles for racial democracy in the United States that saw antiracism and decolonization as linked projects” (14). Therefore, what is happening in the U.S.—the persistent domestic racism amidst the rise of racial liberalism and multiculturalism during and after the Cold War era—may not be comprehended without turning to what is happening outside—the U.S. geopolitics across the globe—, as “linked projects” of the exceptional empire and sovereign state. By turning to transnational Asian American cultural critique, my work pursues what Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon have articulated as, “a scholarly endeavor that brings closer to home just what the implications of such an expansive military empire are, both for the people ‘Over There’ but also for Americans at home” (2). Attending to the “linked projects” and the lives and work invested, mobilized, and sacrificed overseas is also to acknowledge, in Jodi Kim’s words again, “the conditions of possibility,” not just for “the post-World War II formation of Asian America” (6), but also for the postwar prosperity, racial liberalism (however limited), democracy, and “way of life” of America at large.

My transnational and postcolonial Asian American critique as a methodological and intellectual commitment is mediated through the stateless figures in Korean American literature, who I contend are haunting the transpacific traffic as nodal points of

“linked projects.” These points mark the U.S.’s biopolitical killing and saving life on Asian soil and racial exclusion and inclusion on American soil, as well as the ethnic or racial nation formations of the R.O.K. and the U.S. through their control of nationality or citizenship law in the post-1945 conjuncture. My reading of the displaced figures on the thresholds of Korea and the U.S., therefore, discloses how modern biopolitics, primarily designed to serve the nation-state’s agenda of life preservation and economic development, may manifest differently in each nation-state based on its historically and culturally specific and shifting notions of nation, family, race, gender, and sexuality and according to particular geopolitical and economic environments. In doing so, my dissertation reveals and interrogates a unique terrain of transnationalism where global governance creates dual sovereignty in a national territory and each sovereign state governs the population differently for its own biopolitical imperative, which has yet been much discussed in Asian and American studies. It further seeks to search and call for a mode of thinking, imagination, and politics beyond global and local biopolitics to form a decolonized, alternative alliance or relationship between the people over there and those over here.

The Making of Exceptional Empire/State through the Cold War in Asia

Today, “we” live in a so-called post-World War II, postcolonial, post-Cold War world, or perhaps as well in a post-racial, post-ideological, post-political society. Terms such as racism, imperialism, communism, and totalitarianism are perceived as marginal, obsolete, archaic, and belonging to the bygone era that officially “ended” or was “closed” with the fall of the Berlin Wall, which was commonly believed to be a manifestation of

the victory of America's liberal democracy, capitalism, and superiority. Today's neoliberal globalization era led by the unipolar empire seems to have exorcised the "evil" spirit of totalitarian communism, which Francis Fukuyama rather hastily hailed as "the end of history...that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (4). However, far from having reached an end to ideological or political conflicts, America's unipolar global power has proved otherwise. It revived old armed confrontations, from the 1991 Gulf War, dubbed as "the dawning of the Pax Americana" (Muravochik), and the Israel-Palestine conflicts through the War on Terror, which claimed or displaced hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and caused a series of serious international repercussions throughout the twenty-first century. The official and public discourses on the War on Terror were framed as fighting against the totalitarian, barbaric, "irrational, violent, and dangerous" "racial enemy," threatening "our way of life," that is, "enlightened, civilized," "modern," and "free," recalling "the heroic role of America in defeating fascism and saving the world from the axis powers" in the old wars (Jackson 41-53). Despite the change in international relations in the post-Cold War era, the War on Terror brought back the American Cold War ideology and epistemology, asserting Western "universal" values based on the Manichean logic, which further traces back to Orientalism and political paternalism of old empires. Calling this revival of the Cold War logic and rhetoric in the 21st century its "protracted afterlife," Jodi Kim contends that the Cold War has "plural ends," with multiple terminations in time and space, as well as varied "aims, objectives, purposes, and effects" (4) inside and outside of the U.S. Likewise, old imperialism also has multiple ends and has manifested itself in the

postcolonial era, which Jacques Derrida, who wrote *Specters of Marx* in response to Fukuyama's "the end of history," would have called "specters" or "hauntology" of imperialism that resist(s) death or closure and haunt(s) the present.

Nevertheless, as Edward W. Said ably points out, the U.S. empire has constructed itself "not [as] a classical imperial power, but [as] a righter of wrongs around the world, in pursuit of tyranny, in defense of freedom no matter the place or cost," and therefore has established and maintained a new empire without its "colonies" or "direct colonialism" (5-9). Emerged at the end of World War II, distancing from the old empires, the U.S. empire has been sustained and compelled by cultural and ideological formations that include desires and "forms of knowledge affiliated with domination" (Said 9), and exceptionalism has been an essential part of that knowledge. Criticizing America's imperialist wars in Asia and the Middle East in the disguise of anti-imperialist, anti-totalitarian policing or peace-keeping efforts throughout the Cold War and the post-Cold War eras, Said reproves the U.S. exceptionalism: "there is the horrifically predictable disclaimer that 'we' are exceptional, not imperial, not about to repeat the mistake of earlier powers, a disclaimer that has been routinely followed by making the mistake, as witness the Vietnam and Gulf wars" (*Culture* xxiii). The centuries-old myth of American exceptionalism served as a key element of the American national identity as uniquely egalitarian and democratic, "distinct" from, "better" and "superior" than, and therefore "exemplary" and "missionary" for, the rest of the world, including Europe, ever since the seventeenth-century New World migration, and justified its imperialist Western expansions throughout its history from its very foundation and colonization in the North

American hemisphere through its later acquisition, invasion, occupation, and domination of transcontinental territories.⁶

The making of America as an exceptional empire or a global *Pax Americana*, distinct and even more powerful than the old empires, though emerged in the 1940s at the end of WWII and began to spread internationally while defeating old empires bent on conquest in the U.S.-led anti-totalitarian, anti-imperialist wars in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and aiding the economy of Western Europe through the Marshall Plan. From then on, the U.S. began to build its empire in the form of political diplomacy and altruistic, humanitarian military interventions and establishments and financial aid in newly independent nation-states in political, economic, and/or social crisis, all the while supporting their decolonization, as an exception to old imperialism operated through the conquest and colonization of other sovereign territories. The myth of the exceptional U.S. empire as a benevolent or defensive force other than an imperialistic one was deeply embedded into and buttressed the Cold War rhetoric and policy of containment with a mission to save humanity from the “evils” of communism. In the Truman Doctrine, Harry S. Truman’s speech on his policy to send military troops to Greece and Turkey to forestall their fall under the Soviet influence in 1947 officially inaugurated the U.S.’s interventionist foreign policy during the Cold War and for the rest of the century and onward. In that speech, Truman asserts America’s mission in terms of exceptional moral and military superiority and responsibility to protect the disempowered nations in peril of the “evil” Soviet empire:

“One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to

work out a way of life free from coercion....[against] [t]he seeds of totalitarian regimes...spread[ing] and grow[ing] on the evil soil of poverty and strife... This was a fundamental issue in the war with Germany and Japan. Our victory was won over countries which sought to impose their will, and their way of life, upon other nations. To ensure the peaceful development of nations, free from coercion, the United States has taken a leading part in establishing the United Nations.... The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife...when the hope of a people for a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive. The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms. If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world—and we shall endanger the welfare of our own nation.” (504-506)

The principles of the U.S. Cold War foreign policy were to expand its biopolitical imperative into the other, poorer parts of the world, universalizing our “better” “way of life” nurturing freedom and keeping “the peace of the world” opposed to “their way of life” of rogue states “based upon...terror and oppression” killing “the hope of a people for a better life.” Armed with the creed of democratic liberalism and the biopolitical mission to promote and protect “our way of life” and those deemed deserving, the U.S. empire began to spread its biopower by installing its military bases overseas, as Bruce Cumings states in *The Korean War*:

“In the second half of the twentieth century an entirely new phenomenon emerged in American history, namely, the permanent stationing of soldiers

in a myriad of foreign bases across the face of the planet, connected to an enormous domestic complex of defense industries. For the first time in modern history the leading power maintained an extensive network of bases on the territories of its allies and economic competitors—Japan, Germany, Britain, Italy, South Korea, all the industrial powers save France and Russia—marking a radical break with the European balance of power and the operation of *realpolitik*, and a radical departure in American history: an archipelago of empire.” (218)

He continues to claim that “it was [the Korean War] not World War II that occasioned the enormous foreign military base structure and the domestic military-industrial complex to service it and which has come to define the sinews of American global power ever since” (210).

This building of exceptional U.S. empire through the work, life, and death of tens of million U.S. military soldiers served on foreign soil since 1945 and its allied forces and the exploitation of other environmental and human resources and the accumulation of capital in the occupied areas, however, would not have been possible without a politics of knowledge. The underpinning Cold War ideology of liberal democracy, combined with the universalist Western hegemonic epistemology, produced knowledge about the Cold War, legitimizing and imagining it as peacemaking and life-saving operations. This nurtured what many historians and cultural critics of the Cold War era characterize as the Manichaeic Cold War imagination of the world and culture between good/bad, democratic/communist or totalitarian, friend/enemy, our way of life/their way of life, and superior/inferior, as well as the policy of containment to prevent the spread of the latter

through spreading the former in other nation-states across the world.⁷ Moreover, the Cold War ideological battle between the Soviet Union and the U.S. was heated around competing for the moral nobility of their political and economic systems, framing their international intervention as an international responsibility to protect human rights and lives and allay human suffering and therefore as a morally and politically “just” one. Although the global-scale humanitarian system did not emerge until the end of the Cold War when an unprecedented number of humanitarian crises were created under the U.S. unipolar hegemony, Stephen R. Porter chronicles the evolution of the U.S. into what he calls a “benevolent empire,” tracing its multiple origins back to the Cold War and World War I and II. Examining the refugee assistance and related humanitarian endeavors initiated by the U.S. government, activists, and civilians, Porter demonstrates that during World War II and the Cold War, the U.S. government implemented a series of refugee admissions policies, such as the Displaced Persons Program of 1948 to 1952, and increasingly began to recruit humanitarian work of the U.S. non-state organizations and civil society, coordinating with the government’s Cold War imperatives and offering humanitarian aid to the U.S.-allied nations of Western Europe and Asia, constituting “philanthropic [national] identities” at the U.S. home front (Porter 15).

The U.S. Cold War foreign policy, organizing its geopolitical and military power as a benevolent or even heroic force democratizing, aiding, and rescuing the displaced persons overseas who had the same political affiliation, mostly in East Europe and Asia, regardless of their race, corresponded with its domestic racial integration in the post-1945 years. Christina Klein in *Cold War Orientalism* notes the shift in the U.S. Cold War political and social imaginaries from the containment model to “a global imaginary of

integration” (23). It was in the burgeoning Cold War climate in the wake of WWII that the Truman administration appointed the board of the first federal Civil Rights Commission, officially desegregated the U.S. military, and enacted the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, technically abolishing Asian exclusion although admission was very limited. In the climax of the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Bill was passed, followed by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, and anti-miscegenation laws was ruled unconstitutional.⁸ This discursive and legal making of the exceptionally powerful and benevolent sovereign state through its Cold War humanitarian intervention and racially integrative domestic politics as an anti-imperialist, anti-racist force against an ideological, morally degenerate enemy force and saving our human species regardless their race, was therefore enabled by waging what I call “an imperialist war without an empire” or what Leerom Medovoi calls “race war without race” (165). In his study on the U.S. Cold War biopolitics, Medovoi explicates the new era of race war and racial politics:

“Beginning with the Truman Doctrine, the rhetoric used by the United States to declare a state of ongoing, permanent war never referred to an enemy race, but rather to an abstracted and nonhuman enemy force (totalitarianism) that was *exerted on* human beings.... [T]he Cold War itself became understood as a politico-cultural surrogate for race war, because the ‘enemy’ represented an ideological and terror-driven movement, not itself human, that in the ‘second world’ created vast, dehumanized zones of life. Biological racism was repudiated, yet the idea of an enemy population inferior in its subhuman political organization was

retained. With the global condemnation of racial ideology that accompanied the defeat of fascism and high imperialism, the new ‘war of the worlds’ was to be exemplified not by differences in blood but (as in the divided nations of Germany, Korea, and Vietnam) by struggles between systems, ideologies, or ways of life.” (167)

By obscuring imperialism and racism, the U.S. at once flaunted and glorified its excessive sovereign biopower in its imperialist and race wars in Asia, however rivaled by opposing superpowers, with the right to take sovereignty off of other nations, occupy their territories, kill countless lives, and produce mass refugees and other exceptional state subjects in Asia during and after warfare, and then integrate some of them into its nation and families all in the defense of our (way of) life from the enemy. The cultural texts I analyze in this dissertation speak back to the making of the exceptional empire and exceptional subjects, mostly from the perspective of the displaced, by bringing racism and imperialism back, and speak of the uncontainable subjectivity of the exceptionalized subjects who deexceptionalize the empire and themselves.

Transnational Biopolitical Studies in the Neocolonial and Neoliberal Era

The critical biopolitical studies have been initiated by Hannah Arendt in her critique of totalitarianism and Michel Foucault in his extensive theory of power, governmentality, and biopower, and taken up by an array of European theorists including Giorgio Agamben, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, and Slavoj Žižek to name a few. In the last section of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, titled “Right of Death and Power over Life,” known as the beginning of the biopolitical studies, Foucault charts the

historical shift of political power and proposes a new form of sovereign power called biopower that “foster[s] life or disallow[s] it to the point of death,” as opposed to the form of power in ancient times that “take[s] life or let[s] live” (*The History* 138).

Foucault defines biopolitics as a new art of government that integrates life or *bios* into the realm of politics, which has been the dominant governmental rationality in the West starting from the eighteenth century, in order to subject the lives of individuals and the entire population “into systems of efficient and economic controls” in the name of ensuring the wellbeing, economic prosperity, and security of the society (138). From then on, life has been politicized and administrated as the political object and objective of the modern democratic state, and the prosperity of the society depends on the management of all aspects of the life of the population from public health to hygiene, fertility, mortality, and race. Biopolitics, therefore, concerns the nurturing and organization of the social body and the policing and control of social spaces like factories, brothels, red-light districts, resident quarters, roads, hospitals, schools, etc. For Foucault, biopower is distinct from disciplinary power operating on individual bodies, making them available and docile, as it takes a population or species as its political object, but the two powers work together to adjust individual and collective bodies to the state’s economic activities and maximize its economic resources and forces (141).

In Foucault’s analysis, modern biopower or biopolitics has two faces and works in two ways: one is biopolitical imperative to promote the life of society and capitalist development and the other is thanato- or necro-political tendency to produce mass destruction and death onto certain populations or races. Foucault argues that biopower or biopolitics has been essential to the development of capitalism by, “[inserting] bodies

into the machinery of production and [adjusting] the phenomena of population to economic processes.” Therefore, modern biopolitics served for the extension of the sites of production, exploitation, and political or economic activities beyond the factory walls into all levels of life (141). In his following work, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault extended his theory of biopolitics into the present-day context of neoliberal globalization. Under the current Western governmentality programmed by liberals, whether German *Ordoliberalism* or American neoliberalism, with a free-market economic doctrine, he argues, “there is only one true and fundamental social policy: economic growth.” The politics of government or state power is therefore reduced to “a Vitalpolitik, a politics of life,” and its ultimate objective and rationality depends on its capacity to create “a society oriented towards the enterprise and a society framed by a multiplicity of judicial institutions” that enable the market and the “enterprise society” to exist (144-150). However, inasmuch as biopower integrates and takes hold of life in the name of preserving it, it has the right to allow violence and death. Foucault states:

“Yet wars were never as bloody as they have since the nineteenth century, and all things being equal, never before did regimes visit such holocausts on their own populations. But this formidable power of death...now presents itself as the counterpart of a power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations. Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity:

massacres have become vital. It is as managers of life and survival, of bodies and the race, that so many regimes have been able to wage so many wars, causing so many men to be killed.” (*The History* 137)

Foucault makes it clear that modern necropolitical nightmares such as the Holocaust, other incidents of ethnic cleansing, and nuclear wars, are not a “return of the ancient right to kill,” but it is precisely because modern biopower is “situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population” (137).

While Foucault examines biopolitics within the spectrum of Western society, even when he discusses capitalism and genocide as a mode or form of subjection to modern biopower, his study on biopolitics has been taken up and adopted by an array of theorists and scholars across disciplines and geographical areas and with diverse historical and cultural experiences that seek to comprehend contemporary politics and life across national and continental boundaries. Among the transnational readings of and responses to Foucault’s biopolitics, I find two bodies of scholarship whose approaches and interpretations diverge according to their take on the abovementioned two faces of biopower. The most notably opposing ones are Giorgio Agamben’s apprehension of biopower to produce stateless life called “*homo sacer*” or “bare life” and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s celebration of its production of a new world order, global citizenship, and “the global multitude,” emphasized throughout their works. Drawing on Foucault’s notion of the politics of death within biopolitics, Hannah Arendt’s totalitarianism, and Carl Schmitt’s political theory, Agamben in *Homo Sacer* attends to necropolitical sides of modern sovereign biopower that produces “bare life,” human being exposed to death, with its capacity to proclaim the state of exception, the

suspension of normal operation of law, and thus render itself at once inside and outside of the law. Comprised of, for instance, refugees, illegal migrant workers, and camp inmates, bare life refers to a mere biological life that is stripped of legal status or rights as a proper citizen, and is akin to the figure of the sacred man in Roman law, who can be killed or let die without impunity under the auspice of the biopolitical preservation of the life of citizen-subjects. Criticizing Agamben's vision for his "negative limit[ing]" of humanity and life (*Empire* 366) and revising Marx's historical materialism, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, by way of Baruch Spinoza's and Gilles Deleuze's immanence philosophy, celebrate in *Empire* the "biopolitical production" of a new world order and of resistive, inexhaustible social energies and multitude. This world order, according to them, is created under the emerging, new, radically distinctive "Empire" as a global biopolitical and capitalist machine—the United States is an archetypical form of the "coming Empire" (384)—which subsumes all the social activities and levels of life across national borders without an outside.

Both of these approaches have been contested as Agamben's negative vision leaves too little room for constructing agency or a political alternative, whereas Hardt and Negri's positivism too quickly deserts and uncritically transcends the persistent models and practices of state sovereignty, government, nationalism (of both the "Empire" and other sovereign states), racism, and imperialism to valorize the unipolar world order and the agency of cosmopolitan subjects in the era of neoliberal globalization. Even sixteen years after the publication of *Empire*, neoliberal globalization is unevenly processed with the international division of labor and outsourcing, and individual sovereign state powers are surviving and sometimes getting even more powerful in response to the U.S.'s

nationalist superpower working hand-in-hand with the UN and NGOs and other globalizing forces. As Inderpal Grewal has put it, “‘the global’ is not and never was quite global,” but there was “a will to globalization that was both profoundly cosmopolitan as well as imperialist” (22). Nevertheless, I argue that these two sides of biopolitics continue to shape our contemporary worlds at the margin and at the center and across the two in varied ways and intensities. Necropolitical expressions of sovereignty have been taken up by postcolonial critics situating it within the colonial and postcolonial contexts of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Balkans. Achilles Mbembe, for instance, conceptualizes in “Necropolitics” how the colonial situation functioned as the Western sovereign states’ state of exception where politics and warfare/terror/violence were not distinguished under the colonial bio/necropower, producing the colonized into “savage life....’natural’ human beings who lack the specifically human character,” the killing of whom did not amount to murder (172).

I contend that necropolitics has though revived in postcolonial or neocolonial times and spaces in both familiar and unfamiliar ways. The neocolonial situations of the former colonies, whose sovereignty was once again challenged by the continued economic, political, military, and cultural hegemony and control of the old colonial powers and new global powers even after their official withdrawal, created an excess of state sovereignty without formal colonization. This doubled or multiplied state sovereignty simultaneously governing a national territory has often conditioned a state of exception and a necropolitics allowing “weapons...[to be] deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring

upon them the status of *living dead*” (Mbembe 40). It is under this excessive state sovereignty and (trans)national bio/necropolitics that individuals are subjectified as at once national and transnational subjects legally, financially, and/or culturally belonging to dual or multiple sovereign states, or as exceptional sovereign subjects left out off the national body and citizenship of the states and rendered stateless, or somewhere in between. This global bio/necropolitical governmentality has been often resisted by the still reigning nationalist or anti-imperialist disciplinary forces, as in the case of the ongoing War on Terror, and has also worked in cooperation with local governments endeavoring to adjust its political economy into a neoliberal one. The stateless subjects in the post/neocolonial nation have been produced and constructed by the globalizing biopower with the neoliberal market ideology that excludes and abandons those races unsuitable to be economic subjects and by the nationalist biopower that engenders, disavows, and takes hold of enemy or alien races that are presumed to threaten the security and prosperity of the nation. Therefore, this post/neocolonial situation posed by double sovereignty is in a way repeating the old war between imperialism and anti-imperialism, but departs from it in that the sovereign state often cooperates with the imperialist sovereign power in the mood for neoliberal globalization and capitalist development at the sacrifice of its own population. Those rendered excluded, however, are not merely excluded from the nation-state but included as a demographic exception to the normative state subjects and subject to the state regulation.

Borrowing the concepts of Foucault’s governmentality and neoliberal rationality, Agamben’s biopolitical exception, and Hardt and Negri’s deterritorialization of productive forces or what they call the “mobile multitude,” Aihwa Ong in her ambitious

anthropological work *Neoliberalism as Exception* suggests a revisionist reading of Agamben's pessimism and Hardt and Negri's positivism. Ong probes the neoliberal biopolitics of contemporary East and Southeast Asian states, as well as the U.S., over the population, especially in terms of labor force, geared into building a globally competitive capitalist economy by establishing neoliberal "states of exception" of various types. They allow and attract domestic and foreign entrepreneurs and high-skilled professionals in these special or exceptionalized zone, where the normal political, economic, social rules do not apply, isolated from the "ordinary" national space. Ong demonstrates the ways in which this newly emerged mode of neoliberal biopolitics calculated by governments and corporate elites has invested in creating "flexible" production networks through "these exceptional spaces" linking global enterprises with global labor markets, beyond the old ethno-centric, territory-bound models and practices of production, "allowing an axis of variegated sovereignty to come into being" (110). Exploring the geographically and hierarchically dispersed sites of exception—exception to the national juridico-political rule but enmeshed in the transnational chains of production and serving for the national economy—Ong attempts to measure both the gains and losses of neoliberal practices. Ong, on the one hand, points out how the "shifting latitudes of globalized production" created by neoliberal states of exception "continually disrupt conditions for granting worker rights or for forming working solidarity." They also serve to consolidate the ethnic or racial order of a state or across states rather than criss-crossing or subverting it by creating a local and global environment for overly intensified wage competition, ethnic labor isolation, or the control of ethnicized flexibilized labor pool in the periphery by co-ethnic entrepreneur and managerial elites in the center (136). However, she

contends that neoliberal capitalism also produces “the unpredictability and exploitiveness of the mobile multitude... ‘an excess of value with respect to every form of right and law,’” which Hardt and Negri have imagined, opening the possibility for “cosmopolitan thinking and feelings of solidarity between citizens and noncitizens” (137).

My turn to transnational biopolitics seeks to recognize, and ground my research on, the transpacific stateless figures within, the “shifting latitudes of globalized production” and politics in the post-WWII neocolonial and neoliberal eras, where the regulating powers of nation-states, including dominant countries and smaller ones, operate over populations within and beyond their national territories while geopolitically conjoining and conflicting on the uneven global topographies of wealth, power, resources, violence, and suffering. Resisting the models of globality that uncritically valorizes flexible, deterritorialized, or cosmopolitan citizenship unanchored from the control of the state or the models of subjectivity formed in (biopolitically-regulated) terms of right and law (whether national or international), my critical biopolitical study attends to the doubly exceptional sovereign subjects produced at the intersections of national and transnational sovereign bio/necropowers, often simultaneously engineered by nationalist and neoliberalist drives. I take the production and status of the stateless subjects and their multiple subjectifications—though their subjectivity is often effaced and emptied rather than multiplied—as a link between biopolitics and geopolitics in order to trace back the transnational making of the exceptional Asian American figures in Asia, especially under the U.S. neocolonial domination, as well as in the United States. By focusing on the status of “exception,” as simultaneously inside and outside of the law or norm, and what that means for sovereign biopower(s) and those racialized/ethnicized

subjects, my approach departs from both the affirmative right-based identity movements, premised upon the binary model of inclusion and exclusion. It rather breaks down the normative distinction between exceptionally “good,” assimilable subjects and exceptionally alien, unassimilable subjects. In doing so, it will allow us to identify not only transnational biopolitical orders and mechanisms but also linkages between citizens and noncitizens across Asia, Asia America, and America, which may form a basis of transnational, interracial solidarity.

Chapter Outline

Each chapter of this dissertation engages varying degrees, forms, and dimensions of biopolitics, exceptionality, and diaspora each literary text unfolds through its original aesthetic choices and strategies. In the first chapter, I analyze the literary configurations of the gendered and racialized body of the Korean camptown sex worker—a.k.a. *yanggongju* (Western Princess), *yanggalbo* (Yankee Whore), and the *kijich'on* (camptown) woman—in Nora Okja Keller’s 2003 novel, *Fox Girl*. The figure of *yanggongju* has long been an emblem of neocolonialism of postcolonial South Korea under U.S. military occupation and economic and cultural hegemony, or a forgotten figure of national shame that haunts the Korean modernity and diaspora, as well as post-WWII U.S. neoimperial ascendancy. This normative figuration operates on the binary structure of innocent/evil, victim/offender, and us/them, which either uncritically valorizes or erases the woman’s agency by obscuring the history of military prostitution or reproducing androcentric nationalism. While examining her stateless status in the complex geo/biopolitical framework of U.S. military prostitution in Korea, I analyze how

the novel re-maps the figure of the military prostitute moving beyond the nation-bound figurations by using the literary figures of speech such as metaphor and metonymy.

Chapter 2 looks into the figure of the Korean Amerasian, so-called “GI babies” in Heinz Insu Fenkl’s 1997 autobiographical fiction, *Memories of My Ghost Brother*. Navigating the cultural grammar and (bio)political, legal, social settings of a South Korean camptown in the 60s and 70s portrayed in the novel, this chapter examines the necropolitical production of death and unlivable lives and how the political and legal condition of the Amerasian and other camptown subjects turns them ghostly. This chapter analyzes Fenkl’s strategic use of the literary figure of the ghost in the novel to imagine an alternative politics for, and an ethical relationship with, the stateless subjects in and from the camptown. In Chapter 3, I investigate the protracted practice of Korean transnational adoption, which has displaced thousands of Korean adoptees throughout the Cold War and afterwards, and the subjectification of the adoptees as exceptional sovereign subjects across the Pacific by analyzing Jane Jeong Trenka’s two memoirs, *The Language of Blood* and *Fugitive Visions*, published in 2003 and 2009 respectively. While etching in her memoirs her lived experience of forced migration, cultural erasure, loss, forced assimilation, racialization, racism, and forced silence in the U.S. and South Korea, Trenka tries to de-alchemize her life and self defined by (trans)national biopolitics and represented in the public and popular discourses. This chapter analyzes how she critiques the biopolitical “logic of society” by verbally enacting the exceptionalized bodies of the adoptee in her performative autobiographical writing. The fourth and concluding chapter probes the questions of transnational, interracial/ethnic representation and solidarity raised by Chang-rae Lee’s 1999 novel *A Gesture Life*. The novel dramatizes how the

secured and peaceful life of a respectful and well-loved senile Korean/Japanese/American man in a white-dominant, affluent, middle-class American suburb begins to be shaken by his traumatic memories of the Pacific War, in which he served as a Japanese imperial officer in his early twenties, and his troubled memories of his adoptive daughter from Korea. I argue that Lee's novel juxtaposes the post-WWII American biopolitics and way of life with the imperial Japanese necropolitics and way of life to show the similar life-consuming mechanisms of the seemingly altruistic life-saving project of the U.S. military and transnational adoption. In doing so, it exposes the imperialist exploitation and racist oppression of lives most vulnerable, upon which both ways of life were and are established, albeit in different intensities and degrees. By representing the desires and failures of the male protagonist to represent a "comfort woman" and an Amerasian Korean orphan/adoptee and save their lives, the novel brings to light and problematizes the normative ways of "us" to represent "them," especially through the humanitarian "gesture" of assistance and salvation, and calls for alternative democratic transnational and interracial/ethnic relationships.

CHAPTER ONE

“Scenes of Subjection”: Camptown Biopolitics and an Aesthetic Remapping of the Body of the *Yanggongju* in *Fox Girl*

Nora Okja Keller’s *Fox Girl* chronicles a group of young teens prematurely coming of age in “America Town,” a fictional U.S. military camptown, set near Pusan, Korea in the 1960s, revolving around two girls, Hyun Jin and Sookie, who turn into camptown prostitutes (“*yanggongju*”), and their migration to America. The narrative is told in retrospect from the perspective of Hyun Jin who now is in her early twenties and lives in Hawaii with her adopted mixed-race daughter, Myu Myu. *Fox Girl* traces her childhood in the camptown and transformation from a typical Korean teen into a camptown service and sex worker and a stateless migrant worker or refugee. In the novel, Hyun Jin appears as a smart, ordinary Korean school girl, except that she lives in a military camptown replete with GIs, camptown prostitutes, and mixed-race children. Her best friend, Ho Sook, nicknamed Sookie, is a half-black girl born to an unknown GI and raised by her mother, Duk Hee, a camptown prostitute, and Sookie grows into a camptown prostitute like her mother. While at first Hyun Jin is portrayed as the only daughter of respectable Korean parents, her relatively secure, care-free life twists when the secret about her birth and lineage is revealed. Hyun Jin is a biological daughter of Duk Hee, who as a surrogate and genetic mother gave birth to Hyun Jin for Hyun Jin’s mother who was unable to carry a child. Furthermore, Duk Hee was formerly a “comfort woman” during World War II before she became a camptown prostitute. The traumatic revelation of Hyun Jin’s “tainted” blood and Hyun Jin’s defiance of her parents all boil

down to the parents' decision to disown Hyun Jin, which eventually forces her into prostitution.

While working as a camptown prostitute and living with her childhood Amerasian friend, Lobetto, now earning money as a pimp to go to America, Hyun Jin has a miscarriage, and the loss of her unborn child devastates her. So, when Hyun Jin finds Sookie pregnant (presumably by Lobetto), she persuades Sookie to keep the baby, longing for a family made of her half-sister Sookie, the baby, and herself. However, when Hyun Jin and Sookie are offered jobs as service and sex workers in a Hawaiian club, Sookie attempts to drown her baby daughter to go to America. Hyun Jin saves Myu Myu from Sookie, adopts her and manages to go to America with her and then eventually escape prostitution for good. While tracing not just the predicaments of camptown prostitutes and Amerasians in Korea but also their transpacific diaspora and continued sex work in the U.S., Keller's *Fox Girl* offers a transnational perspective on camptown prostitution, which lays bare their everyday experiences and struggles enmeshed in the transnationally structured system of military prostitution in the margin and the global neoliberal (sexual) economy at the center.

A sequel to her critically-acclaimed, award-winning fictional debut, *Comfort Woman*, *Fox Girl* was designed as part of Keller's trilogy of novels about the military and sexual exploitation of Korean women perpetuated from the Japanese colonial era through the postcolonial era, both in Japanese military during WWII and later under the neocolonial U.S. military presence on Korean soil. However, as Allison Layfield aptly points out, despite their thematic similarity, the two texts were received in the U.S. differently. *Comfort Woman* depicts the plight of Korean military sex slaves mobilized

during WWII, whose histories began to be internationally recognized in the 1990s, and her immigration to the U.S. through interracial marriage to an American missionary. This novel centers around a close mother-daughter-bond, a popular theme in novels, especially by Asian American authors such as Amy Tan. Unlike the immediate success of *Comfort Woman*, the reception of *Fox Girl*, though published only a few years later, remained rather cold in the U.S., leaving many readers uncomfortable and uneasy. Comparing Keller's two novels according to and against their professional, literary, and public receptions, Layfield presents key factors affecting the U.S. readership of Keller's second novel: the political climate after 9/11, its story of Asian women sexually exploited by American servicemen and displaced by U.S. military intervention; its literary style, which more explicitly depicts traumatic experiences including rape, rather than presenting a more "abstract" narrative as in her first novel; and its portrayal of abusive family relationship and unsympathetic immoral characters that compete and exploit each other for survival (72-79).

Besides, the scholarship on *Comfort Woman* is mostly focused on Soon Hyo/Akiko's trauma as a military "comfort woman" for the Imperial Japanese Army and its haunting effects on her life as a Korean immigrant in the U.S. *Comfort Woman* in fact portrays the troubling relationship between the Korean girl, Soon Hyo or Akiko, and the American pastor at the orphanage, who intends to "save" Sook Hyo by marrying her, and their dysfunctional marriage, which draws a genealogy of Korean "comfort women," or "girls," to be precise, as later taken up in *Fox Girl*. However, this line of thought has been curiously downplayed and eclipsed in the U.S. readership by the term "comfort woman," designating it exclusively to the sex slaves for Japanese soldiers despite its etymological

evolution widely used in Korea to refer to the military prostitutes catering to U.S. soldiers in the 1940s through 1970s, and by the traumatic experience and inhumane treatment of women in the novel, from atrocious sexual violence and gang rape to murder and suicide, of which the U.S. public would have zero tolerance. In so doing, the author's, however subtle, effort to extend the term into the U.S. military/humanitarian empire is refracted or subsumed by the social imaginary of U.S. exceptionalism that takes for granted U.S. global intervention and missionary work as benevolent aid and act of salvation and the immigration to the U.S. as a privilege. This reading of the U.S. readership reveals how the selective market and public reception of Keller's two novels in the U.S. is symptomatic of the U.S. empire in denial facilitated by the unconscious will to separate the U.S.'s military/humanitarian intervention in Korea from the evil, archaic force of Japanese imperialism, which the U.S. defeated, as well as the women's voluntary sex work or romance from victimized rape, which in this particular case serves to deny the blurred area between the two and liability on the part of the U.S. at the turn of the century. Among the majority of the scholarship on *Fox Girl* that have focused on the novel's portrayal of American dream and the diaspora of camptown, Silvia Schultermanndl also finds "Keller's treatment of sexual labor" or agency and "Hyun Jin's appropriation of the American Dream" used for global "upward mobility" problematic (180, 161). While I am generally sympathetic to these critical responses, my reading of *Fox Girl* turns to the certain links between the "comfort woman" and the "*yanggongju*" that the author strives to elucidate but have been lost or obfuscated in the mainstream readings of Keller's novels. My reading instead pays particular attention to its narratology, specifically its employment of metaphor and metonymy, and turns what has

been perceived as its flaws into strengths. I emphasize looking at the novel through the lens of (trans)national biopolitics and what it says about the complex gender and racial politics deployed across the Pacific within the specific historical, political, and cultural context of camptown in the Cold War era and in the contemporary, especially post-9/11, American domestic and geopolitical context, in which the Cold War is enjoying a “protracted afterlife” as Jodi Kim puts it (4).

Fox Girl emerged in the early 2000s amidst the sweeping ethnonationalist anti-American sentiments and demonstrations in South Korea, following the murder case of a camptown prostitute, Yun Kumi (or Yun Geun-i) in 1992 and the deaths of two female middle-school students in 2002 by USFK (United States Forces Korea) servicemen. Although these incidents were certainly not the first crime committed by a U.S. serviceman, they were the most publicized, unprecedentedly drawing public attention to camptown prostitution and sparking nationwide demonstrations against the unequal R.O.K.-U.S. relations, pointing to the unfair Status of Forces Agreement in Korea (SOFA), especially regarding its criminal jurisdiction provisions over crimes committed by U.S. soldiers in South Korea, as well as the enduring U.S. military occupation in South Korea. These movements signal the incorporation of camptown prostitutes in the *minjung* (grassroots people) movement, and Yun and other camptown prostitutes, who had previously been outcast and considered national shame to be silenced, began to be reimagined as national victims unprotected by the subservient or powerless Korean government from the imperialist U.S. military violence and turned into an instrument to stir up anti-American nationalism and revise the SOFA and the R.O.K.-U.S. relationship at large. Meanwhile, Yun’s death was also covered in U.S. newspapers not immediately

after the murder or arrest, but only months later when the suspect was convicted and being tried in a Korean court.⁹ In these news articles, any hint of the long history of Korean “comfort women” for the U.S. forces, the women’s traumatized and violated bodies and rights, and the unequal SOFA policies, was all effectively unquestioned and omitted. In both countries, Korean camptown prostitutes were either appropriated by the nationalist *minjung* discourse as victimized national daughters and sisters,¹⁰ or othered as unknown, unspecified prostitutes in Asia, unworthy of identity and less worthy than the convicted GI.

Navigating and distancing from such nationalist or imperialist imaginings, Keller in *Fox Girl* undertakes a transnational feminist revision of the gendered and racialized figure of camptown life in and from Korea to move beyond the dichotomies between Korean and American, personal and political, good and evil, and victimology and voluntarism. In her search for what Katherine H.S. Moon says in her study of Korean camptown prostitution “a middleground” from which one can “[view] even the most dispossessed women as ‘players’ in world politics” (52) or what I call “a third ground” from which one can view the technologies of subjection deployed by the two states, I argue that Keller instead tracks down the production of a camptown population, including military prostitutes and their mixed-race children, as stateless subjects, vulnerable to hyper-exploitation and violence, trapped within a transpacific matrix of camptown biopolitics under U.S.-R.O.K. Cold War alliance, and suggests alternative feminist alliances that might form metonymic connections and coalitions across national, cultural, sexual, and familial borders. By foregrounding the stateless and traumatized bodies of a Korean camptown subject to the local and transnational biopolitical order, the novel

critiques both South Korean ethnic and gendered nationalism and state violence and American neocolonial domination and violations in Korea normalized in the state of Cold War emergency.

Situating *Fox Girl* in the conjoining and disjointed times and spaces of the Cold War and the post-Cold War—the “post” here is a misnomer in Korea where the Korean War is technically on-going and the U.S. troops permanently stationed in response to North Korea—and South Korea and the U.S., in this chapter, I will examine the transnational biopolitics of gender, race, and sexuality in the post-World War II U.S. occupation and neocolonization of South Korea, as well as a politics of the other, other than the politics of life, portrayed and imagined in the novel. To accomplish this, I will particularly attend to the formation, performance, and alignment of the bodies of the characters in the novel by analyzing the literary trope of metaphor and metonymy embodying the figure. I argue that Keller’s use of the mythical figure of the fox/girl as a metaphor of the *yanggongju*, which the author calls in an interview as “a shape shifter” that transforms its perspective on camptown prostitutes and reshapes them into a more “sympath[etic]” figure, not only subverts the patriarchal order of Korean society, but further challenges America’s Manichean ideologies and biopolitical order of the Cold War, hinged upon the binary division between friend and enemy, and the worthy of living and the unworthy, and compelling cultural assimilation. My reading of the novel’s metonymy bespeaks how the formal device arranges the characters’ bodies in such a way to form “emotional...connections,” supplementing her metaphorical resignification of the “*yanggongju*” figure (Y. Lee 161). My reading of metaphoric and metonymic narratives of the novel illuminates the bodily agency that comes out of particular corporeal

experiences and metonymic contacts and ties between the fictive, yet powerfully affective, bodies in the text, as well as between those and the bodies outside the text, i.e., the readers' bodies in the act of reading. I argue that this ultimately leads up to transforming the road maps or "fate" of the stateless subjects from the camptown across their past, present, and future, and across national and cultural borders, prescribed by the biopolitical prerogatives of the two nation-states and deeply engraved on and inside its bodies.

Camptown Prostitution, (Trans)National Biopolitics, and the Production of Stateless Life

Keller's *Fox Girl* foregrounds the national and transnational biopolitical production and regulation of the gendered and racialized bodies of the Korean camptown to offer a critique of both South Korean androcentric and ethnic nationalism and state violence and masculine American imperialist military intervention in Korea justified in the name of liberal democracy and protection from the totalitarian communist regimes. Set in a Korean camptown in the 1960s and 1970s under the Park Chung Hee regime, the novel depicts the U.S.-R.O.K. cooperation in the tight control over camptown sex workers' lives and bodies. Although the novel traces the origin of camptown prostitution in Korea, which dates back to 1945, when the former Japanese camptowns were replaced and expanded by U.S. troops, an action that amounted to simply "switch[ing] patrons" (Cumings, "Silent" 174), it mostly focuses on the late 1960s and early 1970s when the camptowns began to be systemically consolidated and tightly regulated under the Park's military authoritarian regime (Moon 51; N. Lee 139-141). Unlike the 50s when

camptown prostitutes were considered caught out of wartime exigencies, in the 60s, public anxiety over the national sexual boundary with regard to increased venereal disease rates and moral and sexual threats soared in South Korea. Then, camptowns around U.S. bases in such large cities as Seoul, Pusan, and Taegu began to be cemented full-scale, and camptown prostitutes were demarcated from the 'normal' Korean society and regulated by the South Korean government hand-in-hand with the United States Forces Korea (USFK). The registration system and regular VD exams for camptown prostitutes were instituted and enforced with the establishment of "104 'special districts' [of prostitution]...including thirty-two military camptowns" in 1962.¹¹ By the '70s, the regulation was tightened through the R.O.K.-USFK joint effort of Base Community Clean-Up Campaign of 1971-76, propelled by the R.O.K. government's concern over the Nixon Doctrine, which signaled the reduction of U.S. troops and economic aid. In short, as Na Young Lee epitomizes, the R.O.K.'s government policy on camptown prostitution had changed "from *tacit permission* to *permissive promotion*" through the '60s and to active and systemized regulation in the '70s through the prostitution regulation system and regular VD exams conducted under the control of the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare, which jointly operated with the U.S. military (118- 122). For South Korea, camptown prostitution was needed for national security vis-à-vis the communist North, for the racially homogenous nation bulwarking the majority of 'decent' women from U.S./U.N. soldiers' sexuality, and for the national economy as a primary source of foreign exchange in the war-trodden country (K. Moon 8).

On the part of the United States, despite its official façade of anti-prostitution policies in the Korean peninsula ever since the establishment of the United States Army

Military Government in Korea (USMGIK) in September 1945, prostitution was *de facto* incorporated into the R & R (rest and recuperation) system of the U.S. military as “an everyday experience, part of routine, for the thousands of American servicemen in Korea” (Moon 37) to maintain its armed forces in the region. The U.S. military’s policy on prostitution was geared to “manage sexual needs of its troops who were separated from their families...through various controlling apparatuses, including VD councils, VD Control Section, regular VD examinations, issuance of certificates to prostitutes, and the operation of enlisted men’s clubs inside military bases, complicit with the Korean government” (N. Lee 227). However, it was the Korean sex workers who had to put through the compulsory VD exams regularly, not the soldiers, as the U.S. military naturalized the male soldiers’ (hetero)sexual desire and condoned its soldiers while policing and criminalizing the women (Moon 38-39; Yuh 25; N. Lee 100-101). In the context of neocolonial U.S. geopolitics in Korea, as well as South Korea’s androcentric and ethnocentric nation-building, Korean camptown sex workers were not just relegated to the position of third-class citizens or almost non-citizens, but also became the object of the biopolitical management confined within socially and geographically segregated areas to serve the R.O.K.-U.S. fraternity.

From the outset, *Fox Girl* depicts America Town as a biopolitical camp-like space in which the bodies of camptown prostitutes, their health and work activities, are strictly regulated by biopolitical institutions, including VD and birth control clinics, detention facilities, enforcing police and administration bureaus that conduct workplace and home raids. This biopolitical management of the camptown basically revived the officially prohibited licensed prostitution system, composed of compulsory regular STD tests and

registration of camptown prostitutes, devised and managed by the U.S.-R.O.K. joint forces. Duk Hee was formerly conscripted as a “comfort woman” for the Japanese military and is currently working as a camptown prostitute catering to GIs, living with her mixed-race daughter, Sookie. One day after school, Sookie finds her mother gone without any note and later figures out that she is locked up in the so-called “Monkey House”—barred facilities where infected camptown sex workers are detained without due process and forcibly treated for VD. Any Korean women working at the bars and clubs in Korean camptowns needed to carry a VD examination pass issued by government-operated or authorized private VD clinics under the supervisions of the R.O.K. government and the USFK. Those who fail to receive a pass have to look for clients on the street or are arrested by police on the spot or on the street and transferred to a Monkey House. Sookie and Hyun Jin go to the clinic doctor to find out Duk Hee’s whereabouts and are informed that she might have come to a USFK-operated VD clinic for a regular exam and been immediately taken into custody upon failure. Hyun Jin’s misinterpretation, “They sent her to the zoo.... She’s not an animal” (46), ironically highlights the dehumanizing aspects of the VD control system, treating the women like animals or criminals rather than as humans or victims, all the while condoning the soldiers and traffickers. The novel also depicts the controlled gates of camptown bars and clubs exclusively opening to foreigners, allowing no Korean nationals except registered bar workers with a VD pass. While Duk Hee is in the facility, Sookie resorts to her mother’s African American boyfriend named “Chazu” (a Korean-accented name for Charles) and ends up becoming his new ‘girlfriend’ in exchange for food and lodging.

However, Sookie's relationship is soon discovered and she is grilled by a government official and a club owner. The governing official taunts,

“‘Cho Ho Sook,’ the man intoned. ‘Where is your license?’ [...] ‘This is official business. Cho Ho Sook, is it true you have been working without a license? I warn you to answer truthfully; we have documentation.’ [...] ‘...I want to know if you are working legally. That is my only concern.’ [...] ‘There is the matter of license fee, health clearance, management and rental fees.’” (69-70)

It turns out that the club owner has bribed the official to interrupt Sookie's unlicensed labor, and she warns her, “If you want to work, work *for* me, not *against* me” (71), reminding Sookie and the reader of the tight cooperation between politics and economics in the “official business” of camptown licensed prostitution.

Fox Girl also dramatizes the ways in which camptown women and their mixed-race children were despised and rendered outcast by local Koreans imbued with the nationalist ideology of the imagined ethnic Korean homogeneity—appropriating the mythology of Tangun—that disdained miscegenation as well as deep-rooted Confucian morality that valued women's chastity, both of which were hyper-stressed in the andro- and ethno-centric nation-building of postcolonial South Korea. In the novel, Hyun Jin's mother—who later turns out to be her adoptive mother—always brags her racially homogenous family that “can trace its roots back to Prince Tan-gun” and abhors and curses the “trashy GI girl[s]” whenever she has the chance (123-124). She spits out, “I would kill myself before I let the big nose *miguks* [Americans] touch me.... Dirty

animals” as she walks by GIs and “GI girls” (53), which resonates the conventional view of the time on the camptown prostitutes. The author also depicts the racially hostile environment of the camptown, in which the “pure Korean” children are “forbidden to play with” those so-called GI babies by their parents who are making a living off of the U.S. soldiers and military prostitutes. Outside the camptown, a mixed-race child like Sookie would be spotted and verbally abused regularly by adults who call her “*tweggi*”—an offensive term for *honhyŏl*, mixed blood—or “trash animal” (35). The novel further represents the racially segregated streets of Korean camptowns divided into “white section” for “pale *miguks*” (Americans) and “black section” for “dark *gomshis*” (niggers) (5), as well as the color line in camptown club businesses and personal or sexual relationships, a replica of Jim Crow segregation. As Katharine H.S. Moon addresses, once labeled as black prostitutes, they could not trespass the color line and “were looked down upon by Korean camptown residents, white servicemen, and ‘white’ prostitutes alike” (85). *Fox Girl* lays bare implications of the racial hierarchy for black prostitutes and their half-black children: being an object of despise, marked as “ugliness” (3), and the lowest of the low in the cultural and social strata of the camptown, despite their relative economic power.

Ethnic nationalism among South Koreans was institutionalized in and consolidated by the biopolitical framework of Korean citizenship and family laws. The Korean Nationality Act of 1948, for instance, conferred citizenship to “children only through Korean fathers,” prioritizing paternal lineage to determine one’s nationality, to constitute a “racially pure” nation-state (Park 29). On the top of that, the patriarchal family registry, called head-of-the-household system (*hojuje*), included in the Civil Act

of 1957, prescribed that only a Korean male head of household could register a newborn child with his last name. Therefore, even though mixed-race children born out-of-wedlock were conferred Korean citizenship through their mother, they could not be officially registered under a head of household (*hoju*), unless they were adopted by a Korean man, which was extremely rare in Confucian patriarchal family structure and culture of South Korea. These gendered and racially exclusive citizenship and family laws of South Korea provided the basis for the exclusion and displacement of Korean women in interracial relationships and their mixed-race descendants from and within the nation (*minjok*).

In *Fox Girl*, this denationalization is symbolically depicted in a scene where Hyun Jin, even though she is a minor, is evicted from home, cut out of her family, and forced to be on her own for associating with Sookie who has dropped out of school and become a military prostitute. She is banished and excluded from the “normal” Korean citizens and residential areas of the town, and her status is reduced to figuratively and literally what Giorgio Agamben calls “naked life” or “bare life” stripped of political and legal status and rights, relegated to mere survival, and exposed to infinite violence throughout *Homo Sacer*, when she is driven out of her home without “the clothes [her] father had brought out for [her]—T-shirts and school uniform and shoes” (Keller 125). Hyun Jin’s clothes such as school uniform that metonymically used to endow her with a proper social status are now taken away, stripping her of all legitimate kinship built upon the patrilineal family register system. This is immediately followed by her adoptive mother’s declaration, “Nothing is yours. Nothing... You’re dead now” (125), which signals her

social death. Later into the novel, Hyun Jin is confronted by hostile folks staring at her as she walks along the streets of America Town:

I noticed my clothes, borrowed from Sookie: blue tank top that tied at the waist; skirt that ruffled above the knee; orange sandals open at the toe. I was dressed like a *kichiton* girl. An American Town whore... I could almost hear the mothers whisper behind their hands: Dirty. No class. Throwaway Korean.” (162)

Once became the *yanggongju* herself, Hyun Jin is treated like a social pariah or “piles of dog dung” to stay away from (53). The novel also depicts the institutional denationalization of Amerasian children in South Korea through insistence on their father’s nationality—stressing its superiority—and denial of their Korean identity. In the novel, Hyun Jin and Sookie pass by a missionary school for “the throwaway children of the neighborhood,” probably waiting to be adopted abroad, and hear the catechetical conversation between the teacher and the children: “‘What are you?’ ‘American!’ ‘Why?’ ‘Our fathers are American!’ ‘Which is better: Korea or America?’ ‘America!’ ‘Where do you want to go?’ ‘America!’” (59-60). Among those children of America Town, “Lobetto” (Robert), a half-black GI baby living with his ex-*yanggongju* mother, also counts on the day when his father brings him to America and identifies himself as “half-American” rather than Korean or half-Korean for that matter (81).

With the state policies, institutional apparatuses, and the social stigma, camptown sex workers and their bi- or multi-racial children were biopolitically segregated or trapped within the “walls” of camptowns, which were “blocking Americans from entering Korean society and blocking ‘normal’ Koreans from interacting with

Americans” (Moon 178). Camptown women including Hyun Jin, Duk Hee, and Sookie are “banished from the nation to the camptown, a space sometimes described as an island that belongs to neither Korea nor the United States but whose borders are strictly policed. For the most part, Korean women cannot get out” as Grace M. Cho states (11). In *Fox Girl*, Keller depicts the bodily contact of Hyun Jin with the boundary of America Town to signify the demarcation and immobility of camptown inhabitants, including herself, the throwaway children, Duk Hee, Sookie, whose bodies are trapped within a virtually inescapable camp-like place:

“I was walking the perimeter of America Town—following the wall past the school for the throwaway children, past the tombs where Duk Hee pushed her buttocks against the transparent door, toward the row of apartments where Sookie used to live. The back of Sookie’s old place brushed against the wall which enclosed America Town—I could just wedge my body in the space between. Turned sideways so that discolored cheek scraped the side of Sookie’s old house and my back rubbed against America Town’s wall, I forced myself along the narrow pathway.” (161)

With Hyun Jin’s physical and psychological exclusion from the rest of society, the fortress-like border image of America Town further heightens her status as an inmate of the camptown, isolated and contained to safeguard the ethnic and cultural purity of the South Korean nation, as well as the physical and mental health of U.S. soldiers. Within the sociopolitical context of the ethnic nation-building of postcolonial South Korea and the R.O.K.-U.S. neocolonial relations, the American dream through marriage or adoption

was imagined and fostered in the U.S. military camptowns of South Korea as the only way out of the military prostitution industry and the camp-like space.

However, this only way out was strictly guarded by post-WWII American biopolitics, reflected in U.S. military regulations on soldiers' marriage, immigration laws, and anti-miscegenation laws in individual states, which tightened the passage to interracial marriage and birthright citizenship. Discussing post-Korea War U.S. military regulations on soldiers' interracial marriage with local Korean women, and thereby on the transferring of U.S. citizenship to the women in relationship with soldiers, Bongsoo Park concludes, "American soldiers' marriages were largely discouraged through discretion of the Army commanders and miscegenation laws that were active in more than 30 states in the United States" (20). In addition, anti-miscegenation and anti-Asian immigration laws of the United States such as the Nationality Act of 1940 affected the children born to Korean women and U.S. soldiers, as they constricted birthright citizenship for foreign-born children of unwed American fathers. When combined with the patrilineal family register system of South Korea, this rendered the camptown population virtually stateless (Park 76). Even with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 that officially, albeit limited, ended Asian exclusion, citizenship conferrals to those children were still restricted and discouraged as the law required not only "clear and convincing evidence" of the "blood relationship" between the eligible minors and their U.S. citizen fathers, but also full dedication and financial support from the fathers (Park 75). Under this American biopolitical rubric in the Cold War era, shaped by the neoimperialist foreign policy and the still reigning domestic racism, which tried to keep the racialized bodies of U.S. camptowns in Asia outside the national borders, a large

number of Amerasians and their mothers were abandoned by U.S. soldiers and left behind in South Korea.¹²

Keller describes in the novel the racial tension of the United States during the Civil Rights Movement and the biopolitically maintained racial border of the American nation through Lobetto's 'impossible' American dream. In a letter to his son, Lobetto's American father, Sergeant James Robert Williams, mentions Martin Luther King's 1963 address in Washington, D.C. and dreams that "there will be a place for [them] in America" and of showing his son "the America all American kids should see: the Grand Canyon...Hollywood...and Disneyland" (95). Although he assures that he has not forgotten Lobetto and been working hard to bring his son to his home in Maryland, he writes, "the man is trying to keep [them] down" (97). Translating the letter, Lobetto says:

"I think it means...leftovers. Or maybe outcast. Yeah, my father says we're outcasts in our own land."

"Shit," Chung Woo said, looking from Lobetto to Sookie. "He's talking about us. He's talking about America Town."

Lobetto frowned.... "I don't know," he said. "My father says that the King was talking to all the Negroes in America...." (96).

The comparison mistakenly made by these children between Amerasians in Korean camptowns and African Americans in Jim Crow America, designating them as "leftovers" and "outcasts in our own land," stresses their stateless status cast outside the biopolitically policed racial and cultural borders of the American and Korean nations. Neither Lobetto's American dream nor his father's dream of liberal America is fulfilled in the novel. Such "fantastical" America "where leftover *gomshis* were crowned king and

girls looked like little boys. *Tweggis* posed in magazines and ugliness was beautiful” seems to be “an impossible world” just like young Hyun Jin who misinterpreted the letter imagines (99). Keller in this manner evinces how the racial and national borderlines of the two states were sustained by keeping the “leftover” or “outcast” stateless, containing them in a distant, safe camp-like place closely controlled by the transnational biopolitics of the United States and South Korea.

The Ambivalent Figure of the Fox/Girl and Metaphoric Transformations

Camptown prostitutes¹³ refer to the military “comfort women” or sex workers exclusively catering to American GIs who have been stationing in South Korea ever since 1945¹⁴ when the United States Forces led by General John R. Hodge officially occupied the south of the 38th parallel within a few weeks after Japanese colonial rule officially ended. The number of camptown prostitutes fluctuates through time and is hard to calculate, but as specified in *Hanguk Ilbo*, a Korean newspaper, 61,833 prostitutes were *yanggongju*, “Western princess” in 1955 (N. Lee 111), and as of 1998, the number of registered military prostitutes is estimated between 5,000 and 18,000, in addition to 9,000 women, a.k.a. *hippari*, working outside of clubs (Chöng 308). These women are called many different names, spanning from derogatory *yanggalbo* (Western/Yankee whore), *GI norigae* (plaything), and sarcastic *yanggongju* (Western/Yankee Princess), *yangbuin* (Western lady; Westerners’ whore), and UN madam, to seemingly neutral *yangsaeksi* (GI bride, lover, or bargirl), *migun wianbu* (U.S. military “comfort woman”), *kijich’on* women, and so on. Although each word has different connotations and implications, and some of them do not fully overlap each other, all is marked by difference, discrimination,

exclusion, and shame. *Yanggongju* is a loaded word most commonly used from the Korean War, along with “comfort women” (*wianbu*) (N. Lee 112), in a broad context for any woman who went out with American or Western men, whether military or civilian. It is a pejorative slang or a swearword, ironically and ambivalently implying both a prostitute/whore at the bottom of the social hierarchy, even among other domestic prostitutes, and a princess ostentatiously dressing up like a Western princess and waiting for a Western prince, the imaginary fantasy associated with their intimate access to, and contact with, American wealth and culture, especially in the context of severe economic hardship of the country suffered right after the Korean War and for subsequent decades.

As the varying names suggest, the figure of the *yanggongju* has been constructed as a Janus-figure by Koreans even in the early years. Although the women have been refigured over time in political and socio-economic contexts, the ambivalence persisted. Grace M. Cho in *Haunting the Korean Diaspora* epitomizes the women’s figure as embodying a set of opposing meanings:

“The woman who provides sexual labor for the U.S. military is at once a hypervisible object of loathing and desire for Koreans on the peninsula and a shadowy figure hidden in the collective psyche of the Korean diaspora. She is the Westernized woman working in the bars around U.S. military camptowns who is officially praised for providing R&R to the American soldiers and dollars to the Korean economy. She is both the patriot who serves her country by keeping U.S. interests engaged and the tragic victim of U.S. imperialism who fans the flames of anti-American politics. She is the woman who simultaneously provokes her compatriots’

hatred because of her complicity with Korea's subordination and inspires their envy because she is within arm's reach of the American dream. She is the dutiful daughter who works to support the very same family that shuns her...." (Cho 3-4)

Indeed, for South Korea, camptown prostitutes were from the outset wanted for national security, national purity, and economic development in the destitute country, and at the same time, unwanted as material evidence of the traumatic war, the subsequent partition of the Korean nation, and the continued dependence on a foreign force and aid even after the monumental year of 'independence'—a reminder of the impotent South Korean nation-state that had to sell its women in exchange for military and financial aid. Overall, as Katharine H.S. Moon points out, the women were generally regarded as a figure of the "social disgrace" or national shame that impaired Korean national pride and identity but was to be tolerated for national security and so were willfully forgotten and relegated to the margin in the South Korean nation-building process (8). This view was once more twisted as the women were eagerly mobilized and praised as "personal ambassadors" and "patriots" (K. Moon 127), sacrificing for sake of their country in the 70s under President Park Chung Hee's regime, and as a metaphor of the victimized nation by U.S. imperialism through the 1980s and 1990s in anti-American movements (H.S. Kim 191-192; Yuh 73; Cho 123).¹⁵

In the U.S., on the other hand, camptown prostitutes were viewed as sexualized and racialized 'others,' exotic, evil seducers that would corrupt 'our' American innocent young soldiers, naturalizing the male soldiers' (hetero)sexual desire, and were treated as criminals breaking the law, not as victims, all the while condoning the soldiers and taking

advantage of their cheap labor for the soldiers' R & R (rest and recuperation) (K. Moon 38-39; Yuh 25; N. Lee 100-101). Ji-yeon Yuh in her study of the history and experience of the Korean women who came to America as military brides states that the crime on the part of the U.S. was also denied among the U.S. soldiers who rather fingered "the Korean madams and pimps, not the U.S. military and certainly not the soldiers themselves" and as such, the women were "treated as playthings" ready to be "bought and...discarded" (14). These gestures are symptomatic of the U.S. exceptionalism, or what Ferguson calls "an empire in denial" (64) during the Cold War.¹⁶ By officially abolishing prostitution and "ignoring, condoning, and tacitly approving...military prostitution" in reality (N. Lee 196), the U.S. occupation authorities differentiated itself from the 'evil' Japanese empire, which conscripted the women from its colonies and made them sexual slaves, the "comfort women." The United States "represented itself not only as a 'benign' liberator... but also as a symbol of liberal democracy" (N. Lee 93), while insisting on voluntarism of the prostitutes and denying its own "comfort women" around U.S. bases across Asia from Okinawa and South Korea to the Philippines and Vietnam, all entangled in the system of militarized prostitution.

According to Cho, the Korean War and its "mundane practices...[such as] the indiscriminate [napalm] bombing of villages, schools, and hospitals, the rape and massacre of civilians, the burning of fields, or the torture and execution of suspected communists" were unknown to the general American public (71). And when the images of Korean or other Asian war brides appeared in government-produced newsreels or popular magazines like *Life* or *Time* during the 40s and 50s, they were visualized as "human war booty" or living "proof positive of America's superiority" (Yuh 1).

However, as Yuh ably adds, along with this gallant display, came an anti-Asian suspicion among the public toward Asian military brides regarding their unsuitability as ‘American’ wives or American citizens because of their alienness, and they were often associated with illegal activities such as sex work or black marketeering (1-3). Popular cultural representations of Korean or Asian women in the Cold War era, including *Madame Butterfly*, premiered in 1904 but internationally adapted into films, TV shows, and Broadway musicals, *The World of Suzie Wong*, the legendary eleven-season TV series *M*A*S*H*, and the Broadway musical *Miss Saigon*, among others, reproduced the Orientalist stereotypes of Asian women. In these cultural productions, Asian women, including prostitutes and military brides, appeared as a docile, weak, submissive, victimized, sacrificing “China doll” figure, on the one hand, and a mysterious, lustful, morally deviant, and/or money-grabbing “Dragon Lady” figure that lures American men or GIs to go to America, on the other, and sometimes a mixture of the two. The contradictory figure of Asian women as at once desired and hated, victims lacking voice or agency and evil seducers with overrated agency, namely, as a racial and sexual other, has largely defined the identity of U.S. camptown prostitutes and shadowed their life in South Korea and immigrant life as military brides in the U.S., where they are compelled or “desired” to assimilate to mainstream American culture and live up to the standard of the worthy American life.

In Keller’s *Fox Girl*, this ambivalent figure of the *yanggongju* is metaphorically fictionalized in the titular image of the “fox girl.” Throughout the novel, Keller adapts the Korean traditional folklore of the fox girl to call attention to the discursive dimensions of the construction and configuration of the camptown woman. In Duk Hee’s words in the

novel, “Somehow, in real life, we have to become like the fox girl” (25). The pronoun “we” in the sentence immediately refers to Sookie, Hyun Jin, and Duk Hee, but it may also encompass other Korean women vulnerable in the aftermath of Korean War and under (neo)colonial rule. Throughout the novel, Keller consistently plays out and problematizes the ambivalent figure of the camptown woman by juxtaposing the two contradictory representations of the figure through the variations and adaptations of the fox girl tales. In Korean oral folktales, the fox girl, known as *kumiho*, appears as a sly, demonized fox monster with nine long tails disguised as a beautiful woman that disempowers and kills men and thus threatens the patriarchal communal order. For instance, a fox woman often appears in a travel story, where a young man who is on a long on-foot journey to the capital city (*hanyang*) to take the civil service examination to be appointed a high-ranking official encounters a beautiful young woman seducing him by offering food, lodging, and sometimes sex and then “drain the men of their yang” spirit, “their masculine force” (Fenkl, “A Fox Woman”). Or, in another story, such as “The Fox-Girl and Her Brother,” a beautiful fox girl “eat[s] the daughter of a family and tak[es] her form” or born to a family, which varies depending the version of the story, graphically kills and eats the liver of the livestock and her family members who are mostly male, or suck their blood like a vampire, but is eventually revenged by a male family member, the last one who survived. As Heins Insu Fenkl and Sung-Ae Lee argue, the figure of the fox woman in Korean oral literature is a symbol for dangerous female sexuality and power that must be warned, checked and controlled. “The ideology underpinning the schema... are grounded in Confucian assumptions of patriarch, privileging sons over daughters, and misogyny” (S. Lee 135) that shaped the normative

masculinity and femininity of Korean everyday communal life. The demonization or elimination of female, often sexual, power is essential to confine or exclude its monstrous, seductive, and transgressive force within or from the dominant patriarchal social order.

Like the fox girl in Korean legends, the sexuality of the camptown prostitute is spectacularly highlighted as a fallen woman, socially stigmatized as an enemy inside that should be eliminated or excluded to restore or re-establish the national pride. In that regard, the camptown prostitute is largely differentiated from the “comfort woman” for the Japanese military in public discourses and even in anti-militarized prostitution movements in Korea based on “the assumption that one group of women were ‘forced,’ while the others were and are ‘voluntary’ (Cho 122). The Korean “comfort women” are viewed as political victims, especially during a warfare, under colonial rule, symbolized as the national purity fundamentally damaged by the Japanese Empire, even though many of the surviving “comfort women” were in fact not welcomed, and some of them later even became prostitutes in U.S. military camptowns. There was far less public sympathy for the camptown women, and they were overtly excluded. Their sexual association with American military servicemen, their proximity to foreign culture, as well as their desire for America or “American dream,” derogated as *Migukpyŏng* (American disease), was regarded as a betrayal of Korea’s postcolonial longing for independence and unity; they were seen as part of the collaboration with the U.S., contributing to its rise into a global empire. Furthermore, rape and other sexual violence towards these women became obscured by the evocation of the terms of “consent,” “choice,” and “free will.” Keller’s *Fox Girl* literally and figuratively dramatizes the tension between the binary images of

victim vs. perpetrator, coerced vs. voluntary, good vs. bad, pure vs. impure that morally judges the camptown woman based upon the existing normative gender and racial code. Literally, Hyun Jin's first sexual experience with three GIs undoes the clear distinction between voluntary sex work and rape as she first decides to give in to her lot to be a prostitute like her biological mother and half-sister, but later she changes her mind and resists but to no avail (146-150). Figuratively, the novel utilizes the metaphor of the fox girl, to configure the evasive figure of the camptown woman in between the slippery questions or porous boundary of voluntary or coerced, or hunter or prey in camptown prostitution.

The variations in interpreting the fox girl tale among the characters in the novel accord to their different views on the camptown woman. Hyun Jin reminisces her father's version of the fox girl story, in which the fox girl/demon takes a hundred boys' lives by kissing and taking their breaths at midnight but misses one "clever boy" who sees it all and hides (25-26). The original story of this lesser known oral folktale is "The Jewel of the Fox's Tongue" recorded in In-Sŏb Zŏng's collection of Korean folktales. This story concludes with the clever boy following the fox girl/demon and saving himself by stealing the fox girl's jewel of wisdom from her mouth. The fox girl-demon without the jewel's magical power is beaten to death by the village people (Zŏng 19-20). As Hyun Jin testifies, her father's story portrays the fox girls as "evil creatures" (26) that sexually suck in *yang* (the masculine force) from the Korean men, as well as their life, thus destroying and disturbing male-dominated society. In the novel, Hyun Jin's father appears as an emaciated Korean patriarch, displaced by the Korean War and financially dependent on his wife and the camptown economy as a merchant in the camptown. Although he had

Duk Hee bear a child for him to continue his Confucian patrilineal family genealogy, he gives up on Hyun Jin when she defiantly keeps associating with Sookie and Duk Hee, and identifies her with the fox demon, declaring, “You cannot dress a fox as a daughter” (124).

However, Duk Hee’s adaptation of the tale of “The Jewel of the Fox’ Tongue” challenges the hegemonic interpretations of the fox girl as a demonic creature having monstrous animal sexuality. She asserts:

“The fox girl was only trying to regain what those boys stole from her... The fox was once the keeper of the jewel of knowledge. She kept it safe hidden under her tongue. One day, a young scholar hunted her down, begging her to teach him a little of the world... The fox allowed him to kiss her, so he could have a taste of knowledge. But he became greedy and swallowed the jewel... And that’s why the fox borrows a human form, forever searching each man for that lost jewel.” (27)

In this version of the fox girl, Duk Hee reverses the structure of the original story and the ending so that the clever boy’s swallowing of the fox girl’s jewel of wisdom or knowledge becomes the beginning of the tragedy, to explain the reason for the fox girl’s kissing/killing of the boys. This inversion changes the whole frame of the story by rendering the fox “the weaker party in a hunter-prey binary,” turning the camptown woman into victims of national and personal circumstances rather than the plain, one-dimensional evil character (S. Lee 137). Hyun Jin also recalls what Duk Hee has told her about the fox girl: “we were in the midst of a war, and that anybody—even a fox in disguise—could get bitten” (29). This alternative story is told by a female character who

metaphorically recounts the unheard history and experiences of the camptown woman erased by a male-dominant literary tradition and social structures built from their point of view, and in doing so she discursively creates a new subjectivity (138). Sung-Ae Lee also confirms that “Duk Hee’s modification of the ending... points to a possibility of verbal agency” (142). As Sookie points out in the novel, this revised ending is made up by Duk Hee, but the flexibility or malleability of oral folktales—the fact that many oral folktales often have multiple versions with small details modified—does not discredit this unheard version of the fox girl story. Lee argues that with this “frame-breaking” Keller attempts to “transform folktales with the hope of making a difference to social practice” and structures (138). She continues, “Two procedures—recuperation of women’s stories and rectification of social structures—emerge from these [kinds of] retellings” (138).

Nonetheless, this version of the victimized fox girl is once again challenged in the novel by another adaptation of the fox girl story, “The Fox-Girl and Her Brother,” in which the fox girl is doomed by her own envy and greed. Toward the end of the novel, when Hyun Jin is driven off again from the bar in Hawaii at which she has been working because of Myu Myu, she begs Sookie for help. While taking Hyun Jin to Honolulu Airport, Sookie tells her a story of the fox girl:

“This fox had good life in—what you call it? plenty trees, grass, wild animals—we call *sup*. But this little fox not happy. She jealous—jealous of the humans in the village. She all the time cry: ‘I want warm house and clothes and shoes on feet.’... Little Fox decide she will turn herself human. So she make like a human girl and sat in road until somebody find her. One farmer, he find and take her home and love her like daughter.

The fox girl try to live like people, but she have secret: animal hunger.

One night, she cannot stand it. She eat the farmer's pig and chickens and still she hungry. She eat his goat. Still she hungry. She have to eat the farmer. 'But I love you,' cried the farmer. The fox, she cry, too, and say, 'But I'm hungry [*sic*].' (277-278)

When Hyun Jin is asked if she "feel[s] sorry for the fox," she replies, "Sure... Maybe that fox girl had a family to feed or something." Shaking her head, Sookie says, though, "The people still get eaten... I'm changing the ending before I get eaten... You're the fox, Hyun Jin. Making yourself what you're not to get more than you need. In the end, you'll destroy yourself and everyone around you" (278). Sookie's version of the fox girl with "animal hunger" resonates the conventional view on the camptown prostitute. In Sookie's tale, the fox girl, as well as the camptown woman, is imagined as an unsympathetic figure who has chosen to be what she is now with her 'free will,' refuting Hyun Jin's view that she "had family to feed" or other constraints that forced her to be the fox.

What makes Keller's text original in her approach to the ambiguous figure is that it seeks to go beyond the conventional representations of the camptown woman contained in the binary images between good and evil, coercion and voluntarism, victimized and treacherous, raising both the questions of morality and agency. These imaginations fail to "mak[e] a difference to social practice" (S. Lee 138), as the former disregards the particular historical, geopolitical, and economic contexts of camptown prostitution, such as the systemic exploitation and management, if not mobilization of their bodies and work for the security and economic alliance between South Korea and the U.S. and their mutual nation and empire building, which the woman is subject to and rendered stateless,

whereas the latter, however revisionist, ironically deprives the military sex workers of their subject position and agency. To transgress this binary framework that confines the camptown woman, Keller takes advantage of the fox girl's ability for disguise, metamorphosis, and transformation, which transgresses the boundary between human and non-human. While Duk Hee is putting on makeup around Sookie and Hyun Jin, she reveals the "magic[al]" power of makeup that may disguise the military bride, lover, and/or sex worker as whatever way they want. It can make them invisible, confuse the GIs, or protect themselves and ensure survival. Duk Hee says, "*Miguks* can't see us... Korean faces blind them... it's possible to be invisible to them... we confuse them... I think that this makeup is magic—a disguise that lets us move through their world safely. It's like the story of the fox who wraps herself in the skin of a dead girl" (25). In Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and "Algeria Unveiled" the veil and the mask function as signs of oppression, relics of seemingly archaic custom linked to backwardness and lack of civilization, showing the superiority of white culture. At the same time, they also serve as a means of liberation, deceiving the colonizers, disturbing surveillance, and subverting domination. Similarly, the camptown woman's makeup becomes "an ageless mask, cool and deadly, capable of swallowing the jewel of a man's soul" that not only marks her conformation to the social roles and expectations as a military prostitute, but also psychologically defends and protects her during the "war" with the GIs, together with the physical protection of the condom (Keller 27; 20). By appropriating and manipulating the disparity between surface and beneath, the body of the camptown woman becomes impenetrable and unreadable, a site of domination turned to a site of contestation and struggle.

By alluding to the metamorphosis of the fox girl, Keller furthermore attempts to trace the genealogy of the camptown woman by discursively constructing the figure out of a former “comfort woman” (Duk Hee), a female Amerasian (Sookie), and a “normal” Korean girl (Hyun Jin). When Duk Hee is confined in the Monkey House for having a VD, she is identified as a fox girl by Hyun Jin who comforts Sookie, “Your mother is a fox, she can take care of herself. She’s smart and she’s beautiful” (29). The novel then identifies Sookie with a fox girl. In Hyun Jin’s dream, Sookie appears as “a green-eyed fox girl with bloody, pointed teeth ready to take a bite” and “Like the fox who drains the blood of her victims, Sookie sucked and sucked, stealing the air from [Hyun Jin’s] body” (52). Later, Hyun Jin is identified with the fox girl by her adoptive mother who roars, “Get out, be a GI whore like your sister. Like your mother.” In this scene, Keller subversively makes Hyun Jin’s adoptive mother also take the form of the fox girl as “[s]he howl[s], raising her upper lip not unlike a feral fox herself...” (124). The fox girl in this sense does not exclusively refer to the camptown prostitute, but also encompasses any other Korean women who may also turn into one, which radically breaks the distinction and hierarchy between those women in whose blood “Nothing but filth runs” and rendered family-less and stateless and those whose “family can trace its roots back to Prince Tan-gun”—the mythical founder of the Korean nation with a single race—that Hyun Jin’s adoptive mother and many other “decent” Koreans deemed worthy of living obstinately hold onto in the novel (124).

This brings up Agamben’s notion of a “zone of indistinction,” the increasing identity of bare life and political life in the state of exception that exceptional sovereign biopower creates (9). Duk Hee herself used to be a “comfort woman” during WWII for

the Japanese military and is now a sex worker for the U.S. military. Sookie is a mixed-race GI baby who has been sexually abused by her mother's lovers and clients and becomes a GI lover/prostitute after her mother. Hyun Jin who has been raised as a "normal" Korean turns into a camptown dancer/sex worker once she is expelled from her parents' home. The genealogy of the camptown woman imagined in Keller's novel radically blurs "the distinction between the raped woman and the fallen woman" or "the good victim of imperialism" and "the bad Yankee whore" (Cho 122). Keller's novel echoes Cho's assertion that "the notion of continuity between Japanese comfort stations and U.S. military brothels is that some of the women among the earliest generation of camptown workers may have been former comfort women" (122). Yuh states that the camptown prostitutes in the early years and through the 80s, were mostly composed of repatriates and refugees coming from overseas after the 1945 independence of Korea without home or family to return to in the already partitioned country, including the former sex slaves for Japanese soldiers in the WWII, former prostitutes during the Japanese colonial rule, war widows and orphans, victims of rape by U.N., U.S., or Korean soldiers, and those from financially destitute family (22). Duk Hee was among those women whose lives were uncontrollably swayed by the tumultuous history of the nation, and her fate is being inherited by her daughters.

The "fox girl" metaphor is used in the novel not only to discursively reconstruct the figure of the camptown woman beyond the binary opposition, but also to discursively imagine the possibility of an alternative path, life, or future. After Sookie's identification of Hyun Jin with the fox girl in the story of "Fox-Girl and Her Brother," Hyun Jin is left with Myu Myu at the Honolulu airport and decides to find a family relative living in the

U.S. However, when she arrives at the address in Hawaii with her baby, she finds out that he no longer lives there and there is no way to track him down. Having nowhere else to go and no one to turn to, and running out any 'choice,' she once again figuratively transforms into a fox, an animal, or animal life akin to the "dead."

"Eyes rolling up into my head, I dropped to all fours, ear pressed to earth, and heard the world singing like the crickets, with that in-and-out beat of the tides, of the blood in our veins, of the panting of the fox. Then everything stopped, went dead, and I knew that it was all over. I had nowhere else to go. I was run to the ground." (285)

There is a double moment of transformation, first from a human into a fox, and then from the fox into a human form again. The second transformation signals the death of life, that of the fox's, with the words, "stopped," "dead," "all over," and "run to the ground." It later turns out that Hyun Jin has been taken in by a female farmer named Geraldine who speaks Hawaiian Pidgin English, living together with Myu Myu, and working as a farm worker. Hyun Jin's magical transformations can be read that instead of eating or hurting anybody, she has been dead and reborn as a human and adopted by a farmer, a female one, and finally has a family and home of her own, transforming the fate of the fox girl in Sookie's story. Just like Sookie's earlier meta-commentary, "I'm changing the ending," the author is changing the original ending of the fox girl story where the fox girl kills her adoptive father by depicting Hyun Jin's death and her resurrection and rehabilitation.

The last transformation or incarnation of the fox girl in Keller's novel occurs to Myu Myu, the baby of Hyun Jin, Sookie, and Lobetto. Years have passed since Hyun Jin left the club and Sookie, and Hyun Jin has been working in Gerry's farm. The novel ends

with a scene where Hyun Jin and Myu Myu are playing together. Catching a glimpse of Sookie in Myu Myu which makes her dizzy, Hyun Jin narrates, “Like the fox spirit—the hunter and guardian of knowledge—this child possesses the gift of transformation” (289), overlapping the opening scene of the novel where Hyun Jin remembers Sookie, her dearest friend, her half-sister, and the birth mother of her adoptive child, Myu Myu:

“And then I notice how pointy [Sookie’s] teeth are, how they are fangs, really, and how through the slightly open mouth, they are glistening, as if about to take a bite. When I wake, I try to envision her, but her features melt into one another; I see a smudge of black hair, dark eyes, a smear of mouth as if through churning waves....In every memory I have of her, I can hear her words, see her gestures, but her face remains a fragmented blur... [because of] money or love or other people’s vision clouding my eyes.” (1-2)

The body of Sookie here appears as fragmented, disorganized, shadowed, ambiguous, and monstrous, and unable to grasp, a figure that exceeds normative or conventional identifications, and as a figure of radical alterity to a bestial form. Grace M. Cho argues that in between the contradictory forces that paint the *yanggongju* over and over again paradoxically empty her, making her a “ghostly figure” impossible to fully flesh out or clearly identify or articulate (4). Likewise, Sookie’s face in *Fox Girl* is out of reach and inarticulate, overshadowed by “money or love or other people’s vision,” desires, wishes, and fantasies of her own and others. This enigmatic vision of Sookie’s body as a hybrid creature, foregrounds the complexity and difficulty of representing the historical, material, and symbolic figure of the *yanggongju*, whose meaning is so ambivalent and

unstable, crossing from a patriot to a traitor, from a victim to a criminal, and from a human to a fox, depending on specific historical, political, and social conditions shifting over time.

The discursive imagination of the camptown woman in Keller's *Fox Girl* is called on to engage in what Neferti Xina M. Tadiar calls, "fantasy-production," that is, how our material realities of "the seemingly objective practices and structures of political economy that determine as well as comprise much of the social life and modern history of nations" (re)produce and are shaped by ideological fantasies, the "imaginary dimensions of political economy" (Tadiar 29). Keller's imagination of the camptown woman in *Fox Girl* through selective metaphors expands the existing pool of signifiers attached to the body of the camptown woman and thus revisions the gendered fantasies—patriarchal nationalist anxieties—inscribed onto her body by the postcolonial Korean nation, in order first to restore their voice and agency from the shadow and second to change our social reality, which is not a given but is being constructed as an "illusion...brought about by the symbolization of our imaginary desires" (Phillips). The "work of imagination" in this regard is "on the side of 'doing'" or performing rather than "on the side of 'knowing'" and therefore is "a form of negotiation of agency" to reproduce or intervene in these historical conditions and the logics of the dominant social order (Tadiar 9; 4). However, as Tadiar makes clear, this is not to say that fantasy is "the imaginary representation of real [preexistent or presupposed] material practices," like the dogmatic Marxist idea of superstructure and substructure. She compellingly argues, "It is already in this 'reality,' in other words, that is profoundly imaginary... suffused with subjectifying meanings and effects of dominant orders of signification" (29). Keller's

imagination “as a form of work” rather attends to the work of fantasy-production of widely accepted material conditions and undoes the boundaries between history and fiction or myth, fact and fantasy, and material and imagined, to “imagin[e] for ourselves, creatively drea[m] beyond our nation-bound imaginations... and exer[t] that dreaming on the world in ways that we had never done before” (Tadiar 5).

Still, Sung-Ae Lee points out that this “possibility of verbal agency,” conceived in Keller’s *Fox Girl* that transforms the life of the camptown woman by modifying the beginning or ending of the fox girl tales, “is ironically counterpointed with another story” in the novel (142). When Hyun Jin looks back the moment that she was driven out of her home by her parents, she adds:

“Sometimes I think I could have changed my story at this point in my life, just by choosing how to interpret what my father said. When he echoed his wife, repeating, ‘Blood will tell,’ I thought at the time that he was acknowledging that I could be nothing more than a whore. But now, I can almost believe he was reminding me that I was his daughter, that I carried his heart, that I had choices. I could have chosen—can choose even now—to believe he loved me. Other times, I think *the maps of our lives are etched into vein and muscle and bone*, and that *mere words—however interpreted—don’t have the power to change anything.*” (Keller 126; emphasis added)

Lee states that “the counterpointing precludes actualization at this point of possibility inherent in the retelling” (143). However, my contention is that this metafictional counterpointing, that mere words do not have enough power to make social change and

that the road maps of our lives, the past, present and the future are deeply inscribed on and inside our bodies, opens another possibility, to take a different path from the intangible “mere words” to approach to the text and to experience the map on the body of the camptown woman. In other words, the limit of verbal agency of the novel is supplemented by the possibility of metonymic, bodily agency that comes out of bodily experiences and contacts between the fictive, yet powerfully affective, bodies represented in the text and between those and the bodies outside the text, those of the readers in the act of reading.

Metonymic Remapping of the Bodies and Borders of Family and Nation

“This is my weapon, this is my gun.

One is for shooting, one is for fun!” [...]

“I found a whore by the side of the road.

Knew right away she was dead as a toad.

Her skin was all gone from her tummy to her head.

But I fucked her, I fucked her even though she was dead!

I knew it’s a sin,

But I’d fuck her again!” (Keller 81)

The passage above is an “American marching song” embedded in Keller’s *Fox Girl*, which symptomatically reflects the masculine imperial desires of the United States. In the novel, the song is not sung by American servicemen, but by Korean and Amerasian children living in the camptown interpreting its meanings. Their interpretation is soon interrupted and “silenc[ed]” by U.S. soldiers throwing “a handful of wrapped candies in

the wake of the jeep” (81-82), which was an all-too-common scene in the wake of the Korean War. Apparently, Keller’s juxtaposition of the song and the candies is targeted at the fantasy production of the American empire as a generous, friendly, benevolent force, or “peacekeeper bestowing the gift of democracy” (Cho 51), sugar-coating U.S. imperialism for humanitarian aid. The use of metaphor and metonymy intersecting in this song on different levels makes this critique even more complex: the metonymic account of the physical and sexual contact between the bodies complements the metaphoric abstraction of the scene. The song first displays the metaphoric similarity between the “gun for fun” and the “weapon for shooting,” the whore’s body and the Korean nation, both torn in half, and the sexual penetration or rape and the military invasion and occupation of the masculine military empire into the southern part of the Korean peninsula. However, these metaphoric tropes make the concrete material reality of the penis, the whore’s body, and the immediate sexual violence or military prostitution rather abstract, conceptualizing the person-to-person interaction vividly depicted in this song to critique the principles or mechanisms of U.S. imperialism. In doing so, it moves away from the material persons being described and erases the camptown woman’s subjectivity by imagining her as a symbol of the Korean nation. On the contrary, the metonymic contiguity between the U.S. soldier’s penis and the prostitute’s body brings us back to the venue, the crime scene, the spectacle of violence and exploitation, and to the concrete, tangible, and material object that is being violated. In other words, the metonymic association or contact between the penis and the woman’s body, along with the spectacle of the dead body half-skinned, presents the violated body at the center, paradoxically highlighting the woman’s physicality, her hypervisible bare body. This spectacle of the

yanggongju's body leaves afterimages, resonance, aftertastes, and uncanny affects that cannot be completely contained or translated in the normative discourse of the camptown woman, which is what Grace M. Cho calls "an excess that cannot be symbolized" like the spectacular, horrendous image of the dead body of Yun Kumi violently murdered and mutilated by a USFK serviceman in 1992 (124).

Whereas the metaphoric relation of the Korean nation and the bodies of Korean camptown women conceptually substitutes or corresponds to each other, the metonymic association focuses on the physical contiguity or contact of their bodies and other individual or collective bodies through the dynamics of distance or proximity between them.¹⁷ Anne McClintock in her study on the gendering of the nation and nationalism has critiqued how women who have been "[e]xcluded from direct action as national citizens" are "subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit" to function "as the symbolic bearers of the nation." She continues to argue that within the normative framework of androcentric nationalism women are relegated to "a metaphoric or symbolic role" while men have metonymic relations with, or contiguous affiliation to, each other and the nation (154-155). Examining the cultural politics of aligning bodily and social space in the construction of the nation, Sara Ahmed also emphasizes the subject's metonymic relation with the nation as a collective body, claiming:

"[W]e need to consider the relation between the forming of the subject and the nation as metonymic as well as metaphoric, as involving the proximity or contact between bodies. That is, rather than considering the stories of subject and nation as corresponding to each other... it is how bodies come

into contact with other bodies that allows the nation as a collective body to emerge.” (95)

Ahmed further argues that the nation as a “bodily form of the community” is “*an effect of the [metonymic] alignment of the subject with some others and against others*” and is (re)formed and felt by the bodily proximity or distance (104). In *Fox Girl*, I contend that the author not only exposes, but also manipulates the normative metonymic relation of Hyun Jin’s body with the collective national bodies as well as other individual bodies, in such a way to challenge the biopolitical alignment and treatment of camptown women’s bodies through exclusion, separation, confinement, and violence. By dramatizing the bodies’ carnal or emotional contact, movement, and distance, the author is able to re-map the metonymic alignments of the bodies and borders of “the bodily form of the community” in order to imagine alternative social space and ties beyond the culture- or nation-bound models.

Well into the novel, the author problematizes the conventional metonymic association or physical contact between U.S. servicemen and camptown prostitutes by enacting a spectacle of gang rape when depicting Hyun Jin’s first sex/rape scene in five pages in detail. Hyun Jin first agreed on the arrangement, but her protest right at the moment, “I changed my mind.... I thought I could do this, but I can’t,” stresses coercion rather than voluntarism in prostitution. Hyun Jin graphically narrates what was happening to her at that moment in a matter-of-fact manner, insistently focusing only on the body movements and relations of herself and the three GIs, as if the body that was being violated was not her own, as if she was looking at herself outside of her body:

“I arched, crying out in shock and pain, and tried to buck him off... ‘Stop,’ I cried, in English and Korean. I tried to focus on the baby-face Joe... but the man wedged his arm under my chin to shut me up. The red GI angled my head so he could shove his penis into my mouth. I gagged, but he moved himself in and out, thrusting against my throat... the boy man took my hand and placed it on his body... They pumped, grunting and grinding themselves into me while I whimpered and tried to get away... the men lifted me up so that one of them could slide under me. After the other two positioned me on top of him, one climbed on my back. I cried out, realizing he was trying to put himself into my anus... I screamed. And then went numb... I finally understood what Sookie told me about letting the real self fly away. From far away, the real me watched them open the shell of my body, ramming and ripping into every opening they could. I watched them spread the legs open, splitting the inner lips wide enough to fit two of the men at the same time. I watched them bite at the breasts and *poji* till they drew blood, and saw them shoot themselves into and over the belly, take breaks, then come at it again.”

(154)

Instead of metaphorically abstracting or allegorizing the sex act to represent something grand like the effeminized Korean nation being invaded and disgraced by the masculine U.S. empire, Hyun Jin’s literal and detailed description of the event calls attention to the urgency and locality of violation of her material body, as well as the affective experience of trauma and pain, which would be otherwise unspeakable. The intimate metonymic

liaison between U.S. servicemen and a Korean girl in *Fox Girl* intervenes in the imperialist ideology of American exceptionalism, sustained by the Cold War liberalist rhetoric of freedom, democracy, friend, ally, and benevolence, salvation. During the sexual encounter, Hyun Jin experiences the separation of her “real self” from her body as an act of self-protection, however feeble it may seem, in a situation where she has little negotiating power to get her through during sex work, recalling Sookie’s remark, “The real you flies away, and you can’t feel anything anymore” (131). This also echoes Duk Hee’s remarks, “*Miguks* can’t see us” and “I don’t see them anymore.... Just like they don’t see me” (23; 121), all holding on to their impenetrability. Keller’s metonymic writing turns this scene of subjection of a camptown woman into a scene of resistance against the U.S. military and the South Korean government, envisioning uneroticized, criminalized, and invisible sex work/violation and the woman’s—in fact, a girl’s in this case—body being unprotected, violated, and traumatized by American soldiers.

After the rape or her first sex work, Hyun Jin cries out, “I won’t do this any more. I-I can’t,” and then she states, “I picked up the wire brush they used to clean vegetables and scrubbed between my legs. ‘No more,’ I growled as I ground the metal into my flesh. ‘No. No. No.’ My skin, already raw, broke open and bled” (156). The narrative here again focuses on Hyun Jin’s genitalia, pointing to a body part, rather than to an abstract notion such as the nation or imperialism. Through the spectacle of Hyun Jin’s pained body commodified and raped by U.S. soldiers, as well as the image of the dead body of an unknown Korean prostitute being raped and discarded in the “American march song,” the vivid and affective description of Hyun Jin’s self-injury performs a grotesque resistance, amounting to an act of protest, by “open[ing]” and exposing the harm done

onto her body and inarticulate affects of trauma. Her bodily protest and affects seem to carry more power than her feeble words—the three “No”s—by creating a sharp, visceral afterimage and transmitting some of her affects onto the reader. By materializing the biopolitical violence of imperialism onto the body of a particular camptown woman and her suffering as being of flesh and blood, Keller re-humanizes the dehumanized, disposable body of the racial and sexual other that can be “bought and discarded” with impunity.

Moreover, the metonymic deployment of the bodies in the passage above gets more complex as Hyun Jin’s spectral perspective, being separated from her own body and watching “it” from away or above, coincides with the reader’s point of view, identifying the reader with Hyun Jin as closely involved in the sexual and textual event. Just like Hyun Jin’s pithy metacommentary on her bodily status, the reader’s racial, gender, or class subject position is “disoriented by the change in perspective” (154). Through this shift, the reader is called upon to participate in this scene. It places the reader as the one who sees Hyun Jin’s body being violated in between inside and outside of the text. In doing so, the identification disturbs and transgresses the reader’s privileged stance and safe distance. Saidiya V. Hartman, in her analysis of sentimentalist narratives of empathy in the antebellum representations of the spectacle of the suffering enslaved black bodies in *Scenes of Subjection*, states, “By brining suffering near, the ties of sentiment are forged.... [which would] give rise to a shared sentience between those formerly indifferent and those suffering” (18). However, Hartman warns that this “empathic identification”—an identification with or “a projection of oneself into another in order to better understand the other or ‘the projection of one’s own personality into an object,

with the attribution to the object of one's own emotions"—is a "double-edged" effort for it may deny the other's sentience and obliterate otherness in the replacement of "the suffering of others" with his own (19). In *Fox Girl*, nonetheless, the reader's identification with out-of-body Hyun Jin, separate from the body being violated, prevents a full appropriation or occupation of Hyun Jin's body and therefore does not allow the reader to consume her body or subsume her irreducible pain and traumatic experience. The novel in this way reduces the physical and psychological distance between the camptown woman and the reader without displacing the other, and in so doing, forms a new metonymic encounter between the two, making the reader as a witness to the crime, rather than as a spectator who may transmute her pain into enjoyment or merely remain unconcerned or unaffected. This virtual identification or encounter with other, that is lived and written, further destabilizes the distinction and distance between self and other, center and margin, and livable life and unlivable life and may open up the possibility for a metonymic tie, bond, or alliance across national, racial, cultural, class, and textual border, alternative to the biopolitically controlled boundaries of life.

Keller's novel also demonstrates metonymic associations of the bodies of the camptown inhabitants to form an alternative kinship beyond the (hetero)normative blood- or nation-bound model. When Hyun Jin finds out Sookie's pregnancy soon after her own miscarriage, she imagines that her baby is incarnated in Sookie's womb and claims, "This baby is you and me, Sookie. It's our chance to be a family... I want this child" (187). However, it is with Gerry, a female Hawaiian farmer that Hyun Jin and the baby end up making a family through an informal form of transnational adoption, not with Sookie who tried to kill her unwanted baby, fearing that it may ruin her American dream.

Lobetto, who is implied to be Myu Myu's biological father, dreams of making a family with Hyun Jin and the baby, but Hyun Jin knows that he would put both she and Myu Myu into prostitution. Given the swamp-like system of camptown prostitution, Sookie's attempted infanticide, as well as Hyun Jin's abortion, may signal a biopolitical subjection and a resistance at once. In the senses that Hyun Jin's miscarriage may have been induced by Lobetto or his mother who wanted to get rid of the baby to put her back in sex work, and that Sookie tried to sacrifice her baby for her own survival, Hyun Jin and Sookie are subject or conforming, respectively, to the biopolitical order of life in the camptown where the birth of Amerasians as an unwanted population is controlled by camptown entrepreneurs and pimps hand-in-hand with the R.O.K. and U.S. authorities. Yet it could also well mean aborting the life of a child in order to set her free from the sufferings of prostitution and racial discrimination as a black Amerasian. Rather than taking the normative path to America as a military bride, Hyun Jin goes to America as a sex worker in the U.S. and manages to take Myu Myu with her. When she finally escapes prostitution altogether, it is with Sookie's help, not with a GI's, although a GI does contribute to her escapade by giving a ride to the airport. The novel later configures a quasi-family of Hyun Jin, Myu Myu, and Gerald, harmoniously cohabiting without legal obligations: "Gerry says she's made us family, *hanai*-ing [adopting] Myu as her granddaughter" (288).

Distancing from the hegemonic transnational/transracial adoption model that was established upon the U.S. Cold War interest in Asia and domestic liberal multiculturalism and failed to redefine the racial and cultural boundaries of family and nation, Keller rather imagines an alternative double adoption for Hyun Jin and Myu Myu. Although it is

not officially documented, Myu Myu is first adopted by Hyun Jin, who is technically her half-aunt, and is later once again adopted by Geraldine, about whom Hyun Jin is at first “unsure if [Gerry] [is] a man or a woman, unsure of how [she] should address him or her” (283). The transnational and transracial family Hyun Jin creates in the novel—composed of an unwed ethnic Korean woman, a half-black girl born in South Korea to half-black parents, and an American born and raised in Hawaii who speaks pidgin but whose racial, ethnic, gender, or sexual identity is unknown—transgresses the normative formation and form of family and kinship. They could as well pass as a gay family with Hyun Jin and Gerry functioning as Myu Myu’s parents. The intimate contiguity of the transnational and transracial female bodies of Hyun Jin, Myu Myu, and Gerry radically remaps the hegemonic metonymic relations of the bodies of Korean camptown prostitutes and Amerasians, associated with GIs, and the (hetero)normative racial and cultural borders of the Korean and American nations and families.

However, the novel does not simply celebrate this alternative family formed among Hyun Jin, Myu Myu, and Gerry, as it leaves a hint of suspense or uncertainty. When Hyun Jin first meets Gerry to ask Mr. Lee’s whereabouts, Gerry’s response reveals her Orientalism: “Singhand, Sigmund, whatever, Lee?...Lee. Lee. Lee....Oh! Down the street a ways, at 789, there’s one Lee, a FOB from Korea. Ziggy Lee...But he’s not there anymore. Good riddance, I say.... Strange guy. Whoever heard of a Oriental trying for find hisself [*sic*]? Thought that was for those *haole* hippies” (283-284). Hyun Jin is also aware of the stateless condition of herself and Myu Myu when stating, “I still worry that [Gerry] might turn on us, throwing us out of this apartment” (188). The transnational adoption of Hyun Jin and Myu Myu in this sense does not quite amount to a rescue by a

benevolent American savior. The diaspora of the camptown bare life is therefore completed neither through a physical border-crossing nor through transnational adoption in the novel. However meaningful it is, the border-crossing in itself hardly signifies a fulfillment of American dream, an escapade from camptown prostitution, or an emancipation from the transnational biopolitical grasp in the novel. Sookie remains “still trapped in America Town” (269) as she remains as a sex worker in Hawaii at least until she gets married—which may be transferring into another kind of prostitution—for U.S. citizenship. Although Hyun Jin has found a temporary place and job to stay with Myu Myu, the fear of being illegal aliens in the United States still hovers about them (288). What seems to matter though in the novel are the contingencies and contiguities their diaspora creates, which may open up a possibility for remapping metonymic arrangements of the bodies and the borders, embodied by Myu Myu.

The novel ends with Hyun Jin finding what Agamben would call a “potentiality that is not exhausted” in actuality (43) in Myu Myu, whose name signifies “no name” (*mumyǒng*), nothingness, is now turned into everything, with her name ever-changing everyday into “Maya, Mary, Mushu” or anything else (199, 289). Pointing Hyun Jin’s large birthmark on her face which used to immediately mark her ugliness and symbolically signify her tainted past, her shame in her “blood” as her adoptive mother used to say, Myu Myu “announces,” “Your face is a map.... Your head is the world” (288). The map created on half of Hyun Jin’s face that she has been “told to cock [her] head to hide” overlaps the map of the Korean peninsula that bears the history of the Korean War and the division, and its prelude and aftermath, to which her life as a military sex worker is intricately tied. Hyun Jin finds that Myu Myu’s face is also a map: “Her

face is a map—an inheritance marked by all who were once most important in my life... Lobetto and Sookie, Duk Hee and even my father. They have traversed time and distance, blood and habit, to reside within the landscape of this child's body" (289). The transnational and transracial female body of Myu Myu, a legacy or physical manifestation of U.S. imperialism, racial and cultural hybridity, and sexual and communal violence, embodies both nightmares of the past, dissent and repressed memories that confront the dominant imaginations of the two nation-states, and a hopeful possibility of the transpacific nexus and multiethnic future beyond the national and cultural borders, by "hold[ing] the world in her hand and sees it, loves it, as her own" (290). By using the metaphor of a body map, Keller's novel is once again diverging from "the map" of traditional folktales, which "were stories of transformation, of ugliness turning into beauty" (9), and from the map or rule of the national and transnational biopolitics that governs and exploits the life of the camptown woman in the margin to preserve the life of citizens at the center. Hyun Jin's and Myu Myu's body maps, rather than erase or euphemize their 'ugliness' or the nightmares of the past, keep all "the pain...and joy... here under the skin, in the bone and in the blood, in [their] jewel" (290). Yet, again, Keller stresses that the maps on the surface of their bodies are not stable or fixed but are ever transforming and moving on to an unknown, but hopeful future.

CHAPTER TWO

“Afterlives of Empire”: The Necropolitics and Spectropolitics of the Cold War in

Memories of My Ghost Brother

An autobiographical novel, Heinz Insu Fenkl’s *Memories of My Ghost Brother* (1996) recounts in retrospect a coming-of-age narrative revolving around Insu, a young Amerasian boy born to a Korean mother and a German American father. Insu grows up in a military camptown located in Pup’yŏng (or Pupyong as used in the novel), South Korea, in the 1960s and later immigrates to America in the early 1970s. In this foreign, haunting narrative, Fenkl portrays Insu’s everyday life and daily encounters with traumatic violence, losses, deaths, and ghosts. These hauntings are an intrinsic part of the protagonist’s life in the heavily militarized zone in Korea, occupied by a large number of U.S. troops permanently stationed across the Pacific in the aftermath of the Korean War, commonly labelled as the “Forgotten War” in the U.S. (Cumings, *The Korean War* 62), and then in the midst of the Vietnam War. As Elaine Kim articulates, Fenkl’s novel offers a very rare voice of a native informant of the camptown “having returned to the imperial center...speak[ing] back...in English” to the normative Cold War representations and narratives about Korea visualized in popular media or written by U.S. military personnel and religious groups. In these representations, sex workers and Amerasians are largely absent or, when they appear, are imagined as an exotic, dangerous, sexualized racial other and a beneficiary of humanitarian rescue and American liberal democracy or a military mascot, respectively, from a “very different positionality” (80).¹⁸ While the Korean War is forgotten between America’s biggest wars, World War II and the Vietnam War, the forgetting of the history of camptown prostitution has been enforced or willfully

performed in American public and private sites as a national and familial shame or secret. As suggested in its title, Fenkl's novel capitalizes "memories," particularly through a "ghost brother" who turns out to be Insu's mixed-race half-brother given up for transnational adoption and lost in his move to the U.S. The novel performs a work of remembering the history of American military prostitution in Korea and its resulting population, including Amerasians and military sex workers largely forgotten in the social imaginary of the U.S. and South Korea and in the rhetoric of alliance, democracy, and progress from an indigenous perspective.

To remember the disempowered and precarious life of the camptown, Fenkl emphasizes the psyches of the camptown inhabitants and creates a haunted narrative space filled with ghosts, phantoms, goblins, and other mythical creatures. While Fenkl's incorporation of Korean folktales, sagas, and shamanist beliefs rooted in Korean indigenous nature and culture into his novel sets a mystical ambience, the ghosts in the novel are firmly grounded on the political reality of the camptown governed by the heightened sovereign powers of the United States and South Korea under U.S.-R.O.K. security alliance or neocolonial relations during and beyond the Cold War era. This doubled sovereign governance created the camptown as an exceptional space, where normal rules do not apply, and ironically created an exceptional population who are excluded from, and unprotected by, either of the states, and therefore vulnerable to violence, annihilation, and death. Like Keller, Fenkl in *Memories of My Ghost Brother* dramatizes the ways in which the camptown inhabitants, whether sex workers, mixed-race children, or other vulnerable characters, are turned ghostly—literally and metaphorically—living on the verge of death and struggling to survive in this state of

exception. Yet, contrary to Keller who depicts the camptown as a subdued place under U.S. military dominance and economic exploitation by locals where no other hope but for escape is allowed for its inhabitants, Fenkl offers a more vivid and lively living environment of the camptown. It functions not simply as a colony but also as a surrogate empire that bridges the U.S. and Vietnam during the Vietnam War and where camptown prostitutes with varying amount of agency make a living not only through military prostitution but also through black marketeering U.S. commodities. Fenkl though does not find this as necessarily empowering the camptown inhabitants. He rather shows disbelief in this kind of empowerment, as it is achieved by taking part in the U.S. biopolitical empire that takes other, even more, vulnerable lives in Southeast Asia. Portraying the subjection of vulnerable, spectral lives in Korea and in elsewhere to the national and transnational militarist bio/necropolitical machinery geared into the mutual construction of the U.S. empire and South Korea's ethnic nation and economic ascendance into what I call a "satellite empire" or what Jin-kyung Lee calls "subempire" in Asia, bridging the geographical and economic gap between developing Asian countries and the U.S. empire (J. Lee 19), Fenkl instead seeks for an ethical transnational and transracial relationship.

I argue that Fenkl's configuration of this vulnerable camptown population as a ghostly form of life or existence between life and death does not simply aim to emphasize their victimization or pathology, but can also be read as an effort to conceive the possibility of an ethics with, and a politics of, for, and by the ghostly other to redress the past, transform the present, and imagine a different, decolonized future. Attending to Fenkl's rendering of the experiences of the camptown natives through the figure of the

ghost is particularly fruitful to make legible multiple types and faces of ghostly existence opened up in the particular state of exception established in the camptown, in which inhabitants have been controlled and rendered insensible by the technologies and practices of seeing and knowing and impelled not to think beyond the present state or imagine a different future from the present. The ghost, which signifies not only death but also its afterlife, taking a liminal form and state between life and death, living and dead, presence and absence, and being and non-being, may manifest the spectral power of the social order or political, economic, legal system of governance within and beyond the national border(s). For instance, Jodi Kim calls the “Cold War epistemology” of the Manichean mindset dividing the world up into two categories of good and evil, light and darkness, friend and enemy that still haunts our spiritual world and keeps returning as in the public phobia of the “axis of evil” and the “war on terror” in the U.S., having a “protracted afterlife” even after its official end, which Jodi Kim characterizes as “multiple ends of the Cold War,” under the auspice of America’s exceptional imperialism (5). By illuminating the ghostly subjects of the camptown as ghosts of the Cold War, of a different kind, also living an afterlife, I contend that Fenkl’s novel foregrounds the spectral but formidable forces of the local and global bio/necropolitics deployed in Asia—South Korea and Vietnam—during and even after the Cold War that engender the stateless, ghostly subjects in and beyond the South Korean camptown, but that again are haunted by the specters of its own.

In this chapter, by tracing the formation of the ghostly subjects of the camptown in Fenkl’s contemporary and transnational “ghost story,” I examine the figure of the ghost as a way of understanding the stateless subjects who have been generated through

the U.S. militarist imperial expansion and South Korea's involvement into a satellite empire but whose presence and labor have been buried in (trans)national and individual memories. My inquiry begins with the exceptionalization of the South Korean camptown and its inhabitants under the persistent (neo)colonial presence and dominance of the U.S. military forces. My research of the camptown history and analysis of Fenkl's fictional camptown reveal that this exceptionalization is not an exception or excess, but an example of the contemporary global politics that often results in mass displacement of refugees and stateless persons. The chapter then moves onto the bio/necropolitical subjectification of the camptown life to literal, social, psychological, and/or symbolic death through inclusive exclusion—included in national or political life only in the form of exclusion—to preserve the life of the U.S. empire, the South Korean satellite empire, and their normative citizens and families. Finally, I interrogate the spectrality of the ghostly subjects and the possible agency they may possess and exercise against the spectralizing politics of life and death in the novel. My reading particularly pays attention to Insu's ethical work of mourning and grieving of the unsanctified deaths of the ghostly subjects through identifying with them, which I read as an ethical gesture against the normalizing work of exorcism or conjuration and a political act of forming an alternative alliance among the ghostly subjects.

My analysis of Fenkl's novel is indebted to the ground-breaking studies of Jodi Kim who situates the text within the Asian American cultural critique, which she calls “an *unsettling hermeneutic*,” against America's “Cold War epistemology” and exceptionalism serving for its imperialist “ends” and Grace M. Cho whose psychoanalytic approach to camptown prostitution interrogates the “process of nurturing

a ghost through shame” across generations and nations (J. Kim 3-5; Cho 3). Both Kim and Cho are quick to articulate in their analyses of the text the biopolitical rule of the camptown within the frameworks of America’s global imperialist dominance and South Korea’s militarized modernity (J. Kim 166-167; Cho 110). Expanding on their invaluable insights on biopolitics, haunting, and ghosts, my analysis attempts to unpack complex historical and conceptual dimensions of the ghostly living and interrogate further the ethics and politics of the ghostly life: what Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx* calls “learn[ing] to live with ghosts” through “spectropolitics,” a powerful ethico-political counter-conjuration of the ghostly subjects to the national and transnational bio/necropolitical conjuration (xvii-xviii, 133).

Camptown Prostitution in the Neocolonial State of Exception

From the beginning, Fenkl makes it clear how death and living with ghosts have been a way of life ever since the Japanese rule and the Korean War, which continued in postcolonial and postwar Korea with the persistent presence of American military forces during the prolonged Cold War. The novel begins with the first-person narrator Insu as a young Amerasian boy stepping into the Japanese Colonel’s house that his maternal family, including his nameless mother, her younger sister Emo, Emo’s Korean husband Hyongbu, Insu’s cousins Gannan, Haesuni, and Yongsu, just moved into. The readers are informed of the history of the house, which is located on the hillside of the camptown of Pup’yŏng and was “built during the Japanese Occupation by a Colonel who tortured and murdered tens of thousands of Koreans for his amusement” (5). The Colonel killed himself when the Imperial Japanese Army was defeated by the U.S. Marines during

WWII, and his ashes were spread in the garden. The house was then owned by a wealthy Korean merchant, who was mistakenly shot by a GI during the Korean War, was occupied by war refugees, many of whom died in it, and is now rented by the merchant's nephew to the family of a Korean woman (Insu's mother) married to an American serviceman and another Korean family that returned from Japan.

The changes made to the Colonel's house manifest the modern history of South Korea through the transfer of the former imperialist power to a new one. Within weeks from Korea's independence from the Japanese empire in 1945, the United States declared Korea as one of its enemies and seized power in the southern half of the Korean peninsula, establishing the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK). As an interim military rule for the transitional period of setting up the Republic of Korea, a democratic government of South Korea independent from North Korea, the USAMGIK was instituted in the name of safeguarding South Korea from the communist North for the time being. Although the transition of power in the South was confronted by vehement resistance and uprisings, it was "smoothly" made with the U.S. military government utilizing Japanese colonial officials, apparatus, policies, and military bases and depots. The security alliance between South Korea and the United States, formed with the establishment of the U.S.-sanctioned R.O.K. government, was consolidated during and after the Korean War with the U.S.-R.O.K. Mutual Defense Treaty, which officially granted the United States the right to station U.S. troops in South Korea indefinitely. This created what Giorgio Agamben calls a permanent "state of exception"—suspension of normal operation of law—in which the state of Cold War emergency becomes the rule, justifying U.S. neocolonial authority and military presence

across the country for more than seventy years, as well as authoritarian and/or military regimes of South Korea during the first four decades.¹⁹

The transfer of imperialist power also corresponds to the history of military prostitution in Korea. Unlike the popular notion that U.S. military camptowns first emerged from the wartime exigencies during the Korean War, military prostitution in Korea dates back to the regime of the U.S. Military Government when the first camptown was built in Pup'yŏng in 1945 (Yuh 19-20), and was instituted as a colonial legacy transferred from the Japanese empire to the U.S. neocolonial power. Camptowns as military comfort stations exclusively for military use were originally constructed in Korea under Imperial Japan's licensed prostitution system to confine and control prostitutes in separate restricted areas that were later taken over by the U.S. Army Military Government. As soon as U.S. military bases were installed across the southern peninsula, so did appear military comfort stations around the major bases. The USAMG in Korea replaced and expanded the former Japanese colonial military bases and supply depots (N.Y. Lee 77-78). The U.S. military camp of Pup'yŏng, known as Camp Market, was also constructed in the mid-1930s by the Imperial Japanese Army and replaced by the U.S. Army to use it for a Depot Support Activity Far East (DSAFE) post and Army Support Command Korea (ASCOM). As Bruce Cumings puts it, "[i]n 1945 the camp towns just switched patrons" ("Silent" 174).

In *Memories of My Ghost Brother*, there is more evidence of the military camptown as a legacy of the Japanese rule and its transmission to the American. When Insu later moves to a different neighborhood in the camptown that has a Japanese name, Tatagumi, closer to the ASCOM, he plays with his friends recounting a chant that goes,

“One: A Japanese guy / Two: Took a pretty maiden / Three: And went across the 38th parallel. Four: Looking all around / Five: He saw that it was deepest night / Six: That silly girl / Seven: Took off her skirt. / Eight: And on a prick as thin as an arm / Nine: She put her hole / Ten: And fucked” (143-146). As the children chant the ninth and tenth lines, an old woman who happens to pass by scolds them. The area of the ASCOM itself, which served as a large supply depot and arsenal for the Japanese Empire, became one of the first military facilities replaced by the U.S. Military Government in 1945 (N. Y. Lee 78). The narrator describes how Insu and his friends used to walk along and play around the railroad, originally built during the Japanese rule to carry war supplies to Manchuria for the Imperial Japanese Army, now is leading into the ASCOM, obviously to support the U.S. troops in Korea and Vietnam (152). Fenkl’s fiction depicts the camptown with a Japanese name as a post/neocolonial space filled with old colonial legacies being taken over by the U.S. military and mixed with new legacies, which as Kun Jong Lee keenly points out is perfectly manifest in the camptown pidgins of Japanese or American origins used by GIs and other camptown inhabitants such as *taksan*, *ainoko*, *baby-san*, *boy-san*, *mama-san*, *papa-san*, *surikoda*, and *daeri* (337).

Camptowns surrounding U.S. military bases in Korea are constructed as a deterritorialized transnational space or exceptional sovereign space, materialized and imagined by the exceptional sovereign powers as they are technically the R.O.K. sovereign territories, but heavily haunted by Americans, ruled by U.S. military policies and the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) criminal jurisdiction,²⁰ and do not belong to either mainstream Korean or American society. Composed of concentrated, squalid red-light districts with authorized bars and clubs exclusively catering to GIs and off-limit for

Korean nationals except for workers, highly Americanized commercial districts replete with American goods and restaurants to meet the desires and needs of American soldiers, and residential areas occupied by U.S. military personnel and Koreans working for them, camptowns were mainly built to serve GIs stationing in Korea on their off-duty time. They are an exotic, alien space in Korea, named after places in the U.S. such as Texas, Chicago, or Hialeah, “a chaotic world of drugs, sex, crime, and black market deals in PX goods” (Yuh 22), and an isolated, island-like zone demarcated from the ordinary, mainstream Korean society to prevent immediate contacts with American military personnel, and vice versa. Although U.S. military bases in Korea are not a sovereign U.S. territory, U.S. laws are applied and enforced within the bases, as well as in off-base areas when American servicemen are involved in crime under the SOFA, a security agreement between the R.O.K. as a host country and the U.S.A. as a foreign nation stationing military forces in that country that became effective in 1967. While the U.S. military bases and camptowns in Korea remain a territory of the R.O.K., they are patrolled by American military police (MP) and closely controlled by the U.S. military rule and hegemony more than Korean juridical order to protect health and safety of the U.S. soldiers and regulate their off-base activities and combat-readiness, functioning as “borderlands” between the two sovereign states as Mark L. Gillem puts it in his study of American overseas military bases in Korea (53):

According to Senior Master Sergeant Andy Eskew, the superintendent of operations for the Security Police Squadron at Osan Air Base, “the Korean National Police allow up to a 10-mile radius around the base for us to patrol, which isn’t necessary here since our activities are limited to a five

or six blocks radius....” In the end, neither the Koreans nor the Americans are protecting the rights of the women working as prostitutes in these borderlands. This unique zoning in many ways puts the women out on their own, at the mercy of unscrupulous pimps, drunk and violent “customers,” and demanding landlords. (53)

Camptowns are more than anything approved sexualized zones designed to function as military comfort towns dedicated to the American forces. Prostitution for U.S. servicemen stationing in Korea has been exceptionally and openly allowed and even promoted by the R.O.K. government and the U.S. military for soldier morale as the Cold War heated up during the Vietnam War, and by local Koreans who were making a living and running a business out of camptown prostitution. According to Na Young Lee in her examination of the R.O.K.’s state laws on prostitution, the government policy on camptown prostitution shifted “from *tacit permission* to *permissive promotion*” through the 1960s and enjoyed its heyday (118). All this marks camptowns as present-day frontiers of transnational biopolitics in a state of exception in which the women were not only were made to live and die outside of state protection, but also were subject to, and managed by, the U.S. military rule and the sovereignty of the R.O.K.

Fenkl’s novel foregrounds the neocolonial setting and exceptional state of the camptown in Pup’yŏng and other highly militarized and Americanized areas around Yongsan Garrison, the U.S. military headquarters in Seoul, and the complex racial, gender, and economic hierarchy, oppression, and exploitation in the intimate and person-to-person relationships between GIs and local Koreans. In the novel, composed of many zones off-limit to Koreans, camptowns are a uniquely segregated space. Exclusive to only

GIs and their families and guests, U.S. military bases are where Insu and his mother could taste pseudo-American life such as buying American products at the PX, having American food and drinks at the Snack Bar, and playing slot machines at the NCO clubs, and going to the “American School” serving the dependents of U.S. military and civilian Department of Defense (DoD) personnel by U.S. army buses checked by MP at every gate. On the Army bus ride to his American school on the first day of school, Insu notices the racial segregation of white servicemen sitting in the front, black servicemen gathered in the back, and Korean women and their bi-racial children in between. There he watches a half-black boy named James who goes to the same American elementary school, and his Korean mother in the black muu muu racially insulted by the white GIs in the front as they pass through, giving them “a disapproving glance” and spitting, “What a fuckin’ whale.... Mama whale and baby coon” (96). At another moment, when Insu gets through the ASCOM gate with his father, he sees “a dozen women...lin[e] up waiting for GIs to take them in....in the hot sun, calling out to the passing GIs” (68). The seven-year-old Insu notices the complex racial, gender, and class hierarchy between GIs and Korean women, and how this affects the “yellow-haired GI,” Gannan’s boyfriend introduced to her by Insu’s mother at the NCO Club and comes to Insu’s home to stay overnight with Gannan, as well as Insu’s GI father. Both ben have the neocolonial privilege and access both to work inside the camp gate and to consume the cheap service and sexual labor of Korean women like Gannan and Insu’s mother, “work[ing] hard” at the bars and clubs and on the streets day and night to support their war-stricken family in a small village (19). Insu as a little boy looks forward to being a GI one day, which designates a power, privilege, and entitlement to “make lots of money and buy everyone everything they

wanted so they would be happy always...[and] go to America to see the many, many Px's, NCO Clubs, and all the tall people in green with their sharp, pulled-out noses" (19), and as Insu's uncle articulates, to "stick it in some white women, yellow women, and black women" (17). In the novel, even Insu's American GI father, who felt obliged to marry Insu's mother after Insu was born, was ashamed of having a mixed-race child and would rant at Insu's mother "for daring to let him be seen in public with a child presented to him by a Korean" (63) and never bothers to call her by her first name. The narrator's memory of his father, Sergeant Heinz Fenkl, portrays him as quoting from Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim*; he even buys it for his mixed-race son as a fancy childhood gift on his eleventh birthday shortly after his first tour of duty in Vietnam, trying to impress upon Insu his critical role in America's "Great Game" in Asia; his father's interest in paralleling American with British imperialism reveals his paternalistic Western imperialist ideology at play in his domestic life with his Korean family (62, 132).

As Cynthia Enloe puts it, "[i]n the microcosm of the base, soldier-clients learn to view their masculinity-and the prowess of the nation they represent—as dependent on their sexual domination of the women who live near the base" (101). In her essay on camptown prostitution between 1945 and 1970, Seungsook Moon argues that racism and sexism were closely linked together among the U.S. servicemen in Korea and that their relationship with Korean women had the imperialist undertones:

"American GIs chased after Korean women in the context of racialized cultural difference, coupled with racism against the Koreans by GIs who were living and working in the racially segregated U.S. military.... Under the category of courtesy, the authorities addressed widespread racism

against the Koreans, ranging from the use of the racial slur ‘gooks,’ physical assaults, reckless driving, and undue arrests of Koreans to making aggressive passes at Korean women.... Americans act as though Koreans were a conquered nation rather than a liberated people.” (43)

Katharine Moon also observes in her study of the 1970s’ camptown prostitution that individual soldiers’ behavior in Korea, as well as the evolution of camptown prostitution, was affected and bound by the policies and practices of the U.S. military, for instance, on VD control, cultural training and education programs for soldiers stationing overseas, the length of tour of duty, and interracial marriage. The fact that enlisted men sent to Korea were mostly very young and mostly without family and hands-on military experience and usually stay in Korea for only one year and a half prevented them from accessing Korean culture or local people or settling down for a long-term or marital relationships with Korean women, making camptown prostitution coming in handy. This made camptown prostitution “an everyday experience, part of the routine, for the thousands of American servicemen,” dubbing Korea the “GI’s heaven” (K. Moon 36-37, 30). The U.S. servicemen in Korea in this sense were “the agents of the expanding American empire” who were encouraged to indulge in sexual relationship with Korean women and treat them as a human booty or “entitlement” under the mixed signal of the U.S. military on prostitution—prohibited in policy but permitted, if not promoted, in praxis (S. Moon 43).

(Trans)National Bio/Necropolitics and Camptown Bare Life: Death and Stateless in the Prolonged Cold War

Out of this exceptional neocolonial state and space were born a population who, despite their service for the postcolonial South Korean nation building and the U.S. empire building in the long Cold War era, were biopolitically excluded from national membership, made stateless, and abandoned by both Korea and the U.S. According to Foucault, the biopower assumed by the modern state functions not only as a disciplinary power to control people's individual bodies but also as a power to determine the kinds of people who are "good" and worthy against the "bad" and unworthy and then "make live" the former and "let die" the latter (241). However, this biopolitical valorization did not eradicate the politics of death, or necropolitics, in modern times. Death was rather "eclipsed" or concealed by the politics of life to mobilize political life (Murray 192). Foucault claims that out of the biopolitics, emerges modern state racism against a certain group of population or race, and so does modern necropolitics. Insofar as biopolitics operates as a power over life and death, promoting the lives of the qualified citizens while allowing or even encouraging the deaths of the unqualified life, necropolitics is the other side of the same coin, disguised in the innocent, humanitarian, life-preserving biopolitical face. Expanding Foucault's concept of the politics of death within biopolitics, Agamben in *Homo Sacer* theorizes modern bio/necropolitical sovereign power sustained by its ability to produce the state of exception and "bare life," life exposed to death. Agamben defines bare life in terms of its stateless or exceptional juridical status, on the one hand, excluded from the collective political life of the state, but on the other hand, captured in the sovereign ban and included in the form of exclusion. Throughout *Memories of My Ghost Brother*, Fenkl animates the bio/necropolitical production of a stateless race in the

camptown and critiques the politics of life and death over that population in Korea and across the Pacific.

The novel exhibits the ways in which camptown inhabitants are reduced to what Giorgio Agamben calls “bare life,” a form of life excluded from the political community and indefinitely exposed to death on a daily basis, by the national and transnational biopolitical ordering of life in the middle of the Cold War conflict. The fictional camptown in Pup’yǒng is portrayed as a borderland, a liminal zone between Korea and America, Vietnam and America, life and death, inside and outside the state and the law, war and peace, and the enemy and the ally, where camptown women and their Amerasian and Korean children all together fight for their daily survival, and despite their struggle, many of them fail to make it. The narrator states,

“The war was fifteen years past with Korea in an uneasy peace, and yet Pupyong seemed to have some fatality nearly every day: the shoeshine boy who was run over by a train as he tried to pull scrap metal off the tracks; the delivery boy crushed between two buses when he tried to take a short cut through the terminal; the bar girl killed by a truck as she tried to free her high heels from a patch of fresh tar on the main road. At the site of each accident there was inevitably a policeman waving the crowd away—and always a straw mat, often with some appendage protruding from underneath” (138)

The aftermath of the war is still striking and affecting many lives of the camptown with the heavy presence of the U.S. forces, which turns the camptown into a virtual war zone. Especially during “the bloodies offensive of the war” in Vietnam, the narrator describes:

“The mood among the GIs in Korea became thick and black, full of hate for Asian people and tense with the fear that the North Koreans might invade... Houseboys and prostitutes were beaten more frequently; there were more fights in the clubs. The Korean army stayed on alert and continued to mobilize more men to send to Vietnam.” (132)

This shows the precariousness of the Koreans in the camptown when they are sometimes lumped together with the Viet Cong and other Vietnamese as Asians, as an enemy race, regardless of their political affiliations while their much-needed military, sexual, and other affective service labor for the U.S. forces is exploited and overlooked.

The narrator continues to remember horrific dangers always lurking underneath the surface of the militarized landscapes where abnormal became routine. Insu as a little boy used to “play war” with his neighborhood friends Kisu and a child nicknamed “Dogshit” pretending to be “Yankee” soldiers and Korean soldiers to fight together and against each other with their “rifle stick[s] and shooting and bombing each other. They would shout, “Die, you Yankee bastards.... You’re dead. Hand grenade!” (153). At the next moment, the children are crossing the rail bridge leading into ASCOM and playing a game to wait for a train to come closer to them in the middle of the bridge and go under the railroad ties to see the train from underneath, which ended up burning Kisu’s right foot with oil and nearly killing Dogshit (153-158). Later into the novel, the narrator recounts the everyday tragedies he encountered and/or witnessed and his own narrow escape from death while growing in and exploring the shadows of the camptowns and the U.S. military bases as an early teen. One day Insu is “hunting for artillery brass...wads of C4 plastic explosive, manual fuses, unexploded shells” to sell it in Itaewon, a camptown

and a foreigners' area located in the heart of Seoul and near the U.S. army headquarters, to a dealer who will "turn it into ashtrays, bedposts, deep-sea diving helmets, and gaudy decorations for spendthrift GIs to take back to 'The World'" (248-249). He hears people chasing away the ghost of the boy who just like Insu himself was searching for military waste but "dug out a shell and dropped it on a stone, and...bl[ew] himself to pieces, scattering fragments of himself so far they could not gather him together again to hide under a straw mat" (248). While carrying an "armful of brass" on the site, Insu to his horror finds "scraps of cheap clothes black and stiff with dried blood" near the spot (249). The alleys of the camptown in Itaewon, Insu notices, are also full of scenes of dangerous crime with "girls not much older than [him] would suck a GI's penis for a few dollars...boys [his] age would let a man fuck them and then pretend to be their family friend...[and] a man stabbed in the gut with a sharpened afro pick, had [his] shoulder slashed by a fast straight razor, smashed a thief's head with a brick" (249). Fenkl's bleak portrait of the camptowns though was not to reproduce the stereotypical image of a developing country beleaguered by corruption, crime, dire poverty. It rather highlights the camptowns as an exceptional bio/necropolitical place where the "*yang saekshis*, the slicky boys, the hustlers, the pimps" were "all doing [their] best" to survive and earn money by working for "the yellow hairs, the long noses, the Yankees" and building *their* "World" (249). The narrator's description of the disease and death of Insu's GI father, which would happen after their migration to the U.S., also reveals the after-effects of the Vietnam War on the soldiers by controversial chemicals such as a defoliant like Agent Orange used abundantly by the U.S. military during the war (128).

Alongside these seemingly accidental deaths occurred in a prolonged state of wartime emergency, there are other deaths inflicted by juridico-political, economic, and social injustice. In the last chapter of the novel, the narrator makes a list of the camptown inhabitants sacrificed in and for the American imperialist project and capitalist expansion in Asia and South Korea's postcolonial ethnic nation-building and capitalist development during the prolonged Cold War:

“I went trying to name the dead to give them peace: Gannan, Cholsu, James; and if I could not name them with a word, I could name them with their stories: the young girl who came from the country and sacrificed herself for her family, the boy who was run over by a careless taxi driver, the boy who might have been drowned by his mother; and there were other, and there would be others: the baby who fell in the well, the maid who leaped into the well, the boy who died of leukemia, the uncle who died of a stroke as he tried to hang himself, the father who died of cancer from the beautiful powder that fell from the sky.” (269-270)

Fenkl makes it visible the invisible sacrifices and long-lasting fatal effects of the Korean War and the U.S.-R.O.K. Cold War alliance, such as the life and labor of the camptown sex workers, sacrificed for the economy and security of her family and nation, devastated and uprooted during the wartime, and for the U.S. empire building, and the life of Amerasian children, such as James, a half-black boy who lost his GI father in Vietnam and was purportedly drowned by his own mother for the fear of losing her new GI husband. Hyongbu's chronic unemployment, drinking problem, and fatal stroke even in his attempted act of suicide all index his struggle and failure to fit in the drastically

changing Korean society where the traditional patriarchal cultural norms were being uprooted and destroyed through the Japanese colonial rule, the American military rule, the Korean War, and the continued stationing of U.S. forces.

Fenkl attends to other vulnerable lives in the camptown put in jeopardy by South Korea's government-led modernization project in the pivotal years of the Vietnam War. In the novel, the narrator describes a tragic event that Insu witnessed as a boy, in which a little baby was accidentally dropped by his maid into a well. This well was haphazardly covered and located at the construction site of a fancy camptown club catering to GIs near the ASCOM. The narrator sums up the incident, which would be soon followed by the suicide of the guilty and grief-stricken maid:

It began in August when a rich man from Seoul came down and built the Apollo Club at the site of the old neighborhood well.... They said the Apollo Club would be a modern, shinkshik [modern or up-to-date] club with strip shows and all the latest drinks from America. The building itself was especially shinshik, with a wide concrete-paved yard in front of the entrance and what looked like large sewer pipes sticking out of the embossed concrete wall. The Apollo Club was supposed to look like an Apollo rocket, and if not that, at least a bunker. The club owner had paved the yard with concrete slabs that fitted neatly into one another, but for some reason he had paved around the well then put some boards over the rim and left it unfinished that way. The rumor was that in a few weeks they would stick a fake missile into the well and paint it like the Apollo rocket.... (178)

The “miracle” of South Korea’s radical economic growth was initiated from the 1960s with economic development programs and policies of the Park Chung Hee’s military administration to promote export-oriented industrialization and the inflow of foreign currency, which was coincided with South Korea’s participation in the U.S. imperialist war in Southeast Asia between 1965 and 1973. As the country that dispatched the largest contingent of foreign troops to Vietnam to fight for the Americans, second to U.S. forces, the Republic of Korea was well compensated, believed to have earned five billion U.S. dollars during its participating years spent for military assistance, soldiers’ salaries in Vietnam, civilian contracts, and trade with Vietnam.²¹ The construction of the Apollo Club with its “fake missile” in a U.S. camptown in Korea, and the loss of two innocent and forgotten people on its hazardous site, symbolically signifies South Korea’s rushed capitalist and militarized modernization within the framework of American geopolitics in Asia at the expense of countless anonymous Korean mercenaries and camptown workers, with “progress” made from cheap labor and disposable lives.

Camptown women’s reproduction, or the birth of Amerasians thereof, has been biopolitically controlled and contained by the R.O.K. and the U.S. to engineer each society in accordance with its ethnically or racially conservative policies on interracial marriage, immigration, and citizenship in the 1950s through the mid-1960s. Fenkl’s fiction lays bare how camptowns were a rigorously isolated and controlled spaces for both camptown women and their mixed-race children, who found it difficult to “[escape]” from and “[survive] into happiness...in the dream country” (172), not only on account of the debt bondage, forced labor, and exploitation, but also in the sense of other legal and cultural constraints. While camptown prostitution and the exploitation of

Korean women's bodies and labor were justified as part of the militarization maintaining the national and international security of the R.O.K. and the U.S. during the Cold War, interracial relationships and marriages between Korean women and U.S. servicemen, and the birth of mixed-race children, were seen as threats to the racial purity and solidarity of the Korean nation and sparked racial anxieties about Asian immigration and miscegenation in the United States. The women and their children were excluded from national membership in both countries.

In Korea, the First Republic of South Korea established the new identity of the postcolonial Korean nation based on patriarchal, patrilineal ethnic nationalism. As Gi-Wook Shin states in his study of ethnic nationalism in Korea, the ethnic purity, homogeneity, and continuity of the Korean nation profoundly shaped post-1945 politics as key agenda for the postcolonial national unity, providing an ideological basis for the authoritarian regimes for multiple decades (100-108). In post-1945 South Korea, Syngman Rhee, the president of the First Republic, sponsored by the USAMGIK, proclaimed a conservative state-led ethnic nationalism, which he referred to as *ilminjuŭi* (one nation ideology). Shortly after, this was established by the First Republic as its ruling ideology and "state policy of a new nation" to unite its people against political, class, and regional divisions, adopting the Tangun mythology as an ethnic origin of the Korean nation (*Han minjok*) and legitimatizing the R.O.K. as its sole heir (Shin 99). The Nationality Act of 1948, which was based on the nationality law enacted by the Korean Interim Legislative Assembly under the USAGIK that defined birthright citizenship, established a paternal *jus sanguinis* citizenship law, bestowing the R.O.K. citizenship only to "a person whose father was a citizen of the Republic of Korea at the time when

the person was born” (C. Lee 233) until 1998. The Rhee government later reinstated the Japanese colonial family registry system (*hojuje*), a patriarchal, patrilineal family institution, which legalized and naturalized the male family-headship (*hoju*) in every family and officially recognized and regulated an individual’s legal identity and relations through his or her status within the male-headed family, by legislating it in the family law of the Civil Code in 1957 in the name of restoring “authentic” Korean cultural tradition. Given that the family registry system allowed only a Korean man to be the head of a family, unmarried Korean women were barred from creating a family register (*hojŏk*), up until the head-of-family law was replaced by the family relations registration law in 2007. Paired with the Nationality Act, which conferred birthright citizenship only to children of Korean citizen fathers, a Korean woman who married a GI was recognized as an exception to the normative Korean family; she could not constitute a Korean family in a legal and proper sense of the term with an independent family register unless the husband became a naturalized Korean citizen and gave up his American citizenship. So, when she had a child with a GI outside of marriage, one possible way to register her child was to have her male family member register her child under his family register. But this could happen as an exception to the family law if only the male member agreed to do so, which technically meant an adoption. Although not uncommon, such adoptions were difficult to achieve given Korea’s long-standing Confucian cultural norms. Therefore, an Amerasian child born to a Korean mother and a GI father could neither be a citizen of the R.O.K. nor be registered in its official family registry system. Under these patriarchal, ethnonationalist laws, Amerasians of American fathers were therefore technically and officially precluded from Korean national membership and citizenship.

Fenkl's novel exhibits the ways the camptown women, despite their Korean citizenship, are culturally treated as disloyal, undeserving Koreans for being Americanized or infected with "American disease" (*migukbyōng*) with their association with GIs and American culture. As in Keller's novel, they are often demonized as a traitor or sexual predator through allusion to a familiar folktale. In the Korean folktales Hyongbu often recounts to Insu, camptown women, who support their household as the breadwinner by engaging in sex work for and with GIs, are demonized as the figure of the fox demon/woman who is the most beautiful and sexualized and whom "[t]hose long-nose bastards could never touch" but who kills and sucks blood from people in the village, including her father-in-law (48). This fox woman/demon tale is immediately followed by the incident that Hyongbu, half-drunken, almost drowns his daughter Haesuni, or let her drown in the river on their boat ride. Hyongbu later assures Insu by saying,

"I would never do that to you or my son, Insu-ya. Never. But she's just a girl. A woman. A woman can ruin an entire bloodline. A woman can suck you dry of your strength. And she's going to grow up into a bitch, just like the rest of them. She's already got that devious fox look in her eye....

Bitches...always thinking they know better than a man." (46-47)

However, both Hyongbu's excuses for his action and his story of the fox woman make Insu "[shudder] and hid[e] [his] face between [his] knees...too afraid to speak" (51-52). Hyongbu's words reveal the deeply-felt biopolitics of patriarchal social order, and his patriarchal anxiety over women whose sexual and economic power threatens male authority. As he grows older in the camptown, Insu also realizes that camptown

prostitutes, even though they make more money from GIs than other prostitutes from Koreans, are placed in the lowest on the social strata of Korean society even among Korean prostitutes, and “sometimes if a *yang kalbo* wandered into their neighborhood they would beat her up as a message to the others” (218).

Fenkl dramatizes how mixed-race children in the camptowns were racially demarcated from the ethnic Koreans as non-Korean or rather American even when they spoke perfect Korea, knew little to no English, and culturally identified themselves with Korean. Primarily raised by his Korean mother surrounded by her maternal family and world, and away from his American father who mostly works and stays in Camp Casey, located in Dongducheon near the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), and serves two tours of duty in Vietnam, Insu is naturally immersed in Korean cultural traditions, myths, legends, rituals, shamanism, and Buddhism and develops a stronger affinity for Korean folks, including Gannan. However, Insu’s cultural identification with local Koreans is challenged and undermined by his racial identity, which is not recognized as Korean in the country where one’s legal citizenship and nationality were determined by his or her paternal nationality, and his Korean ethnicity is effaced and made invisible in the novel. Fenkl dramatizes Insu’s traumatic first days in the Sunday school he was enrolled in at turning six to “learn proper manners.” Insu is immediately spotted and teased by his Korean classmates as a son of an “American soldier” who is “big and scary like a long-nose goblin. His hair’s all yellow and he has fur on his arms,” alienated from the rest of the class with no one to play during recess, and even physically bullied and surrounded by a group of children, speaking in English, “Hello, give me gum. Hello, give me cho-co-late. Hello, wipe my ass. Hello. Hello,” in the same way many Korean children would say

to GIs (76-77). When living in the Japanese Colonel's house, located in Samnung, the "more beautiful" upper neighborhoods of the camptown as a little boy (5), Insu did not have any friends to play with except Cholsu, who was a bully and used to call him "a big Yankee-brat," "idiot," and "a mongrel dog—the ownerless kind that ran through the villages, eating garbage and even their own shit when food was scarce" (85-86). For most Koreans in the racially homogeneous society of the 1960s, Amerasian children were despised for being racially 'impure,' which meant alien, "uncommon,' 'unfamiliar,' 'unnatural'—that is, 'un-Korean'" (K.J. Lee 339)—and could be worse than simply being a foreigner, as well as for embodying post/neo-colonial domination of the Korean nation.

Fenkl's novel also portrays that Koreans' contempt on or hostility against mixed-race children is mixed with a desire for America and its neocolonial wealth and power their American fathers embody. As a veteran of the Korean War, Hyongbu appears as an indigenous patriarchal figure with ambivalence to the colonial power, whose traditional authority has been undermined by the white male neocolonial hegemony and structure. In the novel, he is particularly fond of Insu among his household members and sometimes expresses envy for Insu's American citizenship granted through his American father in wedlock and his half-white race, which all means to him (almost) white male colonizers' authority, economic power, and unrestrained sexuality to "buy...lots and lots of cigarettes and Johnie Walker" and "stick it in some white women, yellow women, and black women" (41, 17). It also meant the capacity and opportunity for success, as Hyongbu advises Insu to be different from the camptown inhabitants including himself, Youngsu, Haesuni, "black marketeers or whores," half-black children, and "a grunt just like [Insu's father who has wound] up in some no-name country with some war going on

and...knock[ed] up some dark-skinned whore and end[up] marrying her” (221). Despite his ambivalence to the colonial power, Hyongbu views Insu as a legitimate heir of “the great Emperor of America,” different from the rest of them all (229).

In the United States, on the other hand, Korean military wives and sex workers and Amerasians born in Korea, as well as in other Asian countries, were largely perceived as aliens by virtue of race and nationality ineligible for or unworthy of American citizenship, in the 1950s and through the Cold War era. The U.S. citizenship and immigration laws vis-à-vis Korean women and Amerasians born in South Korea were shaped by the U.S. foreign policy during the WWII and the Cold War and domestic racial climate of the 1950s, where the demand for the U.S. expansion in Asia and racial integration to comport to liberal democratic ideals was conflicted with the increased racial anxieties over miscegenation and fear for national security involving aliens in and from the communist-infected regions, along with the existing anti-Asian legal and cultural practice.

A small number of Korean women began to immigrate to the U.S. through the War Brides Act of 1945, due to special postwar measures to authorize alien spouses and minor children of American soldiers outside the ordinary quota system to enter the U.S. The majority of these women immigrated as wives of American soldiers since 1952 came through these revised immigration laws (Yuh 2). However, even though the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 allowed immigration of Korean military brides and accorded birthright citizenship to the children born in wedlock to a U.S. citizen father and a Korean mother, interracial marriage between GIs and Korean women was mainly discouraged and dissuaded both structurally and privately by the U.S. military policy on interracial

marriage, anti-miscegenation laws in the majority of states in the U.S., generally restrictive immigration laws against Asians, and widespread feelings of racial prejudice, which continued after 1965 even when the limited Asian immigration quota system was abolished (S. Moon 66). The restriction on soldiers' interracial marriage gave GIs free rein to their sexual libido without marital obligation or parental responsibility in South Korea, dubbed the "GI's heaven," where prostitution was and still is "an everyday experience, part of the routine, for the thousands of American servicemen" (K. Moon 30, 37).

According to Bongsoo Park, Korea's ethnic nationalism combined with the restriction on interracial marriage in the U.S. produced thousands of stateless Amerasians born out of wedlock in Korea. The U.S. citizenship laws of 1940 and 1952 accorded birthright citizenship to those born in the U.S. territories regardless of the parents' nationality or citizenship status and those born abroad only to a US citizen mother regardless of her marital status. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1940 for the first time liberally granted *jus sanguinis* citizenship to children of an unwed U.S. citizen women born outside of the U.S., while restricting it to those born outside the U.S. to an unwed U.S. citizen father. Park argues that the Nationality Act of 1940, often assessed as a gender-based regulation of citizenship, in fact foreshadowed its racial motivation to establish racially exclusive citizenship provision that excluded the majority of the Amerasians born overseas to unmarried U.S. citizen men as a racial Other lacking "American character" and "an undeserving race of people 'absolutely unfit' to fulfill responsibilities and to receive state protections and benefits" as U.S. citizens (Park 79, 90), based on the racialized notion of Americanness, by requiring legitimation of the

child. This gender-based restrictive provision was perpetuated and refined in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, requiring for a child born out of the state and wedlock more detailed proof of “blood relationship” and other written documents for paternal acknowledgement and financial support until age 18, which ended up officially exempting U.S. men who fathered children abroad from paternal duty (Park 81).

Fenkl’s novel shows how the systemically and culturally discouraged interracial marriage rendered many lives in the camptowns precarious or unlivable. In the novel, the first human death Insu encounters in his life is Gannan’s aborted pregnancy, preceded by the omen of a magpie that died despite his great care and soon followed by Gannan’s suicide. Insu as a young child gathers information about Gannan’s predicament from adults around him that she has failed again to get married to a GI she has been dating and “careless[ly]” got pregnant with and that Insu’s mother helps her to get an abortion “at the 121st Army Hospital” (17-18). When Insu’s Emo finds out Gannan’s pregnancy, she laments, “It’s no good being a *yang saekshi*....It’s not as if those GIs will buy her a homestead. If she’d stayed in the country with Country Sister...” (12). Insu’s mother’s response, “There’s nothing we can do now,” alludes that there is no question of going back to the ordinary life in the country once she becomes a camptown prostitute. For camptown women, outcast from the normative Korean family and nation, marriage with a GI was the only conceivable and viable option to get out of prostitution and live a ‘normal,’ or at least legitimate, life again. So, having and raising a mixed-race child out of wedlock as a single mother canceled the last option and even produced a social death in Korea, for both the mother who could neither officially be the head of the household nor granted parental right for her child, and for the child who could not be legal Korean

or American. Upon her multiple failing to “[catch] a husband,” which means “doing bad things,” according to Hyongbu, and an abortion, Gannan gives up trying more and commits suicide.

Fenkl discloses the ironical convergence of camptown bio/necropolitics in his juxtaposition of Changmi’s mother’s secret plan to conceive a half-black baby with a black GI other than her black husband to keep her marriage secure and James’ mother’s putative killing of her half-black son, James, to marry another GI in one chapter. Into the novel, Insu who has now reached his sixth grade one day overhears a conversation of his mother with her *yangsaeksi* friends, Changmi’s mother and Mijong’s sister. Changmi’s mother who “managed” to marry a black GI has been trying to conceive a baby for a while with her husband who eagerly wants to have a child but seems to be infertile. She confides Insu’s mother about her plan to get pregnant with a black GI who is not her husband and seeks an advice on whether she should tell the GI her plan or just seduce him. During the conversation, Changmi’s mother also reveals the news about James’ mother that she is now called Suzie’s mother after getting married to a white GI and giving birth to Suzie and that her half-black son with her former GI husband, James, was “drowned in [the] sewer creek behind their house” years ago (211). Insu finds James’ death odd because the water near James’ house was too “shallow” to drown any children and James and Insu used to “play in the sewer creek...where the water was deepest” (229). To Insu’s question, Hyongbu plainly responds:

“Think about it,’ he said. ‘You’re a dungwhore and you catch yourself a GI by getting pregnant with his brat, but then he goes off to Vietnam and gets himself killed. That leaves you with benefits from the great Emperor

of America, but now you have a Black brat to feed, and it's not enough money. So now you want another GI husband to start things over—maybe a white guy with a higher rank, *ungh?*—but who would marry a whore with a Black kid?” (229)

His chilling remark reveals that as much as the life of Amerasian children can be instrumentalized as a tool for many camptown women's marriage, immigration, and future in the U.S., it can also be a barrier to all this and therefore subject to be eliminated without punishment. Exposing the thin line between those livable and those unlivable, and life and death in the camptown, the novel shows the politics of death, indistinguishable with the politics of life, in the transnational politicization of life. James' blackness, perceived as a sign of racial subordination and inferior social and cultural status in both white dominant American society—albeit amidst the Civil Rights Movement—and ethnocentric Korean society doubles his difference once more than being a mixed race and turns him un-Korean and un-American at once. The novel shows the U.S. domestic racial order is reproduced in the socially segregated camptown where the woman was to choose “before [she] start” whether “to date the Black or white GIs” because the white soldiers “won't touch [the woman] once they see [her] with a Black man” (210), and internalized by and applied to the camptown inhabitants whose worth, status, and life were determined according to the race of their husband or father and “*the rules of blood*” (208).

The politics of life sustained by the politics of death in the camptowns is once again enacted in the preservation of the life of Insu and Insu's Korean and American families at the expense of Insu's half-brother, “Kuristo,” a mispronunciation of

Christopher, who was given up for international adoption in the novel. As the titular description of his “ghost brother” suggests, Fenkl describes the loss of Kuristo through transnational adoption as a form of death inflicted by transnational patriarchal bio/necropolitics in the camptown. The narrator first problematizes his mother’s fantasies of America as a cause of the loss of Kuristo, equated in the novel with other deaths of mixed-race children and children in times of war. It is not a coincidence that the forgotten memory of his ghost brother began to surge back to Insu first in the novel is immediately followed by and following Changmi’s mother’s visit and the news about James’ death (208). In his dreams, Insu recalls someone who was once close to him and his family but irrevocably lost, or just “a young boy in white” whose familiar face just “looked like” him, but not him, and who often appeared in his dreams and made him “always frightened [him] with its mysterious familiarity.” Later in the novel, Insu, half-dreaming, remembers his name, “Kuristo,” who in his dream is taken away by a hunched old woman and “save[s]” Insu and his family “from the crone’s gleaming knife” (246-247). The narrator of the novel also recounts a “tragic and ironic story of wartime” where a mother suffocates her baby to avoid exposure in her escape with other refugees, whether knowingly or unknowingly (232). He continues to state that he “finally underst[ands]” Hyongbu’s “vicious story” of the camptown women’s “shrewdness” to sacrifice or “traffic in” their children “for their own welfare” or “the mythic promise of America” (232-233). However, he also admits that to blame the women “would have been too simple to do [their] justice” (232).

The narrator’s understanding of the camptown women’s viciousness and Insu’s returning nightmares about the crone with a kitchen knife who always approaches to him

to kill, but instead is distracted and follows someone else (203-204), which demonizes the camptown women, is soon challenged by a more complicated context of transnational bio/necropolitics in the neocolonial setting of the camptowns. In the following chapter, Insu is informed that his mother has a miscarriage of twins, after the birth of Insu's sister, Anna, upon which Hyongbu says, "Even your father didn't know—that bastard. He's the one she got pregnant for in the first place, as if it's not enough to have two of you in this awful world. She wanted another son for your Yankee father so he could call him 'war helmet' or some nonsense" (244). Insu also finds out from Haesuni that it was his father who made his mother give up Kuristo for adoption who "was sick with something in the chest," for his marriage to her after Insu's birth, causing her much agony (264). Haesuni describes the untold and unfelt pains Insu's mother suffered from the loss of her first son and her visits to the orphanage until "the orphanage threatened not to take him again and the whole family had to keep her from going back" and "[t]hey put him in a different place that she didn't know about, where she couldn't go get him." She blames Insu's father for the loss of Kuristo and reminds Insu that he "almost dropped" Insu when first shown to him because "he was afraid it was that other man's son" (264).

Haesuni's revelation of Insu's mother's loss of her son, after her recent loss of twins, both of which were hushed up to maintain the life and welfare of Insu's Korean and American families, has a striking resemblance with those children of the Montagnard, the tribesmen of the Central Highlands of Vietnam, called the Degar, sacrificed in the Vietnam War, indexing a complex transnational politics of life and death entangled across the Pacific in service of South Korea's patrilineal, ethnic nation-building and U.S.'s masculine empire building in the midst of the Cold War. On behalf of his

mother still in the recovery room, Insu pays a visit to his father in the DMZ where he is told by his father a story about the Montagnard who “got fucked over by everyone who said he was [their] friends” including “[t]he French, the South Vietnamese, the VC, us [Americans]” (256). Sergeant Fenkl then recounts “a story about the men and the monkeys” he once heard from a Montagnard chief in a tribal village. It tells how the monkeys who once trusted their men “friends” and were living together with them, ends up living “wild” in “the deep forest” away from the men after being tricked by their friends who advised the monkeys to switch their rich fields with the men’s small and barren fields and kill their own children, and stole the monkey children’s bodies and ate the flesh. This tragic tale resonates with Sergeant Fenkl’s description of the predicament of the Montagnard who not only lost their land by the invading local—Vietnamese and Cambodian—and Western—French and American—forces in disguise of friendship, but also thousands of their children in the Vietnam War. Feeling confused with his father’s story as a boy “caught...in the boundary between the two Koreas, caught between North and South and East and West with [his] own blood mixed from the blood of enemies” like the Montagnard, Insu blurts out his dream about his ghostly brother named Kuristo who saved them. To add Insu’s confusion, his father with a red face calls it “a bullshit dream” and hurriedly covers it as a Christian spiritual dream about Jesus Christ who “saved us all” (258). Together with his story of the Montagnard, Sergeant Fenkl’s made-up interpretation, which turns “Christopher” into “Jesus Christ,” paradoxically identifies Insu’s half-brother with the Western god, subverting the paternalistic trope of the U.S. as a friend and savior of Asia-Pacific countries during the Cold War. Although Sergeant Fenkl may have worked and fought hard to save Korea and Vietnam “*both countries*

divided along their middle by a Demilitarized Zone, with Communists in the north and pro-American governments in the south...had Buddhists and Catholics and Animists, ...farmed wet rice, ...plowed fields with oxen, ...were populated by people with yellow skin" (132) from communism and paganism. Nevertheless, the novel shows that it was those children silently and invisibly sacrificed in the imperialist wars and colonial relations that in fact "saved us all," including the lives of Korean, Vietnamese, and American families and nations.

For an Ethics of Haunting and a Spectropolitics without a Nation or Status

The figure of the ghost, whether literal or metaphorical, has long haunted human mind and culture across time, geographical regions, and ethnic groups, albeit with a variable intensity. In contemporary American cultural productions and critiques, Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock in the introduction to *Spectral America* argues that a sudden popularity of and attention to the ghost, known as the "spectral turn," began to emerge from the late 1980s, as "a privileged poststructuralist academic trope...function[ing] as the paradigmatic deconstructive gesture, the 'shadowy third' or trace of an absence that undermines the fixedness of such binary oppositions" of living and dead, present and absent (4). Especially its capacity to "[interrupt] the presentness of the present" and question "the veracity of the authorized version of [historical] events," the trope of ghosts and haunting as forms of political critique have a strong resonance in contemporary ethnic American literature and studies seeking justice and social change (Weinstock 5). The concept of spectrality and haunting as a return of the past in the present has also been woven into the discourse of loss and trauma as individually and collectively experienced.

The compulsive returning of the ghost is a symptom of the subject's failure to internalize and mourn a traumatic event and loss, and provides access to redress historical injustice as a legacy or afterlife of colonial and neocolonial violence and exploitation, war, ethnic cleansing, or terrorism, such as the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, and 9/11 (Blanco and Peeren 443-471).

Fenkl's use of ghostly figures as an aesthetic strategy for a political critique of the transnational bio/necropolitics in neocolonial Korea and its production of sociopolitically engineered death and genocide can be understood in this counter-hegemonic tradition of ethnic American and postcolonial trauma narratives. Nonetheless, this is not to suggest a universal, transnational grammar of haunting or model of the ghost. Although a certain generalization is inevitable for the construction of a concept, the construction of the ghost and its implication and function vary depending on the specificity of the historical and cultural conditions and situations from which it emerges. In this case, the ghost's liminal existence between life and death, presence and absence, visibility and invisibility, and being and non-being, in particular, reflects the exceptionalized legal status and mode of living of the camptown inhabitants between Korea and America, war and peace, and death-in-life and life-in-death, political life and bare life in the transnational bio/necropolitical exigencies of the Cold War. In Fenkl's fictional camptowns, where death and violence are everyday occurrences, part of their living, and almost indispensable for the making of their own life and others in both their real and imaginary worlds, it seems only natural that Insu grows to be haunted by death, whether literal, psychical, or metaphorical, and interact with the ghosts of the dead and/or lost from the other side of the world. Throughout the autobiographical *Bildungsroman*, the reader

witnesses not only the orchestrated buildings of South Korea's neocolonial/sub-imperial nation-state and the American empire that produce spectrality of exceptional state, or stateless, subjects, but also the unbuilding or counter-building of the postcolonial or imperial subject that Insu as an Amerasian boy is subject to be. This unbuilding is once again counterpointed by the building of the haunted and ghostly diasporic subject across the Pacific who not only "learn[s] to live with ghosts" (Derrida xviii), but also turns into a ghost himself. While tracing the transformation of the protagonist from a legitimate heir of his mother's American dream and father's dream of "The Great Game" of America into a ghostly life, this section will seek to identify and interrogate the ghosts and specters of the camptowns, the spectrality of exceptional sovereign powers and exceptional state subjects, their spectral agency, the politics of stateless ghostly life, and ethical relationships with the ghost.

Fenkl's fictional camptown is replete with various ghosts and spirits from actual and symbolic deaths and from Insu's dreams, hallucinations, and oral stories Insu grows up with, including those about the past in times of the Japanese colonial rule and the Korean War, Korean folktales and legends, America, and the Vietnam War and Kipling's novel *Kim*, which haunts and constitutes the camptown reality. Among the multifarious ghosts whose characteristics, contexts, and effects vary, *Memories of My Ghost Brother* features two dominant figures of the ghost: One is the figure of the ghost as a powerful sovereign force, institutional system, or ideology that subjects and politicizes life, and the other is that as the disempowered, exploited, and vulnerable life produced by that deadly power. In his theory of the specter in *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida introduces the ghost as a figure of vulnerability and victimization:

“[T]he ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead, be they victims of wars, political or other kinds of violence, nationalist, racist, colonialist, sexist, or other kinds of exterminations, victims of the oppressions of capitalist imperialism or any of the forms of totalitarianism.” (xvii)

However, Derrida points out that a specter can also be who exploits and controls and be “as powerful as it is unreal, a hallucination or simulacrum that is virtually more actual than what is so blithely called a living presence” like the specters of Marxism, communism, anti-communism, imperialism, totalitarianism, or capitalism and its phantasmatic exchange-value (13, 6). Fenkl’s novel shows how some camptown residents, including Insu’s mother and father and Hyongbu, are haunted by the spectral systems or ideologies such as American dream, communism, U.S. imperialism, and/or patriarchal ethnic nationalism, while others like Gannan, Haesuni, and Amerasian children are rendered ghostly, and how Insu navigates and traverses the two worlds of specters.

Memories of My Ghost Brother first lays bare the ways in which Insu’s life is bound by the specters of his father’s dream of American empire building in Asia and his mother’s American dream. From the very early stage of the novel, Insu’s life as a legitimate heir of a white American sergeant is all planned out to be “a dark-haired GI” who would “make lots of money and buy everyone everything they wanted” and “could go to America to see the many, many PX’s, NCO Clubs, and all the tall people in green with their sharp, pulled-out noses” (19), “have a machine gun and...shoot lots of bad guys with it” (41), and “go to Vietnam” and “help” his father to “kill the bastard” (107).

Upon the news of Gannan's suicide, Insu's father recounts his family history of displacement, how his grandmother killed herself the night before they were chased out of their native country, Czechoslovakia to Germany by "bad people," which were likely Soviet forces at the fall of the Nazi Germany, before they immigrated to the U.S. Insu's question about the return of the ghost of his great-grandmother suggests the production of the specter of a victimized by spectralizing forces (totalitarian Nazism and Stalinism) and the spectral return of the disempowered haunting its descendant across generations and geographies (71). Despite his occasional doubts on the Vietnam War and sympathy with the Montagnards, Sergeant Fenkl has been a firm believer and a faithful player in "The Great Game" of America against the U.S.S.R. in Asia. He wants his son Insu to grow as a Western-educated, Christian, almost white, loyal American citizen and GI to pledge allegiance to his fatherland and contribute to America's "Great Game," guarded by the "bulls on green fields for another twenty years" (132), just like the hero, *Kim* in Rudyard Kipling's novel that he once gave to him as a gift and often alludes, taking hold of "Zam-Zammah," large bore cannon serving as "the conqueror's loot" (Kipling 3). The narrator also recalls how Insu's father "*died believing [Insu] had read the book...[and] had made some decision about its contents, his message to [him]*" (63).

The novel also begins with his mother's conception dream, called *taemong*, the dream that Koreans believe predicts one's pregnancy and prophets the child's character and/or future life, and the ending returns to her American dream about to be actualized, in a similar dream-like setting. In her conception dream in the middle of her labor, Insu's mother, enchanted by a beautiful palace and "silenced by the magnificence of the palace gate," meets a "giant serpent" at the palace gate and when it tries to tell her a secret, she

awakes and gives birth to Insu. The image of the giant serpent returns to Insu at the end of the novel in the form of an airplane “with its red, spiked tail and its scales of silver” that would carry them in its “belly” to his mother’s dream-land (270). The narrator emphasizes, “I was born from a dream, and now I will fly into the heavens, to the West, into another dream” (271). When Insu confronts his mother about her tenacity to America, she answers,

“I’ve dreamed of it since I was a little girl during the War.... That’s where all the wonderful things come from, and that’s where [Kuristo] is.... And really, I did think the streets in America are gold or something. I used to think every American was a millionaire and everyone owned his own house and had a car and drank Coca-Cola instead of water and had meat for every meal. I don’t know where I got those ideas, but I had them. My friends who came back tell me that everything will be a disappointment, but I don’t care. I have to go there and see for myself.... [And] I have to go for him. Even if we never find him, that is where I belong—in the place where I might find him. Even if he’s dead, in the ground, it’s that ground I’ll walk on. It’s the ground that has half of my blood in it...I know that he’s there somewhere. He’s there.” (267)

This reveals that Insu’s mother has been haunted by two ghosts: the glitter of American dream, the collective aspiration for, and fantasy of, America full of “wonderful,” “beautiful,” “grand,” and “magical” things (92, 267), nurtured within South Korea’s neocolonial relations to the U.S. in the post-1945 era, and Kuristo, her ghostly son that is lost as a consequence of her American dream but justifies that dream. Situating public or

national fantasies in the intimate realm of life, Lauren Berlant writes on the American dream:

It would be all too easy to ridicule the Dream, and to dismiss it as the motivating false consciousness of national/capitalist culture. But the fantasy of the American Dream is an important one to learn from. A popular form of political optimism, it fuses private fortune with that of the nation: it promises that if you invest your energies in work and family-making, the nation will secure the broader social and economic conditions in which your labor can gain value and your life can be lived with dignity.” (110)

Neferti Tadiar in *Fantasy Production* further contends that the physical and symbolic work and resources of the Philippines and other U.S. colonies have fed this American fantasy by “serv[ing] to guarantee precisely those social and economic conditions promised by ‘America’” (27). This suggests that the spectral fantasy of American dream, as well as American wealth and style of living, has also been served and maintained by Insu’s mother’s ghostly labor, including her military sex “work” catering to American servicemen, her black marketeering of U.S. goods consumed by middle- and upper-class Koreans, and her reproductive labor as part of “family-making,” as a birth mother offering her child to an American adoptive parent, which all went silenced, almost secretized, and rendered invisible and non-present throughout the novel.

Fenkl’s novel unfolds how the destructive, necropolitical force of what Esther Peeren calls in *The Spectral Metaphor* “the spectralizing systems” or ideologies produces ghostly life shadowed by literal and symbolic death as its own ghosts that “come to haunt

or possess...[their] conjurer” (20). And it is these disempowered ghosts with their spectral agency returning from the past, making their presence to alert and manifest what Derrida calls “anachrony,” a “disjointed time,” or “what is disjointed, undone, twisted and out of time, in the wrong of the unjust” (26-27), and therefore demanding justice, that haunts Insu and the legacies of his father and mother given to him. Avery F. Gordon in *Ghostly Matters* contends that haunting produces critical agency for political change in social relations and codes:

“Haunting...always registers the harm inflicted or the loss sustained by a social violence done in the past or in the present. But haunting...is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done. Indeed, it seemed to me that haunting was precisely the domain of turmoil and trouble, that moment...when things are not in their assigned places,...when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving, when disturbed feelings cannot be put away, when something else, something different from before, seems like it must be done. It is this sociopolitical-psychological state to which haunting referred.” (218-219)

In Fenkl’s novel, soon after Insu moves to the Japanese Colonel’s house in Samnung, haunted by the ghosts of the Japanese colonial rule and the Korean War, he begins to encounter other ghosts, which have been victimized by camptown prostitution and its (trans)national bio/necropolitics and “[belong[ing] to different tragedies” and histories (35). In the novel, Insu is the very first person who, albeit unwittingly, witnesses Gannan’s dead body, “dressed in white, waving to [him] from under the branches of the chestnut tree” with “a gentle creaking sound” (24). Haunted by Gannan’s specters in the

form of her last words to Insu, “You must have *injong*.... It means you have to be a kind person and think of others. Will you remember that word *injong*? It means compassion” (22), as an ethical injunction, which Derrida describes is “an infinite demand” of “the wholly other...which becomes the law for [the subject]” (“Spectrographies” 40), and that of a phantom reminding the socially-inflicted harm, loss, and/or injustice and demanding “a something-to-be-done,” Insu begins to faintly remember a familiar “stranger,” who keeps making presence in his dreams and is later turns out his lost “ghost brother” “belong[ing] to [the same] tragedy” with Gannan (35), and sense the previously unsensed or insensible specters of the camptown, both the subjectifying and the subjected. For instance, he faces Haesuni’s ghostly face during Hyongbu’s boat ride as she is hanging “grim and silent as a ghost, onto the boat” with her “spirit on the verge of leaving her body” (44-45), and sees what is beyond the present and presence, Korea’s spectral bio/necropolitical logic that values and devalues life according to Korea’s patriarchal and neocolonial order. Insu later meets the ghost of the maid who dies in the well and visually and olfactorily senses the specter of South Korea’s capitalist development under the U.S. military and economic hegemony founded upon the bodies and graves of the subjugated life (187-188). Further into the novel, Insu finds his mother on the threshold of life and death at the hospital after she miscarries a twin: “Mahmi’s eyes were closed, the expression on her face calm but also pained.... Her flesh looked pale against the dark blue silk of the blanket.... I felt a desperation I had never understood before, like something hurtling toward a steep ledge, knowing that the fall was inevitable and yet unable to do anything to stop it—that fall in the future, unavoidable as mortality” (243). At that moment, Insu remembers a Korean black-and-white anti-communist movie about

the Korean War titled, *The Dead and the Living*, and identifies his mother with the female character in the film who serves for her nation-state ('fatherland,' South Korea) as a spy and is killed by the communists from the North. Insu's questions about the movie, "Is the woman the 'dead' of the movie's title? Or does the hero suddenly appear with his Thompson submachine gun and blast all the Communists into sprawling oblivion, spewing their black blood onto the white dirt of the courtyard?" suggest his mother's precariousness and spectral positioning between life and death, between communists and American allies in the midst of the Cold War (243).

The narrator also mentions other ghostly lives of the camptown: "Gannan's baby, who died still in the womb; Paulie, who apprenticed himself to a pimp and disappeared; Suzie, who ate rat poison after she was disfigured by a Japanese banker" (172). The tragic death of Jani, Insu's Amerasian friend who "finally did get an American father" and Insu "wishfully imagined...had escaped as [he] had,...survived into happiness,...had avoided the misfortunes of other children," but has "died of leukemia just before his twenty-second birthday" in the U.S., also haunts back the specter of the American dream dominant in the camptown. The narrator writes, "All those years, not knowing where he was, I had imagined Jani somewhere in the vast and mythic America as had believed in as children—in the dream country that had vanished for me the day I set foot in the Westward Land" (172). The ghost of the half-black boy who may have been sacrificed by his mother finally brings back to Insu the ghost of his lost brother, lost in the transnational adoption and in his memory and ghosted by the invisible but omnipotent transnational orders of life and death. By foregrounding the dynamics of haunting, Fenkl's novel affirms the spectral potential of the subjugated to haunt and rupture the

spectralizing social logics or structures, and to haunt the subject and unbuild his subjectivity as a neoimperial subject, a subject created to secure a new American empire of global military capitalism and privileged and lucky enough to “escape” and “[survive] into happiness” (172).

The returned memory and phantom of Insu’s “ghost brother,” in particular, brings forward the fact that the economy of haunting is related to the work of remembering the traumatic memories or personal histories against erasure, repression, or control, against public amnesia and systemized exorcism, and ultimately to the work of mourning. Fenkl’s novel sheds light on the ways in which the traumatic loss and memories of Insu’s ghost brother, along with other traumatic memories, is systemically forgotten and lost. Although specific functions and effects of the individual ghosts may vary, ghosts are generally viewed and felt by the adults in the novel, regardless of their religious beliefs, to be a threat to the order of society and to the identity of the subject and therefore something to exorcise, whether as a frightening and disturbing figure returned from the dead seeking revenge to those responsible for their death, or as an icon of uncivilized paganism. As soon as the former Japanese Colonel who “tortured and murdered tens of thousands of Koreans for his amusement,” committed *seppuku*, a Japanese ritual suicide by disembowelment at the fall of the Japanese empire on an island, fighting in World War II in the Pacific, and came back in ashes to be buried in his house in Korea, a Korean merchant, the new owner of the house, hurriedly “uprooted the old Japanese-tainted trees and planted a new orchard” and “hired a *mudang* to perform a day-long exorcism of the ghosts of the Japanese and their victims” (5). When Insu’s family moves in the house, inherited to a Christian, after the merchant is murdered by a GI while fleeing to Pusan

during the Korean War, and many war refugees died from disease and starvation, the new owner suggests “a Western-style exorcism” (5-6).

What is at stake in the exorcism of the ghosts is the erasing, forgetting and/or silencing of sociohistorical memories the ghosts bear or embody, which makes the living ghost doubly unlivable. Gannan’s suicide is hurriedly and quietly wrapped up by her family in the camptown and in the country. Her funeral is held in Insu’s house in the camptown, but was attended only by family members and relatives, with her GI boyfriend and Insu’s father excluded, and is completed with a burning and chanting ritual of Gannan’s clothes and personal possessions, “as if they were Gannan’s body,” to exorcise her ghostly traces and memories. To Insu’s question about Gannan’s ghost, Big Uncle who just performed an exorcism responds, “Let’s you and I pray she doesn’t come back,” and gives him a “whittled...guardian post” called “*Ch’onha Taejang’gun*—the Great General of all that is under heaven” as an amulet against ghosts (26-27). Even Gannan’s grave, when it is moved closer to the clan’s ancestors’ gravesite, is “*all half-hearted[ly]*” made and is not even “*on the ancestors’ mountain, and there [is] no one in Sambongni to make the annual journey to trim the grass and add to the settling mound so that it would not disappear into the earth,*” which fails to survive the first monsoon (55). The narrator describes that it soon “*eroded away to nothing...becom[ing] part of the landscape, and no one remembered where it was*” (56). With Gannan’s abortion, death, and lost grave and body, the shameful history of camptown prostitution, from the GIs’ sexual involvement with a Korean woman to unwanted and aborted pregnancy of an unmarried Korean woman, was all conveniently buried and washed away for the life of the GI, the Korean family, the U.S. military, and the R.O.K. government.

Among the heterogeneous ghostly figures facing exorcism in the novel, the ghost of Insu's lost brother has a singular significance as an incorporeal figure of Insu's trauma and his family's untold or unspeakable secret, sorrow, and shame, shrouded in silence, creating an air of mystery through the novel. Throughout the novel, up until the last few pages, Insu is haunted by the specter of his lost brother, who always appears as a familiar stranger sacrificed to save the life of Insu and his family, including his mother, Emo, Haesuni, and Yongsu, and Hyongbu, in his dreams, and when he blurts out his ghost's name, Kuristo, his father instantly silences Insu and exorcises the ghost of his and his family's shame with his Christian god:

“When I looked up, my father's face was red—I couldn't tell if it was from the beer or because he was angry at me.... ‘What did Lee say?’ he said finally. ‘I didn't ask Mahmi.’ ‘Well, don't ask [your mother]. You don't ask nobody. That's just a bullshit dream, you understand?....’ ‘But he saved us. And his name was Kuristo.’ ‘Kuristo—what does that sound like to you?’ ‘Christopher.’ ‘It's Christ. Jesus Christ. He saved us all, and you just saw him like he was your brother, *nicht wahr*? Remember the time I was sick with fever and I saw Maria when my mother had her church pray for me?.... It's like that, but it's just a bullshit dream, too, and you don't need to tell anyone else about it.’” (258)

However, Fenkl shows that Insu's father's denial or concealment of Christopher, the lost mixed-race boy, exorcised with his religion, is bound to fail as the narrator has stated:

“My father's religion wallowed in stories and pictures of tragedy and suffering, but it could not heal what happened every day outside the gates

of the U.S. Army post. And so I could not worship his God or the murdered son—I believed in ghosts and ancestors and portentous dreams of serpents and dragons because those were the things I could touch my world.” (241)

Combined with his mother’s silence, Insu’s father’s injunction not only symptomatically reveals the significance of his unspeakable secret and his repressed guilt, but also unwittingly transmits the parents’ trauma, guilt, and secret to their child. Nicolas Abraham and Mária Török develop an elaborate psychoanalytic theory of transgenerational trauma and haunting in *The Shell and the Kernel*, whereby the experience of a psychological trauma embedded in the ancestors’ history as an unspeakable, “undisclosed family secret” later takes the form of a “transgenerational phantom” and is transmitted to “an unwitting descendant” as Nicholas Rand observes in the introduction (16). According to Abraham and Török, the subject is haunted by transgenerational trauma as he or she incorporates this transgenerational phantom, which is not simply a returned dead, but “(a) dead (gap)” left in the unconscious by the “buried speech” or unspeakable secret of the parent (140). The phantom “which returns to haunt” a consequence of an unfinished, unresolved, and thus failed mourning of the ancestral traumatic loss “bears witness to the existence of the dead buried within the other” (Abraham and Török 175) and may be buried alive and inhabit in the psychic crypt of the ego of the inherited through multiple generations. In their psychopathological approach to trauma and haunting and clinical emphasis on therapeutic treatment to the disease and symptoms like phobias and obsessions, Abraham and Török insist on the normalization of the subject by exorcising the phantom: “the phantom must vanish.... How can the

phantom be weakened so as to make it restore the unhappy subject's own speech...that had been victimized by the haunting?" (180); "once known, understood, and exorcised, the phantom should go from our unconscious, vanish into the reality whence it had come, disappear into a bygone and vanquished world" (190).

Fenkl's narrative of haunting, however, challenges this redemptive logic of haunting through exorcism, what Kathleen Brogan calls "the masterplot of the cultural ghost story, a paradigmatic movement from possession to exorcism" through "the modulation of cultural 'mourning,'" characteristic of contemporary American ethnographic writings (153). Insu refuses to ghost-bust the phantom from his psyche or resolve the unfinished trauma even after he discovers the family secret and identifies the haunting transgenerational phantom with Haesuni's help. Insu has seen the persistent presence and production of the ghosts even after exorcism has performed, suggesting the impossibility of exorcism or complete mourning. He hears "whispers which [he] knew [are] lamentations of the refugees," "see the ghost of the Japanese Colonel standing quietly under the trees, gazing at me with his sad and lonely eyes" (7), and "feel[s] [Gannan's] spirit" around her gravesite where she was buried but lost by flood (56). Insu's initial encounters with the ghostly others does not prevent him from living with or speaking to other ghosts, which is contrasted with Emo who "stops going out to open the gate by herself at night" after hearing the ghost stories from Insu, signaling his ethical response and hospitality to the ghostly others from the past, in the present, and to come.

Derrida contends that without "learn[ing] to live with ghosts" as "certain *others*," "no ethics, no politics, whether revolutionary or not, seems possible and thinkable" and "[n]o justice...seems possible or thinkable without the principle of some *responsibility*,

beyond all living present” (*Specters* xvii-xviii). For Derrida, the task of learning to live by encountering death and the other at the “edge” or limit of life, which would lead you to live “otherwise” and “more justly,” is “ethics itself” (xvii-xviii). In Derrida’s speculation, the specter, non-present, non-living, and non-being-there, appears in a non-linear, anachronic, “de-totalizing,” “radically dis-jointed time, without certain conjunction,” arriving not only from the past (“*revenant*”) but also from the future as “the ‘come’ to the future that cannot be anticipated” or “the very coming of the event” (“*arrivant*”) (*Specters* 20, 33, 211). Like the ghost of Hamlet’s father, as well as the specters of communism and those of Marx, the specter reminds the living of a collective “disjuncture” or “dis-adjustment of the ‘it’s going badly’” (injustice), and signals “the very possibility of the other,” the condition for the messianic future or justice to come irreducible to laws or rights (Derrida, *Specters* 26). Therefore, to learn to live with ghosts, which bear the futurity or possibility of justice, is to open to the future as something *other* than before, *other* than a repetition of the past or present, and to (radically) embrace the other *as other* without limit or reserve, without “conjuring [it] away” as a shame or evil or ever subsuming its otherness (Derrida, *Specters* 59, 81-82).

In “Mourning and Melancholia,” Sigmund Freud theorizes the phenomenon of mourning as a psychic response of a subject to the loss or death of a loved one and compares mourning with melancholia. According to Freud, successful mourning is a normal and normalizing process by the subject to overcome and recover from the loss by withdrawing libidinal attachment to the lost object, replacing it with any new love object, and becoming “free and uninhibited again” (245). Melancholia, on the other hand, is an abnormal, pathological state or disorder the subject gets into as a result of the refusal to

withdraw the libido and let go of the lost object, the incorporation of the object into the ego of the subject, and letting it inhabit or prolong its existence in the ego, and therefore, as a failed mourning. Tackling the Freudian psychoanalytical model of mourning as a “working-through” of trauma and loss (Freud 121), Derrida introduces the aporia of an “impossible mourning” that successful mourning fails as it interiorizes the other “in us” only to betray and do it away with it, and failed mourning succeeds as it keeps the loved one close without appropriating it in *Memoires for Paul de Man* (34-35). In his forward to Abraham and Török’s *The Wolf Man’s Magic Word*, Derrida, taking a cue from Török’s distinction between introjection of the lost other that occurs in successful, normal mourning and the incorporation of the other in melancholia or failed mourning, claims:

“By including the object—whence the name introjection—the process expands the self. It does not retreat; it advances, propagates itself, assimilates, takes over. ‘I emphasized the idea of ‘inclusion’ in order to say that I conceive of all object-love..., as an enlargement of the Self, that is, as an introjection.... [In] the process of incorporation....[t]he Self tries to identify with the object it has ‘incorporated.’ Sealing the loss of the object, but also marking the refusal to mourn, such a maneuver is foreign to and actually opposed to the process of introjection.” (xvi)

For Derrida, normal mourning that introjects, devours, and appropriates the object into the self and consumes and eliminates its difference, whereas failed mourning that incorporates the object through identification but “preserves [it] as other (a living person dead)...as a foreigner inside [the self]” and respects its singularity and resistance to remain as other (xvii). It is in the impossible, incomplete work of mourning that Derrida

finds the “possibility of the impossible” as a condition of an ethical relationship with the other (*Memoirs* 34).

Insu’s work of mourning of his ghost brother, as well as other ghostly brothers and sisters—as Koreans customarily call someone close ‘brother’ and ‘sister’—in the camptown, which the narrator describes as an endeavor to “give them peace” by “nam[ing] the dead...with their stories” (269), performs the “possibility of the impossible” as it demonstrates symbolic, but ethical identification with the ghostly others victimized by the national and transnational bio/necropolitical violence the U.S.-R.O.K. Cold War alliance entailed. Throughout the novel, Insu has been empathetic to those disempowered ghostly subjects, from sex workers like Gannan and Haesuni to Amerasian children such as James, Jani, Gannan’s baby, Paulie, and Suzie, and often identifies with them. His identifications are different from the cannibalistic introjection that Derrida critiques or what Saidiya Hartman calls “empathic identification,” which would project oneself “into another in order to better understand the other” and remove its singularity or difference (18-19). For instance, Insu identifies himself with James, the half-black boy, and the African American GIs on the bus ride to his school when he sits on the backside of the bus with them, while the white GIs are sitting in the front. However, it is noted that James is jeered at by the white GIs while he is not (95-96). Retrospectively recalling the tragic incident that befell to James, the narrator points out the racist undercurrent in the camptown and James’ irreducible difference as a racial other:

“For the longest time, I had not realized what it meant that James was Black. I had seen it, of course. I had chanted the chocolate rhyme at him, compared the tones of our flesh, called him a kkomdungi. And he had

chanted the chocolate rhyme himself, singing about the Negro men from Africa and their kindness. He did not seem to notice, any more than I, that his difference went further than simply being of mixed blooded. To both of us, I think his Blackness was lost under the labels we heard—ainoko, chapjong, t'wigi—and that commonness obscured the fact that when people looked at us oddly, they looked at him more oddly than at me. Even a decade later, I could not look back and see that James's tragedy was in the fact that his father was Black.” (232)

As the narrator states, Insu's cross-racial identification with James as “ainoko, chapjong, t'wigi,” mixed race, a racial other in Korea ethically slips with James' racial otherness doubled by his blackness, marked with the derogatory word, “kkomdunggi.”

As an heir and mourner of his parents' transgenerational and national and transnational trauma and secret, Insu is far from trying to overcome the traumatic past and close off the possibility of the other. When Insu finds out that the ghostly figure that haunts Insu is his lost half-brother, he feels infinite “emptiness” that he knew “that nothing would ever fill it” (265), which is what Freud describes as a characteristic of melancholic incorporation of the lost other that “empt[ies] the ego until it is totally impoverished” (29). Through this melancholic incorporation, Insu remains to be haunted by his ghost brother, which refuses to vanish even after his family's secret is disclosed, as a foreign body and spirit sealed and entombed within his living body and psyche. Through the novel, the ghost brother is almost identified with Insu in his dreams “repeated...in many convolutions” and in his reverie. In the dream the narrator first describes in the novel, the ghost brother appears as a stranger in “[his] own reflection”

who Insu “[takes] to be [himself] but knew, in [his] heart, [is] really an older stranger (35). In the following dreams, he is almost identified with Insu: “He looked so much like myself—that I tried to imagine he was me. But he was not me. He was too old in that place to be me, and he was too thin, his ears a bit too wide, his face too narrow. He was a stranger in my skin, and each time I saw him I was terrified and unspeakably sad” (203); “He looked like me, but he was not me. His was the face I often saw in my dreams, the face that always frightened me with its mysterious familiarity” (208). At the end of the novel, he makes a ghostly presence in front of Insu at the airport waiting for his flight to America, and the narrator states, “I am too terrified to run forward and look at his face because I know it will look too much like my own” (270). Insu’s identification with Kuristo, who he knows though is not himself and therefore is incomplete bespeaks his cryptic incorporation of his ghost brother, whom he holds onto and keeps living as an other but does not absorb it and make it his own, which Derrida would find is an ethical way to “learn to live.” Then, what does the ethics of learning to live with ghosts—the ethical incorporation/identification with the other—have to do with the politics of transnational ghostly life? How may the ethical relationship with the other lead to a resistance, or a counter-politics to the spectralizing (trans)national bio/necropower over life across the Pacific?

Memories of My Ghost Brother suggests how this ethical relationship with ghosts may also open up a politics of, for, and by ghosts or ghostly life, or a “good” “spectropolitics” of revolution or justice to come, which Derrida proposes as opposed to a “bad” spectropolitics of totalization (whether as totality or as totalitarianism) or of post-democratic, post-political society (*Specters* 133-134). María del Pilar Blanco and Esther

Peeren expound that Derrida's "spectropolitics" is "designed to address how, in different parts of the world, particular subjects become prone to social erasure, marginalization, and precarity" (650). They continue to state:

"spectropolitics emerges as the site of potential change, where ghosts, and especially the ability to haunt and the willingness to be haunted, to live with ghosts, can work...to 'revivify our collective capacity to imagine a future radically other to the one ideologically charted out already by the militarized, patriarchal capitalism that has thrived heretofore on the practice of social erasure.'" (2237-2238)

In the novel, Insu's ethical identification with, or internalization of, his ghost brothers and sisters leads to his racial and cultural disidentification with the masculine figure of GIs who he has been dictated to identify with. When Insu visits his father at Camp Casey and has a tour of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) after the news of James' tragic death and his visit to his sick mother at the hospital recovering from a miscarriage, Insu feels alienated from his father and like-minded fellow GIs, singing "the old Angry Alpha song." Insu notices how their voices merge harmoniously and they share the same routines, mindset, white American national identity, and masculine comradeship, and thinks, "That was something that only yellow-haired soldiers could do. It would forever be tainted by a Koreanness that would make the words 'gook' or 'dink' sound strange coming from my lips, like the word 'nigger' spoken by a Black GI to anyone but his brothers" (253-254).

Having disidentified with both his father's militarized imperialism and his mother's colonial collaboration as death-producing or ghost-conjuring specters, Insu once

again identifies himself with Kuristo or his ghostly status at the final scene of the novel.

The narrator writes,

“Kuristo, my ghost brother, gone already into the Westward Land.
Kuristo, a family dream from a time before my golden-haired GI father.
This was the dream that had affixed itself in my mind.... I remember—
yes, I remembered, I will remember—I [too] was born from a dream, and
now I will fly into the heavens, to the West, into another dream” (270-
271).

This haunted narrative shows Insu’s identification yields a learning or realization that his fate is bound with Kuristo’s as they were both “born from a dream” and end up going to America, which turns Insu into a ghostly figure, “fly[ing] into the heavens, to the West, into another dream,” following the phantom of his ghost brother who “is walking away...into that next world” (270). Insu’s identification with his ghost brother radically challenges the distinction between life and death, the living and the dead, and the valued life and the devalued, which the national and transnational bio/necropolitical order relies upon. This also manifests the “zone of indistinction,” discussed in the previous chapter, the gradual convergence or identity of political life and bare life under the biopolitical paradigm of the modern liberal democracy (Agamben 122). The figure of Insu’s ghost brother manifests this indistinction as a transnational adoptee who has escaped the camptown to the promised land of America and is lost in the transnational adoption, simultaneously embodying livable and unlivable life. The spectralization of Kuristo through his diaspora to the U.S., as well as Jani’s premature death in the U.S., further undoes the binary opposition between the camptown, as a necropolitical place of ghostly

life created by cultural exclusion and ethnic annihilation, and the U.S. as a “grand” and “magical” “dream country” saving and preserving life. The last scene, where Insu re-enacts the disappearance or loss of his ghost brother in the transpacific migration from the camptown to America and joins the ghostly others as an *other*, makes visible and sensible a transnational link or community among the disenfranchised, dehumanized, and precarious ghostly lives, which is akin to what Derrida calls a “new international,” defined as “a link of affinity, suffering, and hope, ...almost secret link, ...but more and more visible, ...without status, without title, and without name, ...without contract, ‘out of joint,’ without coordination, without party, without country, without national community..., without common belonging to a class” (*Specters* 106-107). By demonstrating “the ability to haunt and the willingness to be haunted, to live with ghosts” in his haunted and haunting novel, Fenkl imagines the possibility for a politics of the ghostly subjects to form an alternative alliance or “link of affinity, suffering, and hope” with their irreducible singularity reserved and to collectively counter-conjure the spectralizing bio/necropolitical forces and kindles “our collective capacity to imagine a future radically other,” deemed unthinkable and thus impossible by the U.S. and South Korean governments.

CHAPTER THREE

The Biopolitics of Korean Transnational Adoption and (Dis)Performing Exceptional Subjects in Jane Jeong Trenka's Memoirs

Over the past decades has emerged a growing body of literature by adult transnational and/or transracial adoptees and their “allies” out of sociology, history, anthropology, psychology, and creative writing across the globe that speaks back to the existing adoption narratives and scholarship written by adoption agents, social workers, researchers, adoptive parents, and an earlier generation of adoptees that celebrate the healing force of transracial love and multicultural kinship. These emerging voices offer dissonant adoption memories, experience, and narratives of love, loss, grief, and belonging, which interrupt the hegemonic colorblind and redemptive rhetoric of transnational/transracial adoption and the popular model minority discourse, and instead turn their attention toward the politico-economic, social, and cultural structures of adoption practice, situating it within the history of imperialism, colonialism, racism, militarism, and globalization (Oparah, Shin, and Trenka 1-15). Among the Korean adoptees who ushered and participated in this turn or revision of adoption discourse in a wide range of academic and artistic practices, Jane Jeong Trenka stands out for her original “voice of the native, having returned to the imperial center” and back to the margin, “from [a] very different positionality” simultaneously interior and exterior to national and juridical belonging in her autobiographical adoption narratives and journalist writings.

In her award-winning debut memoir, *The Language of Blood*, Jane Jeong Trenka narrates what it means to be a Korean adoptee in Minnesota, nicknamed as “the land of

10,000 Korean adoptees” after the state motto by the Korean adoptee community (qtd. in Nelson 101), and in contemporary South Korea. Going against the grain of the representations of Korean adoptees in the United States, largely configured as icons of American humanitarian salvation and multiculturalism and a model minority, Trenka speaks of her lived experience of forced migration and assimilation, cultural erasure, color-blind and outright racism, Orientalism, and racial melancholia in the American Midwest.²² In her follow-up memoir, *Fugitive Visions*, written after she relocated to Seoul in 2004, Trenka records how she faced the Korean social fantasy that imagines adoptee returnees as exceptionally privileged Korean transnationals, possessing “[t]he best of both worlds” (123) and embodying the neoliberal and multicultural values. In the face of the dominant trope of Korean adoptee exceptionalism in both her adoptive and native land, Trenka speaks back of her less-than-fluid transpacific diaspora, the magnitude of losses and pains, and “inner homelessness” (*Fugitive* 153) as the material and psychic conditions of impossibility for exceptional (trans)national subjectivity, and instead documents her painstaking search for the genealogy of Korean adoption and the complex “logic of the society that would not help [her] family” (88).

As Trenka is re-establishing the lost connections with her Korean birth family and digging around in her past, the complex history and regulatory frameworks of her adoption and homecoming began to unravel. She finds that the biopolitical orders of South Korea and the U.S. during and after the Cold War, which constructed and reconstructed the legal and cultural boundaries of kinship and national belonging in accordance with the geopolitical and domestic interests of the two nation-states by organizing and regulating global flows of children, capital, and labor, as a juridico-

political and ideological ground for transnational adoption and resettlement of many Koreans. The prolonged practice of transnational adoption beyond times of warfare and humanitarian crisis was rationalized in South Korea in the name of better life, defined by the developmentalist and paternalist rhetoric of education, opportunity, success, wealth, power, and salvation, coded and syntaxed within the U.S.-R.O.K. neocolonial geopolitical context, which also rationalized the forced normalization of the adopted population in the U.S. Trenka's memoirs foreground the subjectification of adopted Koreans—the process of being subject and becoming a subject—to the national and international biopolitics of South Korea and the U.S. during and in the aftermath of the Cold War as legally, racially, culturally, and/or economically exceptional subjects. By laying bare the mechanisms of the transpacific biopolitical machinery controlling kinship, citizenship, and nationality and producing exceptional immigrant and transnational subjects, Trenka situates her experience of transnational adoption and homecoming within the history of South Korea's postcolonial and neoliberal nation building, which was coordinated and/or connected with the post-World War II U.S. empire-building project in Asia.

Having said that, this chapter reads along and across Trenka's journey to find the biopolitical logic behind the systemic exclusion and inclusion of Korean adoptees as exceptional subjects across the Pacific in her memoirs. While engaging theories of biopolitics and subjectification in the discussion, I begin by mapping out the politico-legal, economic, and cultural frameworks of the biopolitical ordering of life across the Pacific and its shifting orders over time that have differentially subjectified Korean adoptees and organized their migrations. This chapter also inquires into how Trenka's

memoirs depict her subjectification as a Korean adoptee to the state of exception, or the production of the Korean adoptee as an exceptional subject, and its dynamics of subjection and resistance at the call of the dominant biopolitical ordinance in and across South Korea and the U.S. My reading reveals that Trenka's life narratives enriched by heterogeneous and imaginary narratives animate a mimetic adoptee subject performing ideal national subjectivity prescribed through transnational adoption and homecoming only to show and affirm her inevitable failure to do so, and therefore to un-form the idealized figure of Korean adoptees. Trenka's failure of coerced or pedagogic identification with the racial and ethnic ideals of exceptional American or Korean citizenry, or what queer theorists Judith Butler and José Esteban Muñoz call "disidentification," predicated on loss, erasure, and melancholia that her forced migration and assimilation entailed. Unlike counteridentification, Muñoz argues that disidentification works simultaneously as an effect of her politico-legal subjection and as a condition for her potentiality to dis-perform the prescribed idealized life and radically thwart the biopolitical hold over her life.

I find the power of Trenka's autobiographical rendering of her adoptee and returnee experience in her experimental, nonlinear, multi-vocal, multi-textual, and performative writing that weaves fragments of historical and personal memories and poetic and theatrical narratives to enact her psychic and social submission to the biopolitical orders and the racial and ethnic exception under the U.S.-R.O.K. Cold War geopolitics and South Korea's recent neoliberalizing regime, as well as her failure to perform or identify with ideal American or Korean subjectivity. The genre of autobiography is understood as "a form of identity quest" or self-forming in the mode of

writing or composing of one's "most personal experiences and public performances" where "'auto' means self, 'bios' means life, and 'graph' means to write" (Lopičić 123-124). If we take that assumption, Trenka's autobiographical composition becomes a particularly effective and subversive tool for her to re-compose, re-form, or re-perform her body, self, and life as a Korean adoptee against the normative formations of her 'bios' and the public performances dictated or guided by the (trans)national biopolitics, for which the bodies of Korean adoptees served as its nationalist "laboratory" as Christine W. Gailey puts it (82), as well as the hegemonic ethnographic discourse of adoptee 'bios.' Taking the narrative space of autobiography as a site or "laboratory" of political resistance or reform, Trenka nevertheless un-forms any coherent adoptee "identity" resisting "the sense of progress and development" normative in that genre (Lopičić 127). Trenka's experimental writing instead composes herself not as a unitary speaking or writing subject with the privileged first-person singular voice and authority, but as a complex, multiplied, fragmented, and "fugitive" subject in crisis who battles with representation, consumption, exploitation, and resolution. Upon this undercurrent of self-un-composition, I attempt to read the configuration of her and other racialized bodies and bodily performances to trace the laboratory work of biopolitical projects and hers onto and through the bodies.

By illuminating the macro-level power structures of Korean adoption diaspora and return and the micro-level subjectification of an adoptee in Trenka's texts, this chapter closely engages the evolving body of scholarship on adoption literature that investigates "the political and the psychic economies of transnational adoption" (Eng 95). My analysis of Trenka's two adoption narratives offers a transpacific reading of Korean

adoptee subjectivity in the U.S. and South Korea to move beyond the nation- or culture-bound interpretations of adoption literature, which more often than not viewed the adoptee subject either as a successful model or a victim, and to reveal the complex production of the exceptional adoptee figure and its transition from the figure of damaged life to that of privileged life across the national borders. My reading of Korean adoptees as exceptional transpacific figures in Trenka's memoirs nevertheless does not intend to re-inscribe Korean adoptees' exceptionality or highlight their cultural and legal singularity among immigrant groups in the U.S. and South Korea. Rather, this chapter, through the lens of biopolitics, seeks to reframe transnational adoption and homecoming as an instance of institutional racism and structural violence and inequality legitimately committed and sanctioned by contemporary transnational politics of life operating within and outside the state territory, and to align the life of adoptees and returnees with that of other populations disproportionately affected and differentially valued under the similar regimes of biopolitics.

The Biopolitics of South Korea-U.S. Adoption and the Making of the Exceptional Subjects across the Pacific

Trenka's memoirs, which trail the transformation of Korean adoptees from exceptional racial or ethnic Other to exceptionally assimilable Asian American and successful transnational Korean, capture the double meaning of the term "exceptional," at once being an exception and a model. In spite of the seemingly contradictory subject-positions, Agamben's discussion of the exception makes legible how the positive and inclusive model of the exceptional Korean American adoptees was founded on the same

biopolitical principle and mechanism of the exception as an inclusive exclusion. The exceptional inclusion of Asian adoptees in the U.S. was predicated on the erasure of their Asian race or Asianness, leaving the racial order or hierarchy that identified Asians as a racial Other intact. The transformation of Korean American adoptees from bare life to exceptionally preferred global Koreans under South Korea's neoliberal imperative was also organized by the same economy of biopolitics that initially expelled them in order to build a racially homogenous and globally competitive nation. Trenka's portrayal of the Korean American adoptee performing or compelled to perform the exceptional racial and ethnic subject in and across South Korea and the U.S. exposes their contradictory, but continued subjection to the transnational biopolitical regimes of the two nation-states.

Korean transnational adoption, as Eleana J. Kim states in *Adopted Territory*, was from the outset "a form of transnational biopolitics, in which domestic population problems were converted into diplomatic solutions" within the context of the American exceptional hegemony in postwar South Korea (72). In the 1950s, due to the lack of regulations governing domestic adoption, the South Korean government depended on the U.S. adoption and immigration laws and used transnational adoption as a convenient, temporary measure to handle the orphaned children. In 1961, this practice was formalized by the Orphan Adoption Special Law, essentially designed for international adoption to "protect the welfare of orphaned and abandoned children being placed outside of South Korea" (Sarri, Baik, and Bombyk 94) and as a solution to overpopulation for the sake of economic development and security defense by saving the welfare cost for military spending, controlling women's productive and reproductive labor, earning foreign currency in the global adoption market for babies, and maintaining close diplomatic

relations with its Western allies, especially with the U.S.²³ The law established a legal and administrative system that promoted mass international adoption, replacing domestic social welfare to support birth mothers and families, whereby the children of young, single, impoverished, and/or victimized Korean mothers could be transferred to middle-class Western parents as efficiently and smoothly as possible for more than half a century.²⁴

In *Fugitive Visions*, Trenka locates the biopolitical exclusion and deportation of adoptable orphans from South Korea within its ethnic and gendered nationalism, which had evolved into an ingrained culture and been codified in law from the era of Japanese colonial and U.S. military occupations through the postwar division of the nation and the continued presence of U.S. forces. She claims that the widespread ideology of the Korean national identity as “one big Korean family” and the emotional sense of Korean “togetherness” had been maintained by “purg[ing]” undeserved, excessive populations “from the nation” (15). Trenka herself was one of them. Her birth father, a Korean raised under U.S. military rule and hegemony, thought that she was too light-skinned to be his child, a sign of unfaithfulness for a suspicious husband, and being the “worthless” fourth daughter was an additional disadvantage (192). Like many mixed-race children or children of unwed mothers who could not be registered in the Korean patrilineal family registry, she fell outside of normative kinship and national membership.²⁵ As explained earlier, the family-head system (*hojuje*), when combined with Korean Nationality Act of 1948, allowed only the male house-head to register a child to establish a racially homogeneous, patriarchal/patrilineal nation. Buttressed with Korea’s strict patriarchal and anti-miscegenation tradition, the family registry system provided the legal basis for

the state's biopolitical racial exclusion and control of women's sexuality and reproduction in the face of a heavy U.S. military presence and created "a condition of possibility" for the production of thousands of what Jodi Kim calls "legal orphan[s]" with living biological parent(s) in contrast to biological orphans. Jodi Kim explains that the making of the abandoned or lost children into legal orphans, by severing them from "any kinship ties" and stripping them of "social identities" and "social personhood" in the normative adoption practice in South Korea, has caused their social death—until they are adopted and socially resuscitated—as well as their birth mothers.' Radically stripped of social identities and statuses, left to the discretion of the state, and exposed to violent social death, the legal orphans are constructed as "the exceptional state subject[s]" (169).

Trenka bitterly remarks, "the Korean economy is built on [her] back, [her birth] mother's back," and their suffering (*Fugitive* 98). She points to the large-scale mobilization and exploitation of Korean working-class women's cheap productive and reproductive labor and the biopolitical control of their sexuality and reproduction for the construction of ethnic nation-state and the dramatic capitalist economic development in the 1960s through 1980s under the authoritarian military rule. It is also indicative of her birth mother's and her own contributions to the Korean and international adoption industry, which was orchestrated by and above the state, and thereby to the state-sponsored, export-driven industrialization of South Korea. Arissa Oh argues that the "baby export" industry contributed to the "economic miracle" in the 1970s and 1980s, as a revenue stream, a cultural bridge to South Korea's Western allies, and an outlet for "excess populations" and as a means to reduce spending on domestic social welfare programs (177). Insofar as the life of working-class Korean women was incorporated into

the economically weak but aspiring nation-state's biopower as a matter of national interest at the levels of both productivity and reproductivity, the life (and death) of their fetuses and children, especially those considered "surplus"—mixed, abandoned, street, institutionalized, disabled, and/or out-of-wedlock children—in the state's population control campaigns of the 1960s through 1980s, was also subject to the state's regulatory logic as controlled and (re)organized by midwifery clinics, hospitals, orphanages, and adoption agencies. Eleana Kim articulates that these institutions functioned as "influential brokers of biopower" and "less as the private social welfare institutions they purport to be and more as extensions of the South Korean state" (217).

In *Fugitive Visions*, Trenka demonstrates the systemic annihilation of adoptees' identities by these brokers in her "perfectly legal" adoption process (91), while examining her own and others falsified 'orphan *hojŏk*' that were meant to facilitate transnational adoption by laundering children's identities or altering their information.²⁶ A renowned Korean American filmmaker Deann Borshay Liem's documentary films, one Emmy Award-nominated, the other award-winning, have also brought this adoption fraud to the fore. During her filmmaking of *First Person Plural* that documented her search for and reunion with her birth family, Liem discovers her "faked" identity forged by the adoption agency to replace another Korean girl at the same orphanage scheduled to be adopted but was claimed by her birth family before the adoption was completed.²⁷ In her more recent film *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*, Liem travels back to Korea to find the reasons for the identity switch and the real Cha Jung Hee who has haunted her as a surrogate identity ever since her adoption at the age of eight. While tracing the incredible stories of her adoption, Liem's films critically capture the human sacrifice in South

Korean modernization, as well as the commercialization of the humanitarian work, revealing the global producer-consumer chain in the transnational adoption industry.

Trenka also demystifies transnational adoption by revealing the commodification of adoptable babies of the Third World and the prosperous adoption markets and industries on a global scale. In *The Language of Blood*, Trenka recalls her adoptive mother always saying, “We chose you.” This sounded to her as if buying a doll from store shelves, which implied that she could be “returned” or “exchanged for a better girl” at any time (24). The image of the adoptee as a commodified plaything challenges the dominant adoption rhetoric of benevolent salvation. In *Fugitive Visions*, following the YES/NO questions in the worksheet, Trenka adds a conversation drill, which asks, “The private adoption of a healthy white American infant can cost over \$50,000. This being the case, would you like to substitute a child from another country” like Russia, China, or Guatemala? She then inserts another drill titled, “LET’S GO TO THE MARKET!,” with examples of “Give me _____ won worth,” “Give me a discount!,” “I don’t have time,” and “Do it fast,” and instructs the readers to “negotiate [their] preferred price and time frame” (84). Pointing to the neoliberal logic of the adoption industry and culture marketing on transnational adoption as a cost-and-time-efficient method of family building for prospective Western parents, the author criticizes not just the neoliberal commodification of children, but also the neocolonial relationship between the supplier/sender/birth mother and the consumer/receiver/adoptive mother.

The international baby market constructed through the system of adoption may also suggest what Pheng Cheah, one of the leading postcolonial scholars, calls “the new international division of reproductive labor.” Gayatri C. Spivak, who has raised the issue

of the international division of labor (IDL) between nation-states and regions as an outcome and a contemporary form of nineteenth-century territorial imperialism, has illuminated the shadowed space of unorganized gendered labor outside “the circuit of the international division of labor” (288). Taking on Spivak’s notion of the IDL and exploring her critique of Foucault’s theory of power, Pheng Cheah attempts to elucidate the validity of Foucault’s notion of biopower, which operates “by productive incorporation, rather than exclusion and repression,” to understand contemporary IDL on the current stage of global capitalism (188). For Cheah, women’s unpaid domestic work and reproductive labor, which was traditionally considered “outside organized labor,” has now been incorporated into the postcolonial neoliberal capitalist economy, and therefore has been the object of the state’s biopower to promote capitalist accumulation, establishing “the new international division of reproductive labor” (188-189). Under the frame of the contemporary international division of labor, transnational adoption functions as an outsourcing of reproductive labor, which “redistribute[s] the reproduction of the metropolitan workforce on the shoulders of women in and from the ‘Third World’” as Silvia Federici insightfully argues (72).

To highlight the mechanisms of global supply and care chains and the international division of labor in the adoption industry, Trenka drafts a short poem titled “TRANSFORMATIONAL ÉTUDE No. 2” in *Fugitive Visions*, which goes, “Made in Korea / Cheap goods / Cheap labor / Cheap womb / Cheap adoption / Cheap immigration / Cheap immigrant / Cheap yellow daughter / Honorary white almost but not quite” (30). Tracing the transformation of a Korean child into a product and then to a “[c]heap yellow daughter” and a “[h]onorary white” through the global production-consumer conveyor

belt, the author stresses not only the production and commodification of adoptable children as “goods,” but also the exploitation of women’s labor in a low-income developing country. She also includes topics for conversation practice into her memoir, which include “If you could recognize a child’s mother as a human being, would you still think of taking her child from her as a charitable act?” and “If you knew the true nature of desperation, would you still use the word ‘choice’ as a synonym for the relinquishment or abandonment of a child?” (*Fugitive* 85). The gap between the ‘choice’ her birth mother made and the choice of her adoptive mother marks the unlevelled playing field, one in which the women in advanced capitalist countries, albeit unwittingly, take advantage of the women in desperation on the other side of the world, challenging the popular Western elite feminist perspective of adoption as a win/win situation that adoption will benefit both the birth family and the adoptive family. As an ESL teacher and a Korean language student in Korea, the author appropriates the language exercises to lay bare the social grammar of transnational adoption and the socioeconomic structures of women’s ‘choices,’ that were, and still are, profoundly neocolonial and biopolitical.

Unlike Liem, Trenka goes further to stress South Korea’s biopolitical system of capitalist development, which made such fraudulent adoption crimes not just “a few [odd] mistakes” or exceptions, but exemplary of Korean transnational adoption practice as institutionalized expulsion (94) and of that the economic success of the tiger nation came at the expense of those unwanted, erased lives:

Erasure as passing / Erasure as job skill / Erasure as survival / Erasure as economic development / Does anyone remember how we came to be prosperous? Not in a straight line from American-style war to American-

style democracy, but a Korean-style path [...] over thirty years of military dictatorships and how many hours of female sweatshop labor later—where do you think babies come from anyway... (97)

Trenka reveals that transnational adoption has functioned in Korea as a biopolitical means to constitute a racially homogeneous and economically competitive body of the nation by classifying and organizing the population into worthy and unworthy lives and sacrificing and turning the latter unlivable and outside the confines of national membership.

Trenka observes how this type of biopolitical (re)organization or removal of life within and outside of South Korea was orchestrated on a global scale within the Cold War international geopolitics by the U.S. in service of its rise as a global economic and military superpower under the banner of democracy. Adoption from Korea or Asia at home was integrated into “the national project of global expansion” in the U.S. (Klein 190), in which Korean adoptees were to perform “ideological labor” (J. Kim 174) to flaunt America’s exceptional military, economic, moral, and cultural superiority and imagine U.S. military domination and intervention in Korea and other Asian regions as humanitarian, not as imperialist.²⁸ Tobias Hübinette also argues in *Outsiders Within* that transnational adoption was integrated into the imperialist project of postwar U.S. military intervention in Europe and Asia as a form of a humanitarian rescue mission to flaunt America’s exceptional moral, military, and economic superiority (144-145). As Trenka in the introduction of the book articulates, “No bid for empire would be complete without religious forerunners” (9).²⁹ Trenka presents an image of the transnational adoptee as the mascot of the American military, performing the ideological labor to celebrate and

propagate the Christian-led military-humanitarian mission to rescue war waifs. She depicts her elder sister Carol—who was also adopted with the author, but unlike her worked hard to fit into their white American adoptive family—perfectly playing piano on hymns like “Beautiful Saviors,” “Onward, Christian Soldiers,” and “O Sacred Head Now Wounded” (*Fugitive* 16). Adoption scholars have shown how Korean adoptees were often materialized in U.S. newspaper as cared by and physically associated with American military servicemen to promote the social imaginary of the United States as a paternalistic ally and protector (E. Kim 47-53; Pate 78-87). Trenka’s representation of the Korean adoptee as a mascot figure of the U.S. military highlights the adoptees’ function as an ideological buffer between the U.S. occupier and the local Koreans and an instrument to reorganize and expand the symbolic and territorial boundaries of the American nation.

To further demystify adoption promoted as the Christian missionary work of salvation, Trenka traces the genealogy of transnational adoption in postcolonial Korea as born out of wartime and postwar exigencies in the state of exception, which persisted and was often renewed even today under the longstanding U.S.-R.O.K. security alliance. This alliance, dating to 1945 in the form of U.S. military occupation and government (USAMGIK) in the southern half of Korea, was consolidated with the U.S.-R.O.K. Mutual Defense Treaty, which officially granted the U.S. the right to station U.S./U.N. troops in South Korea indefinitely. To unpack the Cold War geopolitics and neocolonial relations between the United States and South Korea, Trenka exemplifies the key travel phrases for the U.S. military in Korean and English languages in popular travel guide books like the one she carries: “Have you seen communists?! *Kongsangoon bwasooyo?!*

공산군 봤어요?/ [...] Submit to search!/ *Tamsaeke unghae!*/ 탐색에 응해!/ Do not resist!/ *Banhanghajeema!*/ 반항하지마!/ [...] We came to help./ *Dowa jooreo waseoyo.*/ 도와 주러 왔어요” (106-107). While capturing the power relations and hierarchy between the speaker and the listener coded in the two languages, the author also lays bare the ways in which the red menace, which evokes the war that never ended and the unlimited state of Cold War emergency, rationalizes the U.S. military presence, as well as its neocolonial power and authority over Korean civilians in their quotidian life, euphemized as a softer paternalistic effort of “help.” For Trenka, transnational adoption was founded upon and structured by these paternalistic intercountry relations. In a worksheet that Trenka weaves into her memoir, the reader is given a series of yes or no questions such as:

If you were a country that calls itself a shrimp between whales...Should you appease foreign powers by giving humans as gifts? . . . If foreign allies helped save you from communism, should you send your children to those same allies later? . . . For how long? . . . Under what kinds of trade agreement? (*Fugitive* 80-81)

Raising the critical questions of the stakes and effects of the security alliance, Trenka attempts to denaturalize transnational adoption by reframing it as a neocolonial trade in which children are exchanged for foreign military and economic aid and Korean adoptees are reduced to “gifts” for the “big brother,” U.S./U.N. allies.

In *Fugitive Visions*, Trenka further indexes the close ties between the military empire and transnational adoption, and the accompanying rhetoric of democratic values, redemption, and healing, and instead, foregrounds biopolitical mechanisms and their

underlying necropolitical—death-inducing or life-destroying—force. She contends that the suffering of her birth mother, “bearing a Japanese name not her own, chewing on a language not her-our own, her-our country filled with a foreign military, a barbed-wire gash running through the body of her-our nation, running through her-our family, her-our country now filled with another foreign military,” originated in the nation’s two military occupations and imperialist and neoimperialist wars (16). Trenka claims that the Korea War, which she “never lived through...[but] marks” her (118), founded the practice of intercountry adoption between South Korea and the U.S. upon the exceptional biopolitical order of U.S. empire. Apprehending transnational adoption as a form of ethnic cleansing, she juxtaposes the “expulsion of children” with the Nogunri civilian massacre and other forgotten “mass civilian sacrifice[s]” such as the 4/3 Jeju massacre (87, 94) that were carried out by the U.S. and R.O.K. forces before and during the Korean War under U.S. military command in order to purge Communist enemies and political opponents. Trenka situates transnational adoption within the history of war crimes and genocide committed by the two states in U.S.-occupied and wartime Korea. The prolonged practice of transnational adoption in postwar South Korea was sustained in the ongoing state of Cold War emergency, with Korea technically still at war and virtually under U.S. military control. By framing transnational adoption as state-initiated mass destruction, displacement, and deportation, “as something other than charitable” (94), Trenka politicizes her transpacific diaspora as a product of sovereign and transnational biopower over a dispossessed and disfranchised Korean population.

The process of making Korean children into vulnerable orphans during the war and then again into acceptable adoptees demonstrates the global biopower of the U.S.

military empire that could “let die” Korean children in warfare, and then “make live,” that is, foster their life, as well as the life of the American family, which Foucault epitomizes as the prerogative of the modern nation-state’s (bio)power (“*Society*” 241). Pointing to the paradox of “humanitarian or pacifist militarism,” Slavoj Žižek has denounced the obscene logic of biopolitical liberal democracy that “war is okay insofar as it really serves to bring about peace, democracy, or to create conditions for distributing humanitarian help” (509), indexing the hazy line between biopolitical decision on life and necropolitical decision on death. Trenka’s account of Korean transnational adoption discloses the growing convergence of humanitarianism and militarism, peace and violence, family and national security, and life and death in the prolonged state of emergency. Addressing the War on Terror and Americans’ effort to adopt the children of Afghanistan or Iraq, Trenka finds “patterns of [U.S. military] occupation and violence unfold in the relentless way” that have kept “displac[ing] family members and creat[ing] orphans, . . . one after the other after the other” (*Fugitive* 140).

Transnational and cross-racial adoption from Korea was founded upon America’s domestic racial order during the Cold War, which saw Korean adoptees as legally and racially exceptional (Asian) American subjects in a multi-racial body politic, simultaneously heightening and overlooking their Asian racial difference. From the outset, full- and half-Korean children were legally admitted to the U.S. in the 1950s as exceptions, Korean War refugees under emergency legislation such as the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 and the Act of September 11, 1957. They were allotted special nonquota orphan visas that circumvented domestic anti-miscegenation and anti-Asian immigration laws, and that could expedite their citizenship even while restrictions on emigration and

naturalization of the mixed-race children of unwed U.S. citizen fathers and Asian mothers born outside the U.S. as well as their mothers were tightened (Park 128; E.J. Kim, *Adopted* 55-56). Including Asian orphans—not half-American children—from communist and U.S.-intervened countries highlights their exceptionalism and reveals the state's biopolitical control over the bodies of immigrants, national membership, and domestic (inter)racial kinship in accordance with its Cold War foreign policy in Asia. Park's study further suggests how Korean adoptees were subsumed within ideologies of domestic racial integration during the Cold War, in which the American family, racially different but culturally the same, was reimagined as a global, redemptive force, nurturing "a body of immigrants...most easily assimilable to the American way of life" (154; 2). Hence, the integration of Korean orphans into America's Cold War geopolitics and racial integration policies at home as an exception to the state's anti-immigration law then culminated in an effort to make them exceptional Asian American citizens,³⁰ raised by (mostly) white American families and having a special capacity and inclination to assimilate into normative white culture. The adoption of Korean children became "a laboratory for assimilationist beliefs in the redemptive qualities of capitalist culture and Christianity" to create "'real' Asian Americans...reared by ['real'] white, middle-class, conservative, patriotic Americans," setting the norm for "'model minority' adoption" (Gailey 82-83).

In *The Language of Blood*, Trenka parodies the Korean adoptee's performance of exceptional racial subjectivity in a standup-comedy-style monologue titled, "Don't Worry I Will Make You Feel Comfortable." An Asian female persona named Jane in "a sad clown outfit, complete with whiteface makeup," speaks to the spectator:

Lucky for you, there are the thousand adopted Koreans in Minnesota—one for every lake. [APPLAUSE] We extra good because we come without lice or tapeworm. Almost pass for white daughter! I am honorary white person! [APPLAUSE] Ancient Chinese secret: No matter mail-order bride or mail-order kid—Oriental woman love you long time! *Kamsahamnida!*

(97)

Jane then begins to play and sing a song, which goes, “I’m the very model of a high-achieving minority/ I got straight As and all white friends and even a sorority/ I never bitch about my rights or blame my problems on the whites/ I just work hard and sweep my shop and quietly grow erudite!” (97). This skit reveals the Orientalist ideology of othering the Asian race both in the negative stereotypes of uncivilized, submissive, and lustful Asian women and in the trope of Asian adoptee exceptionalism, premised upon her racial covering and (almost perfect) identification with idealized whiteness. Kim Park Nelson in *Invisible Asians* also traces the figure of the Korean adoptees as “exceptional” American people of color and/or immigrants or a prototype of Asian American adoptee model minority, back to the first-generation Korean adoptees, “in terms of cultural assimilation, psychological adjustment, and/or social success” circulated through media coverage, popular culture, life stories, and the transracial adoption studies (13). Nelson demonstrates that this myth was imagined upon the dominant colorblind racial ideology in American adoption practice, geared toward “achiev[ing] normative familial sameness,” whiteness, thereof, and “de-emphasizing racial difference,” and as such, rendered the adoptees racially invisible within and outside their adoptive family (331, 339).

In *The Language of Blood*, Trenka describes her exceptional racialization through transnational and transracial adoption as a work of modern alchemy:

Home chef, the modern alchemist, starts not with base metals but old chicken hearts and livers, broken backs and flightless wings. Boil them; strain them. Extract the undesirable parts; accent the desirable flavors.... Consider another recipe: Start with a girl girl whose blood has been steeped in Korea for generations, imprinted with Confucianism and shamanism and war. Extract her from the mountains. Plant her in wheat fields between the Red river and the Mississippi. Baptize her. Indoctrinate her. Tell her who she is. Tell her what is real. (135)

Trenka depicts her own American upbringing as an assimilationist laboratory of erasing her Koreanness—negatively associated with death, prostitution, sexism, and barbarism—and turning her into white American by her adoptive parents who were so thoroughly blinded to and disavowing her racial difference, challenges, and grief that they raised her only as white and their own “and no one else’s” (*Fugitive* 29, 47). Her Asian race, which functioned as a condition for her possibility in the U.S. and her exceptional American membership, was soon turned into an object of discipline and erasure. Trenka bitterly criticizes that the entire adoption practice, from the exclusion from South Korea through American military-humanitarian intervention and the post-adoption normalization, amounted to cultural genocide or a “methodical” destruction of adoptees’ identity and history: “adoption would erase the people who we once were so completely, so irrevocably [...] tak[ing] our language, our culture, our families, our names, our birth dates, our citizenship, and our identities in perfectly legal process” (*Fugitive* 89). Hence,

for Trenka, transnational/transracial adoption is doubly an ethnic cleansing, first by deportation and then by forced assimilation.

Trenka further grounds the forced migration and “methodical” cultural destruction of Korean adoptees within the Native American history of forced relocation and assimilation and cultural genocide under U.S. imperialist rule. Describing her stalker who once put her life in peril and gave her a post-traumatic stress disorder, she sympathizes with him after she is informed of his Native American ancestry. According to Trenka, in a police interrogation, the mentally disturbed stalker confessed that he was a registered Indian who had been raised outside his tribal nation and had never been to the White Earth Indian Reservation in Minnesota until the age of 23. Trenka makes a list of their “encounters”:

“quarter-Indian > half-Finlander > whole Korean > family register > registered Indian > recognized as > right to call oneself > I never involved in that > right to documentation > documents public > documents private > decisions made > people nullified > invisible colored > whiteness visible [...] years since creation of White Earth = 139 > years of existence of foreign occupation of Korea = 111 > framed by fences > age of stalker at first trip to White Earth = 23 > I was just gonna go > couldn’t find relatives > I’m just a quart—quarter > I’m just ad-adopted > my age at time of first trip to Korea = 22 > just went > found relatives [...] > I recognize you now > and what of the family you wanted > the son they never had > and what of the family you found > never been >” (44-45)

By comparing her own transnational/transracial adoption experience with that of a Native American, Trenka “recognize[s]” the long history of transnational/transracial adoption in the United States. As Christine Ward Gailey states, “[t]he history of international adoption in the United States cannot be disassociated from the history of U.S. military occupation,” which traces back to the transnational/transracial adoption of Native American children by white settlers and religious groups during the antebellum era (79-80). The imperialistic removal of Native Americans and their children from their birth families by whites in the United States was soon followed and completed by the expunction of indigenous cultures, languages, and identities through various biopolitical techniques of assimilation and institutions from white-run boarding schools to white foster homes and adoptive families on behalf of “civilization” (Papke 67). Trenka points out that a similar type of imperialist integration and erasure was repeated in the intercountry adoption between South Korea and the United States during the Cold War, rooted in the state’s normalization and reproduction of the ideologies of white, middle-class nuclear families and reorganization and expansion of the racial, cultural, and symbolic boundaries of the American nation, while re-creating adopted children as ‘its own but no one else’s.’

South Korea’s Neoliberal Biopolitics and the Reception of Returning Adoptees as Exceptional Ethnic Koreans

Trenka mentions that one-third of the six hundred internationally adopted Koreans who returned to Seoul in the summer of 2007 ended up staying long-term (*Fugitive* 9-10). Trenka’s homecoming and resettlement in Seoul, Korea, like the return of many Korean

adult adoptees from the Global North who began to reside in South Korea around the turn of the century, was not just a personal decision, but was historically conditioned by the state's biopolitical regulation of the neoliberal movement of capital and labor and reconstruction of the Korean identity in a globalized term and scale. Foucault discusses the emergence of modern biopolitics in the context of 20th-century neoliberalism as a governing principle and mechanism to set the life of a population correlated with the life of the state's neoliberal economy conformed to market logics and processes. Drawing on Foucault's analysis in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, I use the term "neoliberalism" as a governmental rationality rather than an economic theory and emphasize that political and economic neoliberalism, far from nullifying the state's biopolitical power and control, has strengthened it for a transformation of the life of the population and societal membership to maximize transnational capitalist mobility rights and produce *homo economicus*, "an entrepreneur of himself" (226). South Korea's effort to incorporate Korean, especially English-speaking, diasporic communities is exemplary of its neoliberal biopolitics as the nexus of state politics of subjection or subject-making and the logic of the market, reorganizing and transforming the social body into *homo economicus* in accord with the social and economic interests of the state and private corporations.

South Korea's neoliberal turn was initiated by the Kim Young Sam administration's globalization (*seggyehwa*) project in the mid-1990s that sought South Korea's OECD membership and spurred by the 1997 financial crisis and the Kim Dae Chung government's neoliberal restructuring under the guidance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Neoliberal globalization became a top priority of South Korea's

new democratic government. Under the impetus of the extensive neoliberal economic reforms to enhance flexibility in the labor market and restructure the financial market for liberalized international trade and capital flows, the government began to enforce diaspora policies to incorporate “overseas Koreans” (*chaeoe tongp’o*) into the liberalized Korean economy by granting them quasi-citizenship rights (Park and Chang 1-3),³¹ simultaneously establishing “a trans-border nation-state” and “kindl[ing] interest in ‘long-distance nationalism’” (C. Lee 235-237). The 1999 Act on the Immigration and Legal Status of Overseas Koreans, commonly known as the Overseas Korean Act (OKA), passed by the Kim Dae Chung government, was designed to foster global network and unity of ethnic Koreans and draw the capital and investment of overseas Koreans, mostly in the U.S.

The OKA particularly showcased the state’s biopolitical patrolling of the ethnic borders and the domestic labor market, as it not only reestablished the legal identity of the global Korean nation as an ethnic one but also disproportionately incorporated overseas Korean populations based on the “perceived different economic status of host countries.” It largely excluded the pre-1948 Korean diaspora to China (*chosŏnjŏk*), Russia (*koryŏin*), and Japan (*chaeil kyop’o*) that had constituted a majority of the unskilled, flexible migrant workforce in South Korea, while embracing post-1948 emigrant groups with a concentration in North America and Japan as professionals and investors (Park and Chang 7). Even with its 2004 revision, which eliminated the controversial criterion of former nationality for defining Koreans, the OKA still excluded most Korean Chinese and Korean Russians with the new criterion of the family register (*hojŏk*) that had not been established until the Japanese colonial regime (Freeman 107).

This selective inclusion of people based on their financial and economic power demonstrates what Aihwa Ong calls “neoliberalism as exception,” the way the states exceptionally adopt neoliberalism and include certain groups of high-skilled economic subjects regardless of their citizenship in certain zones under the neoliberal imperative, which in turn creates “exceptions to neoliberalism,” including human beings, rendered outside its neoliberal order, such as unskilled, low-waged, flexibilized, disposable laborers (3-12). Korean adoptees, whose migration burgeoned in the wake of the Korean War and was concentrated in North America and Europe, along with most other Korean Americans and Europeans of Korean ancestry (*kyop’o*), were on the other hand entitled to be global ethnic Koreans (*tongp’o*) and were eligible for the F-4 visa, which granted them the right to stay and work in Korea for an unlimited time. They were exceptionally recognized and proactively incorporated as “unique and valuable assets” of Korea and “a precious resource” as civil diplomats “bridging Korea with the global community” according to a press release of the OKA (qtd. in E.J. Kim, *Adopted* 180).

Tobias Hübinette in *Comforting an Orphaned Nation* investigates the shift in the official and cultural representation of Korean adoptees in South Korea, from a shameful or victimized subaltern figure in the 1980s and 1990s to a diplomatic or cultural bridge and “human resources and national assets” in the state’s globalization plan (198). This integration of Korean adoptees’ symbolic and economic power was constituted upon the universalizing nationalist terms as these adoptees were heralded by the state as “our children,” emphasizing “the blood ties that cannot be severed,” and demanded to “renew [their] relations with [their] native country in order to work together toward common goals” to help make their “mother country” develop into “a first-rated nation in the 21st

century” (qtd. in Hübinette 5, 101). Eleana Kim also confirms this change in the view of Korean transnational adoption, which has been reframed as “investment in human capital, rather than as a failure of the state” to provide basic social welfare and care for its citizens (“Human” 306). Kim states that recent returnees were received as *homo economicus*, or “human capital,” whether as “cultural ambassadors” or “lucky cosmopolitans,” with their “‘inborn’ Korean qualities” and Western upbringing and education at the moment of economic crisis and neoliberal transition (302, 306). She adds,

Korean-style globalization demonstrates how state power and practices can be applied to the production of an expanded vision of the nation such that, rather than presenting a threat to the legitimacy of the nation-state, globalization in Korea is mobilized to underwrite state power and build a deterritorialized nation-state. (180)

Trenka’s memoirs record the ways in which adopted Koreans are recognized less as sources of embarrassment or victims of poverty, cultural patriarchy, and/or the state-led industrialization, and more as global citizens belonging to the privileged, Western-educated bourgeoisie. Unlike her earlier visits to South Korea back in the early 1990s, when she and other adoptees were informed of, and had to anticipate, “the shame” of unwanted pregnancy and adoption for their birth mothers and families in the Children’s Home Society Motherland Tour, and encountered “pity” as depicted in her first memoir (*The Language* 123, 132), Trenka found herself transformed into an object of envy, as English proficiency and American citizenship had been tickets for upward social mobility. One of her cousins begged, “insisting upon [her] Americanness, ‘teach me En-

gu-lish-ee!,” and one of her Korean friends admired her fluent English, “dead set on a good job and forgetting for a moment exactly how my English pronunciation became so spectacular” (*Fugitive* 104-105). In a society swept by “the hysteria to learn English, and the hysteria to date a foreigner in order to get even more, better, twenty-four-hour private tutoring” (*Fugitive* 139-140), English-speaking adopted Koreans like Trenka herself were considered lucky cosmopolitans to be able to have sought-after job skills.

Fugitive Visions demonstrates how the body of the returned ethnic Korean adoptees are subject to South Korea’s changing social and economic order, which defines and stratifies new global Korean subjects by market-driven measures of human worth, demanding them to perform the role of agents of South Korea’s neoliberal globalization. In the memoir, the ideal global Korean membership is embodied by Daniel Henney, a Korean American actor and a mixed-race son of a Korean American adoptee mother, who once advertised for an international adoption agency and played a Korean American adoptee returning to Korea to find his Korean parents in the film *My Father*. He is much admired by Koreans deluded by “[b]ewitching, bedeviling seduction of whiteness” as an icon of the transnational Korean, symbolized in an advertisement, which Trenka calls “the alliance of Gwyneth Paltrow and Daniel Henney,” “sell[ing] the hope of becoming a transnational: a person who habitually drinks wine, eats cheese, sleeps in a bed, and speaks English; a person who is white, American, and wealthy.” Trenka shows that the inclusion of adopted Koreans has been fostered by the collective fantasy of and desire for transnational life, defined by the prevailing logic of neoliberal capitalism invested in “privilege,” “[b]ilingual, bicultural” education, “competiti[on],” “choices,” “breaking boundaries,” and “freedom” (109), which, along with South Korea’s ethno-nationalist

discourse, imagined adopted Koreans as ideal transnational and multicultural Korean subjects.

Having worked as an English editor at one of the official press agencies and later as an ESL teacher since her relocation to South Korea, Trenka states in *Fugitive Visions*, “I was hired partly because being a native speaker of English means not being a native speaker of Korean; I got the job on the strength of my foreignness” (10). As a Korean American adoptee, she possesses a cultural capital of English language skills and Western academic qualifications and culture, easily convertible into the economic capital in a highly-competitive, neocolonial society where people are possessed by an excessive and collective zeal to acquire English, and for the Western, especially American, education and life style. Trenka states, “I’m expendable of Korea who can pass as one of its elite in a school that hires primarily Korean American teachers.... All I have to offer is my English, my occupation” (98). As much as she was “expendable of Korea” as a baby for export or bare life as an exception to national subjectivity in the developmentalist 1970s, she is once again called upon to contribute to the building of neoliberal South Korea and her “motherland” as an exceptionally marketable cultural and symbolic human capital. Trenka, therefore, exhibits the point where the borders between bare life and political existence, orphans and adoptees, unwanted “foreign brides and migrant workers” and adoptees as legitimate *tongp’o*, are no longer distinguishable and “lump[ed]...together” under the exceptional biopolitical orthodox (*Fugitive* 105).

“My adoption failed”: Dis-Performing the Exceptional Adoptee Subject

If the life of the Korean adoptee was incorporated and subjectified to the biopolitical juridico-political, social, cultural, and economic orders of South Korea and the U.S. through adoption and return, then how exactly is the adoptee subject subjectified by state biopower, or power in general for that matter, and how then, if possible, can the subject, as the very agent of her or his own subjection, thwart that power? What forms of politics or political actions would be possible, especially for the exceptionalized subject? Although Foucault suggests the possibility for “real and effective” forms of resistance “formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised” (*Power/Knowledge* 142), his rendition of the subject as an effect of power falls short on these questions concerning resistance to power.

Trenka’s memoirs offer an aesthetic answer and insight to some of the critical questions as they enact the adoptee experience as melancholic, queered, and uncanny. She writes herself as a failed subject, in which the social compulsion to turn her into an exceptional American/Korean subject by destroying her undesirable race, culture, and memories only ends up by making her improper. After more than thirty years in the U.S. and three years in South Korea as a returnee, and despite her parents’ seemingly “colorblind” love and her lifelong wish to belong and feel at home, Trenka defiantly declares in *Fugitive Visions* that her adoption not only failed to make her white American (75) but also “failed to mold [her] into a global citizen, a true cosmopolitan, a person who has accumulated the riches of culture and experience, marketable job skills” (186). By enacting an adoptee subject that failed to respond to the juridico-political and social orders of the two sovereign powers having the capacity to exceptionalize Korean adoptees both negatively and positively through citizenship or visa conferrals, Trenka’s

narratives unfold her refusals and failures to perform, and thus her potentiality to “dis-perform,” the legally- and socially-scripted subject.

Trenka’s rendering of the Korean adoptee subject as at once a product and performer of the (trans)national biopolitics and laws animates what Butler theorizes as the performative power of discourse to produce social reality “that it regulates and constrains” through embodied subjects (*Bodies* xii). Performativity, therefore, consists neither in voluntarily chosen actions of the subject, nor simply in forced or monolithically programmed acts solely determined by the law, but rather in the repeated citations of social and cultural norms affecting both our psychic and social life and enabling possible transgressions within regime of “the juridical (prohibitive and regulatory) and the productive (inadvertently generative)” power (*Gender* 40). It is in the performative repetition of public action, “in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repletion that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity,” Butler argues, arises the possibility of the subject—however limited, involuntary, or at the risk of being punished—to exceed, subvert, and/or re-signify socially established codes and transform material and social reality (*Gender* 179).

Building on Louis Althusser’s scene of interpellation, Butler finds a performative, rather than purely constative, possibility in acts of interpellation and submission; at that moment of subjectification before the law, for instance, a nonconforming, disloyal subject can be produced by acts of parodic conformity that result in a “slippage between discursive command and its appropriated effect” (*Bodies* 121-122). In *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler further suggests “a possibility of being elsewhere or otherwise” that “would require a different kind of turn, one that, enabled by the law, turns away from the

law, resisting its lure of identity, an agency that outruns and counters the conditions of its emergence.” “Such a turn,” Butler continues, “demands a willingness *not* to be—a critical desubjectivation—in order to expose the law as less powerful than it seems,” borrowed from Giorgio Agamben’s concept of the possibility of human existence as “potentiality that remains unexhausted by any particular interpellation” (130-131). Adopting Aristotle’s distinction between potentiality and actuality in his theory of sovereignty, Agamben attends to the concept of potentiality in its negative form, “impotentiality,” which carries the potential not to be or do and thus “[maintain] itself in relation to actuality in the form of its suspension” (*Homo* 45). He claims that impotentiality has, on the one hand, structured the paradigm of sovereignty, providing sovereignty with the exceptional ability to maintain its rule over life indefinitely without ever passing into actuality, and on the other hand, granted individuals human potentiality not to be captured by the sovereign power (Primera Villamizar 86). For Agamben, human potentiality opens up a possibility for a radical politics that can deactivate the work or force of the law and the state and defeat their violence by ultimately dis-performing it in the form of suspension and undecidability.

The Language of Blood dramatizes Trenka’s racial passing and its inevitable failure to assimilate and make good on the promises of American liberal democracy and to perform the racial ideal of whiteness in Harlowe, Minnesota, which she describes as “a landscape of burning Whiteness, of isolation and absolutes” (47). Trenka depicts how she underwent racial alienation and forced dissociation from Korea and Koreanness, which only meant “a place that couldn’t be talked about at home...[and] made other children leer at [her] in school” and it also became “the reason [her] face was mutated...why it

was hard to find clothes that fit...[and] the reason some children weren't allowed to play with [her], [and] some felt justified in calling [her] a chink or a rice-picker," followed by her desire to fit into the White family and community and survive by identifying with the idealized White race and performing as "a Twinkie" or "white or at least tried to pass culturally white" (129). In her adolescent years, she scratched her Korean name on the bedroom wall and hid it under the bulletin board, permed and bleached her hair "beyond recognition, into a giant mass of curls" to her mother's pleasure, and even tried to change herself to make her face "less round, [her] eyebrows...stop growing downward" and curl her stubborn eyelashes like the idealized white girls in the magazines, *Teen*, *Glamour*, *Young Miss*, and *Seventeen* (67). Trenka laments how her foreclosed identification with Korea led to the loss of her former Korean self, Kyong-Ah—amounting to her symbolic death—in an adoptive household where "[t]he a-word, adoption" or "the K-word, Korea" was prohibited (29; 38).

In *Fugitive Visions*, Trenka shows how along with her Korean memories, her racial difference, reality, and grief and rage were also so fundamentally disavowed by her adoptive parents that she was raised exclusively as white. She recounts a scene where her adoptive mother, who blindly denies racism, racial loss, and melancholia in her adoptive family and the host country, dismissed her daughter's racial pain and alienation "growing up...in all that whiteness" as just one of the ordinary challenges of childhood when she confronted (29). Such a racial rejection or disavowal may engender racial melancholia, created by the demanded racial and cultural losses and the identification with them, for Asian Americans and for other racialized minorities in the U.S. in the face of assimilation.³²

Interpreting the Freudian construction of the self through the Oedipal complex in “Mourning and Melancholia” and *The Ego and the Id*, Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* asserts that heterosexual gender identity is an effect or production of compulsory internalization of a prohibition or taboo and constructed through melancholic identification structured by “the prohibition of the opposite-sexed parents,” by the ego ideal, “an identification with the sex of the parent lost [and] a refusal of that identification” (80). As such, for Butler, gender identity is exercised and maintained through the constant struggle and negotiation between the identified lost or prohibited object, preserved and permanently habituating in the self, and the exterior moral law and power. Drawing on and extending Freud’s theory of melancholia to the contexts of Asian American assimilation and racialization, David L. Eng and Shinhee Han in “A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia” attempt to “depathologiz[e]” melancholia by disclosing its “structure of feeling” for Asian Americans as well as other racialized minorities in the United States stemming from “the mourning process that underwrites the losses of the immigration experience” and racial melancholia as a mode of incessant political “conflict” and negotiation rather than a simple outcome of unilateral damage or victimization (669, 680; 693). In other words, racial melancholia of Asian Americans refers to their physical and psychical condition of ongoing, everyday battlement of racial subjectification, created by the identification of the lost love objects—including, for first-generation immigrants, “homeland, family, language, identity, property, status in community.” For the next generations, it concerns the unattainable dominant norms and ideals of white heterosexual, middle-class culture—and their inability to come to terms with the losses. However, racial melancholia, generated through structures of feeling or

lived cultural environments of a given time and space, produces not only depression, but also the political, ethical, and affective energy and space to negotiate their failed identifications or unresolved grief within both psychical and social domains by dwelling on losses (Eng and Han 671).

In a family where the loss of Korean memories, kinship, home, and culture was compelled and unmourned, Trenka kept on grieving her loss secretly, keeping her birth mother and her Korean self alive within the crypt of her ego. Trenka's refusal or failure to let go of her Koreanness and melancholic incorporation of her loss, which would come to haunt her subject and constitute her psychic as "split and dis-eased" (Eng and Han 677), engendered a failure of complete identification or monopolization and, as such, a condition of possibility to become a 'bad' subject. In this sense, Trenka's melancholia as a transnational adoptee in this sense corresponds to but exceeds what Insu experiences in *Memories of My Ghost Brother* from his loss of his ghost brother and other friends mostly in the Korean camptown, as their melancholia both originates in the same sociohistorical conditions of literal and symbolic deaths created by the U.S.-South Korea biopolitics. However, unlike Fenkl's novel that leaves Insu's immigrant life in the U.S. largely unknown, Trenka's memoirs opens up other sources and dimensions of melancholia generated in her post-adoptive life in the U.S., from not only the loss of her loved persons, but also that of her culture and ethnicity/race, as an involuntarily transplanted adoptee and a racially isolated minority. Yet, like Fenkl's Insu, the way Trenka deals with and performs her melancholia in the memoirs also highlights the "impossible mourning," which led her into failed assimilation with the U.S. and Korea and constituted her disidentified subjectivity.

For Trenka, her loss encompasses the unattainable racial ideals of whiteness and her Korean heritage, and her melancholic identification with the lost object troubled her assimilation to, or identification with, her “perfect” American family and culture, which she describes is the ideal “heartland of Americana” and “survived...several of [her] trips to psychiatric units, and one halfhearted suicide attempts” (*Fugitive* 154). In Harlowe, Minnesota, Trenka addresses her failure to pass “[e]ven with full command of the language, no accent, and all the necessary cultural accoutrements, including a white family” (*Fugitive* 123). Trenka includes “MASK DANCE” scenes in *Fugitive Visions*, such as “THE REMOVAL OF THE HEART,” “THE REMOVAL OF THE TONGUE,” and “PASSING FOR WHITE,” where she enacts her racial upbringing and passing for “lower-middle-class whites, honest, good people who work hard for a living” and discriminate indigenous and immigrant groups, as well as its failure as she was silently grouped among racial minorities and was called “[f]rog-eyed nigger-lipped Dumbo-eared chink” by her white friends (37-43). After all her efforts to fit in and perform learned whiteness, she admits “underneath it all [she] was still a chink” (27), revealing her troubled racialization that allowed her to be neither Korean nor American. In the text, Trenka’s mimetic Asian American adoptee subject of difference that is “[h]onorary white almost but not quite” (30), imitating ideal Whiteness but only partially succeeding or failing to do so, acts out her racialization and melancholia as a consequence of identifications with the desired, foreclosed, lost, and unresolved ideals of Whiteness and Asianness.

In her first memoir, Trenka also highlights the queerness of her mimetic and melancholic racial performance that “‘queers’ or defamiliarizes normative conceptions of

family and identity” (E.J. Kim, *Adopted* 100) and produces a queered form of adoptee subjectivity. She describes in her adoptive kinship that disavowed her racial and ethnic identity and assimilated her to the normalcy of straight, culturally homogeneous White families, her acting out as Korean was akin to “coming out of the closet” (218).

Comparing her experience with that of her homosexual friend, Trenka states, “we’re both from the hinterlands of rural Minnesota; our parents are both overly Lutheran (his dad is a pastor); we both have characteristics that would be easier to live without. Meaning he’s gay and I’m Korean. Born like that. No choice” (219). She continues,

I know that announcing, “Mon, Dad, I’m K-K-Korean. No, you don’t get it, I mean, I’m *Korean*,” is a lot more difficult than deciding to become a pianist. And after I acknowledge that I’m Korean—or at least an adopted one—like Aaron, I am not going to magically “move on” or become “normal.” (220)

Equating a Korean adoptee’s racial passing for White with a gay passing for heterosexual and thus performing her difference, exclusion, unfittingness, non-normativity, and queerness, the author heightens the weight of the White heteronormative middle-class social order, as well as her failure or impossibility to assimilate, conform to, or perform, the normativity due to the incommensurable non-normativity of the racial Other.

Insofar as it poses a subject undergoing the intersubjective conflicts and negotiations with a sense of herself as split and at odds with itself, which prevent complete identification and exceed the normalizing power of the law, queered and melancholic adoptee subjectivity suggests, rather than a simple mark of pathology or failure, a psychic possibility for her contestatory subject-position, or what Butler and

Muñoz call “disidentification.” Disidentification is “the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it...a [survival] strategy that works on and against dominant ideology” (Muñoz 11), marking an interstitial space or “uneasy” position between belonging and nonbelonging (Butler, *Bodies* 219). Conceptualized as a “failure” of, rather than a resistance to, the identification with the fantasized, normative ideal, disidentificatory minority subjectivity informs Trenka’s failed Asian American adoptee subjectivity, constrained to exceptionally identify with the adoptive White racial culture but failing to do so, neither fully dominated by biopolitical state ideology nor free of it, but working with and against it simultaneously.

Trenka’s queered racial subjectivity in the U.S. was complicated by her relocation to Seoul, where adopted Koreans were reconfigured as exceptional global ethnic Koreans, as depicted throughout *Fugitive Visions*. Trenka admits that to Koreans, a Korean adoptee may look like the ideal “lucky cosmopolitan” in post-IMF South Korea. Acknowledging “[her] own complicity” with “the seduction of whiteness, of empire” (96), Trenka describes how she can pass for a global citizen with a U.S. passport, neoliberal mobility, and economic and cultural capital at her workplaces where her American education and upbringing are highly valued and capitalized: “When I told [the students] that I went to school in America, they gasped. I must be really rich. My parents must be really powerful...I separated. I escaped. I shine with good luck. I was, at first glance, the person my students wanted to be” (98).

Nevertheless, Trenka lays bare the inadequacies or contradictions of this type of integration that at once neoliberalizes and renationalizes the adoptee population and

dehistoricizes their migration by performing an “almost but not quite” cosmopolitan. She demonstrates the dilemma for the returned adoptees to assume the normative, globally competitive Korean nationality, which otherwise would work to gloss transnational adoption as an investment in economic and cultural capital and enforce psychic amnesia or getting over of their cultural losses, differences, and pains, as well as the complex sociohistorical contexts that have generated them. Trenka first shows her incapability to align with neoliberal prerogatives, pointing to the economic hierarchy among diasporas and the material gap between her forced migration, compelled “out of sheer desperation,” and voluntary migration of other privileged transnationals who could afford U.S. colleges and citizenship with “choices” and “freedom” driven by economic and social gains. Claiming that “[m]y fluent English is worth everything, my broken Korean worth nothing” in South Korea (98-99), she reveals how the neoliberal logic of society has veiled the affective impacts of her transnational adoption, including the loss of her mother tongue, her birth mother’s “infinite capacity to suffer,” the situation where “sisters [are] trying to rebuild their relationship after being unwillingly separated, [and] families struggling to talk to each other” (109).

In addition, she shows how the construction of returned adoptees as transnational subjects clashes with the essentialist ethnic and cultural normativity that still strongly rules in contemporary South Korea, where ‘Korean’ means Korean ethnic physicality with Korean cultural heritage and “‘America’ is synonymous with ‘white’” (110), for which she has to explain her existence and “the riddle of [her] face and tongue” (123) on a daily basis, and compelled to speak Korean. When she tries to speak Korean, she is told, “‘Your pronunciation is strange.’ ‘Oh, you’re not Korean. But your face looks like

Korean.’ ‘What country are you from?’ ‘Japanese? Chinese?’ ‘American? Where are you really from?’ ‘*Sayonara!*’” On her honeymoon in Korea, her now former White husband’s limited Korean proficiency was lauded (“You look like a movie star”), but hers was considered “proof of defectiveness.” She continues, “[her] inability to speak fluent Korean combined with [her] inability to be white is a deformity,” that turns her into “a sort of monster, a mix of the familiar with the terribly unexpected” (110). Within the ethnically and culturally imagined community of Korea where Americanness is equated with whiteness, Korean American adoptees with Korean looks without or with limited cultural authenticity are not recognizable as either a Korean or an American, which magically erases their ethnic and cultural identities altogether and makes their presence uncanny.

In his insightful account of “The Uncanny” (*Unheimlich*), Freud introduces the uncanny as an oxymoron, a convergence of what is familiar, native, and homely, and what is unfamiliar, foreign, and unhomely in the sense that the eerie feeling is evoked in the subject when an object or Other that was once familiar to him or her and was forgotten and repressed during childhood, has returned and is making its presence. For Freud, the civilized subject is predicated upon repressing and “surmount[ing]” the primitive thoughts “closely linked with childhood complexes” (155), which would though apparently never be complete and mastered. The feeling of uncanniness produced by the presence of the adopted Korean being removed from the nation, having returned to the native land, and speaking a foreign language shakes the national amnesia, upon which the fiction of the unified nation was premised, and traverses the ideological fantasy of the ethnic and cultural homogeneity of the Korean nation, fundamentally putting the

conventional definition of the Korean in crisis and demanding recognition of the “foreignness in ourselves” (Kristeva 191).

For Trenka, transnational adoption has created “Division by language/ Barrier/ Barbed wire fence” in her and made her “stripped of the qualities Koreans think make a Korean” and “incapable of loving in [her] mother tongue,” and her mother tongue “[t]he language of [her] enmity” (*Fugitive* 28). Enacting her failure to perform Korean cultural norms imposed on returned adoptees, Trenka emphasizes the “structure of feeling” of such failure³³: “Transnational transcultural [adoption] transplanted” her so much so that she could only use “Universal language” to “[express] the inexpressible” loss and affect in the three poems or musical compositions titled, “TRANSFORMATIONAL ÉTUDE” that she includes in *Fugitive Visions* (98, 27-31).

Trenka’s adoption ‘bios’ narratives stage everyday and aesthetic scenes of subjectification of a Korean American adoptee by the global and local (bio)political orders that conditioned her double immigration and displacement, and display the emergence of a queered and uncanny adoptee subject dis-performing and unmaking exceptional transpacific subjectivity in a liminal space suspended between “to be or not to be,” acting and not acting, consent and refusal, and subjection and resistance. For Trenka, transnational adoption, marked by the systemic erasure and loss of Korean culture and kinship, can and should be subsumed to, or compensated with, neither the redemptive American humanitarian salvation nor South Korea’s neoliberal logic and reconciliatory ethnic integration based on the market-driven ideology and the doctrine of *jus sanguinis*, the right of blood. Trenka’s failure to assimilate to either her adoptive or native culture, to identify with imagined ideals and to actualize valued life biopolitically

defined and invested by the two nation-states, therefore registers the failure of interpellation and a possibility for her agency to make the exceptional biopower inoperable. Her transnational transplantation has also made her more than mere bare life, as Aihwa Ong suggests in *Neoliberalism as Exception*, global capitalism has introduced the possibility for a new scale and mode for citizenship, rights, living, and relationships, as well as plights and challenges. It is in this changing, but still uneven global landscape, Trenka imagines and seeks alternative transnational alliance and possibilities within, across, and beyond “*fearfully and wonderfully made*” adoptee communities (*Fugitive* 194) for individual and collective actions to unsettle the hyphen between the nation and the state, as well as the edifice of biopolitics over life within and across borders based on exclusion and inclusion, and bare life and exceptional citizens.

CHAPTER FOUR

Empires Old and New: The Bio/Necropolitics of Empires and Transnational Representation in *A Gesture Life*

“We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.”

- Kurt Vonnegut, *Mother Night*

In his second novel *A Gesture Life* published in 1999, Chang-rae Lee dexterously portrays a peaceful, affluent, and respectable American suburban country called Bedley Run near the New York City—modeling Westchester—set in the mid-1990s. Bedley Run represents in every way an archetypical post-Cold War white-dominant upper-middle-class American “way of life.” It is filled with “tumbled sidewalk and shabby-chic shops...all simple and beautiful and proportional” having “just the right amount of history....the place you want to arrive at, forever and ever,” as the town’s beloved real estate agent Liz eulogizes (136). The protagonist-narrator, Franklin Hata is a retired Korean Japanese American who formerly owned a medical supply retail store and has been living in Bedley Run for thirty-odd years. If I can borrow a friendly description in the novel, living “in a gorgeous house in the most prestigious neighborhood,...enjoying the high golden hour of a well-deserved retirement, for having been a business and civic elder and leader,” Hata “*is* Bedley Run” (136). Into this seemingly uneventful setting and Hata’s present, nonepic septuagenarian life-story in America, the author embeds Hata’s fragmented, unsettling memories from the past, first of Sunny, his adoptive daughter from Korea, and of Kkutaeh, or K, a Korean “comfort woman,” whom he thought that he fell in love with during the Pacific War. In his memory of the war, young Hata in his early twenties in the service of the Imperial Japanese Army as a Korean Japanese field-

trained paramedic dutifully upholds the Emperor's mandate "to develop...an Asian way of life" (249). By paralleling the historically conflicted ways of life and depicting Hata's life-long struggle to fit into one life and after another as an ethnic and racial minority in both Japan and the U.S., Lee's novel draws bio/necropolitical links between the two ways of life. Tracing the links in the novel, this chapter discloses how the two empires were expanded and maintained by universalizing their national way of life and transnationalizing their bio/necropolitical order of life, which has perpetuated through the (U.S.-involved) wars in Asia, from WWII to the Cold War, and the "postwar" American society, and by producing, utilizing, and managing stateless subjects, such as "comfort women" and orphans.

A national way of life is a popular nationalist trope and ethos that imagines a homogeneous national community along lines of racial and cultural identity and degrees of civilization as different from other nations, which has been persisted and intertwined with the notion of American exceptionalism in the U.S. As discussed in the introduction, the trope was adopted and liberally employed in the official national discourse at the close of World War II and at the dawn of the Cold War, taken as a critical homeland security concern to defend "our" good, democratic, and superior way of life and combat "their" evil, totalitarian, imperialist, and inferior way of life of other nations as represented in the Truman doctrine. America's exceptional and exemplary way of life defined in terms of morality, justice, freedom, and democracy began to be developed in such a way to domestically democratize civil rights and to internationally spread universal human rights beginning with World War II. While the origins of modern human rights and humanitarianism in the West trace back to the Enlightenment era, the

American Revolution, and the French Revolution, scholarship in the field widely concur on “the emergence of an international regime of human rights” with that of the military fascist imperialist regimes of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in WWII, where the Allies fought explicitly in defense of human life and rights and founded the United Nations upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a result, through the post-WWII global anti-colonial struggles and the Cold War (Koshy, “From Cold War” 3).³⁴ Quoting Tony Evans, Susan Koshy sums up the historical rise of the human rights discourse in the wake of WWII:

“[T]he idea of human rights was ‘adopted by the United States as a symbol of its moral superiority after 1945, became divorced from its postwar architect and began to develop an independent character that increasingly reflected the interests of socialist and less developed states who were able to promote their own particular interest’ But the solidarity generated by the defeat of fascism and the idealistic rhetoric of a global order centered on the rights of the individual were soon confronted with the resurfacing tensions of competing national and ideological interests. Even as the UN Commission on Human Rights began work on the International Bill of Rights, Cold War hostilities turned the discussion over human rights into a fierce ideological battleground.” (5)

As we all know, this ideological battle ended with the “winning” of the U.S./U.N.’s defense of liberal democracy and universal human rights over the U.S.S.R.’s defense of socialist democracy and workers’ and women’s rights across nation-states, which served to prove the superiority of the American way of life Truman had declared. From then on,

inviolable human rights regardless of race, ethnicity, class, and gender have become a primary objective and principal of the U.S. foreign and domestic (bio)politics and an ideological rationale for the contemporary American “humanitarian empire.” According to Foucault, as discussed in the previous chapters, the birth of biopolitics is intertwined with the emergence of liberal democracy in the West as the authority of a sovereign power over its subjects relies on the ability to protect, foster, and care the life and social well-being of its population, rather than the necropolitical ability to extinguish life, which is though not extinguished but only hidden. The U.S. humanitarian empire can, therefore, be understood as a transnationalization of its biopolitical sovereign power and way of life through the universalization of human rights norms across the uneven global topography of civil rights. This transnationalized regime of human rights has though ironically created hundreds of thousands of displaced persons, left only with their “Rights of Man,” known to be the only “rights of the rightless,” around the world and their precarious life entrusted at the mercy of, or at the hand of, the transnational sovereign power and its nationalist biopolitics.

A Gesture Life, I argue, captures not only the victory of the American exceptional way of life over the Japanese, but also how it constituted exceptional national subjects across the Pacific through American military occupation and “humanitarian” reconstruction of post-WWII Japan and Korea, as well as its racial reformation of the American family and nation at home during the Cold War, and vice versa. As discussed in the previous chapter, the “exceptional state subject” encompasses both the stateless subject and the model minority. In *A Gesture Life*, it refers to the colonized Korean under Japanese rule, especially in times of Japan’s imperialist wars, and the Korean

orphan/adoptee. Trenka's adoption narratives reveal the contradictory exceptional subjectifications of the Korean orphan/American adoptee by (trans)national biopolitics of adoption and stage a non-conforming adoptee subject dis-performing her exceptional subjectivity. Likewise, Lee's novel features such opposing but conjoining implications of exceptionalism, but centering on an exceptionally included and well-assimilated Korean/Japanese/American male subject in contrast with two other non-compliant exceptionally excluded and/or included female subjects, one a Korean "comfort woman" and the other a part-black Amerasian adoptee from Korea. I contend that by portraying Hata's transformation from a dutiful subject of Imperial Japan to a first-class American citizen and his transnational adoption of an Amerasian orphan, Lee's novel registers the emergence of new Asian American subjects in the Cold War era, who had been legally and culturally excluded and considered previously unassimilable aliens but turned into a model minority.³⁵ Hata's conversion of his loyalty to the U.S. particularly stands out in the context of what Jodi Kim calls the "transpacific project of gendered racial rehabilitation" of Japanese and Japanese American subjects through the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII and the postwar military occupation and rehabilitation of Japan (108). Lee's novel demonstrates how this biopolitical taming of Asian and Asian American subjects was differently applied in terms of ethnicity and gender. In the novel, Hata as a Japanese American man is to be desexualized and unthreatening while Sunny as an adopted Korean girl is to be vulnerable and grateful. The novel not only traces an origin of transpacific stateless subjects but also demonstrates how Asian and Asian American subjects shuttle between the extreme poles of exceptional juridical and racial subjectivity, one exceptional and the other exemplary. In so doing, the novel reveals the

post-WWII transpacific formations of Asian and Asian American race and the limit of Cold War racial liberalism.

I also contend that what makes the novel at once intriguing and troubling is the ways in which Hata's search for his "own place in the accepted order of things" and his exceptional transformation into Bedley Run's, if not America's, "primary citizen" (299, 275) are consolidated and challenged by his relationship with a Korean "comfort woman," called K, and a mixed-race adoptee, Sunny. In Hata's estimation, albeit not fully conscious, the success or failure of finding his home, position, and identity as a Korean Japanese and then as a Japanese American somehow depends on his heroic efforts to rescue first K and then Sunny from the (trans)national political orders of life, deployed and exacerbated by Japanese and/or American imperialist/colonialist forces and wars, which turns them familyless and stateless and reduces them to human beings without juridico-political and human rights (250). Attending to the constitution and reconstitution of Hata's ethnic/racial subjectivity through his relationships with K and Sunny, this chapter analyzes how and why Hata's past memory of the "comfort woman" is sutured with his narrative of Sunny within Hata's late coming-of-age or re-education narrative in the novel.

A Gesture Life has been at the center of the scholarly debates on Asian American representation of Korean and other Asian "comfort women," transnationally transported enforced sexual slaves for the Imperial Japanese Army during the Pacific War.³⁶ In the 2003 special issue of the *Journal of Asian American Studies*, a group of Asian American scholars, for instance, have raised the issue, textualizing their session presentations and discussions at the annual meeting of the Association for American Studies. In her

innovative essay “Discomforting Knowledge,” Kandice Chuh interrogates the power/knowledge practices about “comfort women” and cautions that the figure of the “comfort woman” may be employed in Americanist discourse “as bolstering rationale for waging wars” to “serve U.S. imperialist/nationalist ends” (8). Examining Lee’s *A Gesture Life* and Keller’s *Comfort Woman*, Chuh concludes that Lee’s novel literally and thematically performs the limit or inevitable failure of the liberatory work of “breaking silence” that “the act of giving voice to ‘comfort women’ cannot but be circumscribed by the regulatory demands of the discursive field within which that story becomes legible.” Chuh argues that Keller’s novel, on the other hand, “register[s] the problematics of privileging the mode of ‘breaking silence’” by transforming the victim of war crime into a heroic survivor, but only to leave the work of recovering the history of “comfort women” to her American daughter (16-19). Mindful of the privileged position of American political and epistemological knowledge producers, Laura H. Y. Kang is also critical of “‘Americanization’ of the ‘comfort women’ issue” in terms of Lisa Yoneyama. Kang probes how Asian American cultural and scholarly representations of Korean “comfort women” may have appropriated their colonial/national/transnational experience through uncritical ethnicity- and/or gender-based identification, transferring “their” experience into “our” Asian American one, and transplanting it onto American soil, in order to establish and affirm “Asian American” racial and feminist politics. In her article on the Americanization of Japanese war crimes, Lisa Yoneyama grapples with the implications and ramifications of what she calls “Americanization of world justice,” which has framed the U.S. as a site and agent of redress of past injustices committed by other colonial, military, and/or national powers including Japan.

Taking up their invaluable critical intervention in the Americanization of the knowledge-production of “Asia” and “Asian women,” this chapter agrees that *A Gesture Life* as an Asian American literary text Asian-Americanizes the Japanese war crimes against Korean “comfort women.” The novel creates links between the Japanese imperialist wars and vicious crimes in Asia and the U.S.’s Cold War and humanitarian efforts in Asia by embedding Hata’s past memories into the forward-moving narrative of his present quotidian life in the U.S. Following the abovementioned critics, I too oppose to the subjection or “endisciplinization” of “comfort women” to and by what Kang calls “American regimes of knowledge production” (42) and find Lee’s “forced attempt to conjoin the histories of Japanese military sexual slavery and U.S. military-related prostitution in Korea” through the linked stories of K and Sunny too radical (Kang 32). Nevertheless, I propose that Lee’s writerly and political interest in remembering the Korean comfort women and World War II is a transnational or cosmopolitan one, rather than solely American, in that it seeks to intervene in the hegemonic American memory of World War II, as well as in the Korean or Japanese nationalist memories of Korean “comfort women,” which have served nationalist and/or imperialist ends of the three nation-states. For the U.S., the memory of “comfort women” served to construct the U.S.’s post-WWII rise of exceptionally “just” global police and peace-keeping state against the exceptionally “evil” Japanese imperial state. The “comfort women” redress movement, which belatedly arrived in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Korea, has been internationalized in the context of what Inderpal Grewal calls the post-Cold War U.S.-led global “human rights regimes” (126). Since 1992, the “comfort women” issue has been an international concern beyond the Korea-Japan bilateral framework. In this

international or transnational redress movement, “comfort women” began to be reframed more or less as model humanitarian victims of gender-based human rights violation, in need of international protection of their right to truth, justice, and reparation. This, however, runs the risk of fixing them with decontextualized Asian women’s victimhood, vulnerability, and disempowerment by Asian men in wartime sexual violence.

Representing “comfort women” as a humanitarian figure may be practically effective to draw attention and raise international awareness immediately, but potentially compromising the redress movement. Lee’s literary representation of Korean “comfort women” emerges in this transnational human rights framework of the “comfort women” redress movement, where Japanese military sexual slavery is conjoined and conflated with other wartime or military sexual violations as ethnicized/racialized and gendered humanitarian figures of Asia displaced by war or military intervention.

My contention is that Lee’s radical transnationalization of Korean “comfort women” for the Imperial Japanese Army in *A Gesture Life*, hooking the U.S. in the loop, is not what I call “cultural humanitarian work” that supports the hegemonic humanitarian discourse and praxis premised upon the material and moral superiority of the aiding/representing subject over the aided/represented subject and ideologically aiding and/or actualizing paternalistic imperialism. Lee deliberately frames the relationships between Hata and K and between Hata and Sunny with the grammar of empathic identification and representation and humanitarian salvation only to show how those gestures of salvation and representation are untenable by animating Hata’s efforts and failures to stand in for, or speak for, K and Sunny. To put it differently, the novel, on the one hand, entangles the lives of Hata, K, and Sunny, as exceptionally excluded and/or

included national subjects produced by the biopolitical subjectification of Japanese and/or American imperial nation-states. On the other hand, though, it tries to disentangle the links by representing Hata's failures to represent or save K or Sunny on the ground of "love" and "like-enough race" or ethnicity (73), and thus revealing the irreducible differences of their ethnic, racial, gender, and national subject-positions among the exceptionalized subjects. Besides, by depicting Hata as an ethnic and racial minority in Japan and the U.S., the novel addresses the inter-ethnic and inter-racial violence and exploitation within and across national boundaries and calls for an alternative coalition among minority communities.

Chang-rae Lee's *A Gesture Life* has lured intense scholarly interest as it features sensitive issues of "comfort women" and transnational adoption, but its ample textual potentiality resists being confined or exhausted by a single interpretation or approach as any respectable cultural work would. The fruitful and diverse body of critical work on the novel, examining the text from the conceptual and analytic angles of diaspora, trauma, guilt, ambiguous identities, the question of representation of, and knowledge production about, the "comfort woman" and the transnational adoptee as epistemological objects, proves the text's rich complexity. My reading of Lee's representation through critical biopolitical studies and human rights studies resorts to what Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih call "minor transnationalism," in quest of alternative epistemologies, politics, cultural forms, and subjectivities to elite-controlled mainstream transnationalism to address various minority issues in different national and regional contexts "inflected by transnational and transcolonial processes," which "constitut[e] the shadowy side of the transnational" (11). Examining the differentially subjectified transnational minor subjects

and their uneasy transnational, transcolonial, and interracial relationships in the novel, my reading seeks to go beyond what Kandice Chuh describes as the identity politics of victimhood, “long plagued studies of ‘minority literatures’” (10-11), as well as the legitimization of Western (feminist) humanitarian activism creating “the third world [gendered] victim as an object of rescue by first world ngos” as Inderpal Grewal rightly assesses (133). This chapter focuses on the national and transnational systems of production of the transpacific transcolonial subjects and cultural figures in order not to be caught by the Western(-influenced) liberal feminist snare of victimification and salvation of “comfort women” and other subjects of gender-based violence in the Third World, often appropriated to legitimize the imperialist work of the nation-state, but instead to “create a valuable sense of discomfort with respect to our critical practices” (Chuh 20).

Representing Failed Representations of “Comfort Women”:

Bio/Necropolitics and the Limits of Human Rights Discourse

In an interview, Chang-rae Lee explains his decision to write about Korean “comfort women,” from the perspective of a former Japanese imperial soldier in his second novel, *A Gesture Life*:

“Originally, I wanted to write a book that was told from the point of view of a ‘comfort woman.’ I probably wrote three-quarters of a book in that vein.... But I began to feel that what I had written didn’t quite come up to the measure of what I had experienced, sitting in a room with [some surviving comfort women]. I began to feel that there was nothing like live witness.”

Lee's confession signals that *A Gesture Life*, therefore, was from the outset written upon his failure to represent "comfort women"'s experience and life. Not only he keenly feels his inability to match his representation with the women's live testimonies and strong presence, but Lee also re-writes his novel centering around that limitation of his and Hata's representation of a "comfort woman" named Kkutae, or K as Hata consistently calls. Instead, Lee forms the novel as a sort of memoir—personal account or record of the past through remembrance—of the narrator, Hata, a Korean/Japanese/American man who as a former Japanese imperial medic has witnessed the atrocious crimes against Korean "comfort women." However, Hata is not merely an observer, but also a participant implicated in the crimes, which he has strived to forget and denied throughout his life until the time of the novel's beginning. Lee's literary representation of Korean comfort women through the eye of Hata offers a peculiar addition to the existing comfort women discourse, mostly focusing on rewriting the androcentric dominant history of the war from the comfort women's perspective and recuperating the women's long-silenced voice and long-absent visibility whether through public, legal, or cultural testimonies of comfort women survivors or scholarly and cultural representations about them. At once taking part in, and going against, the grain of the sudden national and international fervor over Korean "comfort women" and of the intellectual and cultural representations of the women in the 1990s, Lee takes a thematic and aesthetic distance from the hegemonic mode of representing and figuring the women by animating Hata's heroic efforts and dramatic failures to stand and speak for her through his novel.

Gayatri Spivak in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* has explicated the double meanings of representation: political representation as speaking for (*vertreten*) and

descriptive re-presentation (*darstellen*) in art and philosophy. She argues that political representation or stand in for others is persuaded by descriptive representation often by veiling the gap between the position of the representing and that of the represented and phantasmatically and discursively identifying with the different subject-positions and interests of others (256-260). Describing the androcentric ideological conflicts over the practice of *sati*, Spivak points out how the voice of the gendered subaltern in colonial India can be silenced by the patriarchal imperialist and nationalist representations of the British colonizers and the colonized Indian men that turn her either into an object of rescue or a freely acting subject. The question of representation in both political and discursive senses has been particularly at stake for Korean “comfort women” as they were reduced to colonial gendered subalterns and then to stateless bare life in Agamben’s term, deprived of the right to represent or re-present themselves not just during the war, but also before and long after the war.

The history of tens of thousands of Asian “comfort women” sexually exploited by Imperial Japan’s military during the Pacific War, of whom Korean women made up eighty percent, had been silenced for more than half-century up until the early 1990s. The issue of Korean women’s sexual slavery was first publicly addressed in the late 1980s by Korean religious and political women’s organizations, demanding the Japanese government for official admission, apology, compensation for the coerced recruitment and military sex slavery of Korean women, and correction of Japanese history textbooks about Korean “comfort women.” The violated Korean women, especially those forcibly conscripted in the 1940s, were mostly composed of school girls and very young unmarried women with no sexual experience, coerced into the comfort system, mobilized

either through abduction, military conscription, or trickery. In response to the Japanese government's then insistent position of declaiming "coercion in the recruitment of Korean women" into Women's Volunteer Labor Service Corps (*yōja kullo chōngsindae*) and the state's involvement in the construction and supervision of the comfort stations, Kim Hak-sun, a former Korean "comfort woman" first testified in 1991 about the uncensored war crimes at a press conference in Korea (Soh, "The Korean" 1227-1228). Initiated by her public testimony, other survivors also came forward and began to file lawsuits against the Japanese government, which immediately amassed public and international attention.

Once the silence was broken by Korean feminist activists and former "comfort women," however, representations and voices on and over "comfort women" by the survivors and other activists, scholars, and artists in Korea, Japan, Europe, and the U.S. have surged up and multiplied. Since the momentum, Korean "comfort women" were figured in multiple forms through multifaceted approaches and political interests; for instance, as national victims by Korean nationalists and nationalist feminists, gendered human rights victims of wartime sexual violence by the UN and Japanese and Western liberal feminists, and a mixture of "our" victimized women and victims of "their" human rights violation by Asian Americanists. Primarily led by the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, a private organization seeking justice for former "comfort women," the movement produced remarkable work and outcomes for breaking silence on the war atrocities and extreme sexual violence against the colonized women. Nevertheless, the existing empathic public and cultural representations have largely focused on Korean female victimization by the vicious

Japanese state and army in Asia in times of Japanese colonial rule and wartime against the deplorable denial of the Japanese government of the state crime and Japanese nationalists' rendering of the women as voluntary camp followers or prostitutes, as such failing to redress the long-standing patriarchal social structures and conventions of Korea and Japan.³⁷

With the Korean Council's initial filing of a petition with the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) in 1992 and ensuing appeals to international human rights laws and organizations seeking juridical judgment on the war crimes and criminals and legal justice, the representation of comfort women began to be re-paradigmed as a universal issue of women's human rights violation in the context of the post-Cold War global "human rights regimes," "the networks of knowledge and power that inserted [human rights] discourses into geopolitics" (Grewal 126). In 1994, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), an international human rights NGO organization headquartered in Geneva with a standing group of prominent jurists from around the world, recommended that the Japanese government compensate the survivors of the military comfort system for Japan's imperial troops during World War II (Soh 1236-1237). In 1995, the UN special rapporteur dispatched by the UNCHR began to investigate the "comfort women" case and concluded in the next year Japan's responsibility for the comfort system (Soh 1226). In 2000, the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal for the Trial of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery was held in Tokyo organized by international women's and human rights NGO organizations to prosecute "top Japanese military and political officials and the state of Japan for the injustice of the Japanese military comfort women system" (H. Kim, "The Comfort Women" 176).

In her critical analysis of the tribunal, Hee Kang Kim argues that the tribunal “categorized the comfort women issue under women’s international human rights discourse of wartime sexual violence, ‘making it into a universal women’s issue of contemporary and international significance’” (176). Though the tribunal was perceived by the public as a victory, Kim rightly contends that the tribunal’s final judgment “in defining the comfort system as wartime sexual violence” is insufficient to address “the full scope of the injustice of the comfort system... constructed, operated, and maintained under the oppressive structures of patriarchy, colonialism, and imperialism and their interactions” (175). She states that although the international juridical recognition and judgment of “comfort women” as victims of a human rights violence, as well as wartime sexual violence, marks a decisive moment in the redress movement, the tribunal’s universal international language or angle of wartime mass rape is inadequate to recognize the structural injustice of the phenomenal violence against women, including not only colonialism and imperialism but also the power difference between nation-states within the notion of human rights (197-203). In this framework of women’s human rights, “comfort women”’s concrete matters of multiple structural oppressions are subsumed by the universal narrative of war crime and sexual violence, essentializing the female body as a site of victimhood and disempowerment, subject to Asiatic violence and leaving the larger international economic and political circumstances that structured the particular conditions of crime intact. This move therefore appealed to the universal qualities of the condition of “women,” based on “a false sense of the commonality of oppressions, interests, and struggles between and among women globally” (Mohanty 36), and their anger against the atrocities committed against “us” by “them,” men, especially of the

other worlds. In Hyunah Yang's words, "it may freeze the identity of the former comfort women as international victims, 'existential' comfort women" (66). After all, as Chandra Mohanty puts it, "Beyond sisterhood there are still racism, colonialism and imperialism" (36).

A similar internationalizing or transnationalizing mode of representation of Korean "comfort women" as victims of gender-based human rights violation or humanitarian subjects began to appear in the U.S. cultural and literary fields since the 1990s. As recent scholarship on the Americanist politics of Asian American representation of comfort women has addressed, many of the Korean American writers, artists, and scholars as knowledge producers have viewed the "comfort women" case "as a human rights issue," making their work of remembering the women's silenced and forgotten history humanitarian work of a sort to give voice to the voiceless and speak up the long silenced history of the women's lives. This cultural humanitarian work of representing the Korean women though is a distinctly American or Asian American, mostly feminist, one, created and consumed in "a particularly American grammar and regime of representation and knowledge-production" as Laura H. Y. Kang articulates (32). Laura Hein, a historian of twentieth-century Japan, discusses how remembrance of the plight of the comfort women has functioned as a political tool for the Asian American diasporic community to constitute their ethnic and feminist identity, taking the memory as "an important cultural site" for redressing the American remembrance of WWII to forging Asian American solidarity, as well as for redressing racial and gender oppression (355-356).

This work of remembering the Asiatic-Pacific Theater of WWII in its redressing of the Empire of Japan's inhumane, heinous acts, as Lisa Yoneyama points out, may run the risk of replicating the conventional American war memories that highlight American victimhood and victory while containing the memories of their own war crimes and human rights violation. Situating "Americanization" within the post-WWII U.S. world order, Yoneyama states:

"'Americanization of world justice' was constitutive of the Cold War strategy that posited the North Americans as the supreme defender of the 'free world.' This Cold War arrogation of world freedom and democracy to the United States, however, was enunciated not only vis-à-vis rivaling Soviet claims for human rights, anti-(neo)colonialism, and world justice. More importantly, it has been inseparably tied to prevailing American war memories in which the U.S. war against Japan is remembered as a 'good war.' (58)

Korean "comfort women," whose belated emergence in the post-Cold War era was soon captured by the post-Cold War global humanitarian discourse and regime, has been represented and refigured in the U.S. as transnational humanitarian victims in need of international recognition and Americanized world justice, which may replicate the Third World women's victimhood and comfort the U.S. exceptional sovereign power as a legitimate police state and military power to deliver, guard, and enforce justice. Probing the role of human rights activism that links geopolitics and biopolitics, Grewal, citing David Chandler, argues: "'ethical' involvement of these human rights NGOs relied on the creation of the third world victim as an object of rescue by first world NGOs, and thus

delegitimized nonwestern states and legitimized western activism. The move from ‘needs-based’ to ‘rights-based’ humanitarianism...led the way for the ‘military humanitarianism’ of the western states” (133).

Lee’s *A Gesture Life* represents some of these limitations of the existing attempts to represent Korean “comfort women” in both writing and reality, through Hata’s treatment of “comfort women,” intimate relationship with K, and failure to speak for K, notwithstanding his romantic gesture of “love” or humanitarian gesture of “help,” due to his androcentric Japanese nationalist—imperialist and colonialist—ideologies of the time. Through the narratives of Hata’s war memory, Lee describes the comfort system and the dehumanization of the fictional “comfort women” and other human lives, as well as the necropolitical mechanism of the imperialist war that consumes most vulnerable lives. Lee embeds five narratives of Hata’s war memory into the novel, all focalized on his encounters with Korean “comfort women,” except for the first vignette where he recalls Captain Ono, the outpost’s doctor and his supervisor, performing one of his lethal medical experimentations on living person. The memory seeps into Hata’s mind as he is looking, at the present moment, down at Patrick, son of the Hickeys, the family to whom Hata sold his medical supply store years ago. The business has been going down since then, and their boy is dying with a heart disease and is waiting for a heart transplant at the hospital. He states, “[I]t is the vulnerability of people that has long haunted me: the mortality and fragility, of the like I witnessed performing my duties in the war, which never ceased to alarm, but also the surprisingly subject condition of even the most stolid of men’s wills during wartime, the inhuman capacities to which they are helplessly given if they have but ears to hear and eyes to see” (220). However, it was not until he meets K

that he begins to “hear” and “see,” and in the meantime, he appears indifferent to “comfort women” of other nationals, as well as other military brutalities in general, which all seemed natural to him. Hata remembers how he “witnessed” Captain Ono during the war perform a dreadful medical experiment on the body of a living Burmese man, who had been sentenced to decapitation on spot by a commanding officer without trial for stealing military supply and instead was allowed to be used and disposed at the doctor’s discretion. Hata recalls, “It’s a strange technique to see, the procedure at once God-like and lowly animal.... It was nearly magical.... Though to me it seemed more academic than anything else” (76). For young Hata, death-producing wartime brutal experiments on human bodies—“crimes” legitimized in the state of exception—especially of those considered unworthy had been nothing unordinary or even educational for him as a paramedic. In Singapore, where he initially stationed before sent to an island of the Malay Archipelago, the first dead body he saw was a naked Korean-looking “comfort girl” presumed to have committed suicide to escape from sexual slavery (108-109). Hata later saw her body being treated “like a sack of radishes” and heard “the full sound it made on the metal bed, deep-voiced and surprising,” and also saw the after-image of the other “comfort girls” gazes “transfixed at the body,” contrasted with the image of the soldiers idly playing games while waiting for their turn for the sexual “entertainments” and complaining about the longer wait caused by the loss of one girl (109). When he saw another naked Korean-speaking “comfort girl” running out from the comfort house, he grabbed her and told her in Korean, “There’s no place to go,... You must stay in the house” (111), reminding at once her incarcerated and stateless status and her duty to “comfort” imperial soldiers as a subject of the empire.

After sent to Indonesia, Hata as a paramedic takes care of Corporal Endo, a young officer who is agitated by the upcoming arrival of new “female volunteers” (161).

Recalling young Hata’s observation, the narrator states:

“[T]he imminent arrival of these ‘volunteers,’ as they were referred to, seemed quite removed from the ordinary. Certainly, I had heard of the longtime mobilization of such a corps, in Northern China and in the Philippines and on other islands, and like everyone else appreciated the logic of deploying young women to help maintain the morale of officers and foot soldiers in the field, though I never bothered to consider it until that night. And like everyone else, I suppose, I assumed it would be a most familiar modality, just one among the many thousand details and notices in a wartime camp. But when the day finally came I realized that I was mistaken.” (163)

Using Hata’s position as an inside observer, Lee first places him as a witness within the novel to testify the crimes against “comfort women,” whose history was denied and whose official records were destroyed or hidden. Hata begins to notice and testify that the Korean comfort system was not “ordinary” in that they were young and virgin and coerced into this “duty,” and that he had “mistaken[ly]” identified the young Korean “comfort girls” with the much the other “voluntary” comfort women or camp followers from Japan. He further testifies:

“In those initial years there had been houses of comfort set up by former prostitutes shipped in from Japan by Army-sanctioned merchants, and the infection rate was naturally high. Now that the comfort stations were run

under military ordinances and the women not professionals but rather those who had unwittingly enlisted or been conscripted into the wartime women's volunteer corps to contribute and sacrifice as all did..." (180)

Nevertheless, despite his initial disturbance, the exceptionality of the Korean "comfort girls" case does not matter to young Hata who thinks that "comfort women" are, just like the other Japanese soldiers and officers, whether voluntary or not, subject to sacrifice their life and perform their "duty" to fight for the Japanese "way of life" against "the British and Americans" and "carry [themselves] with dignity, in whatever he [or she] does" (162-163). When he is ordered to be "responsible for maintaining the readiness of the girls" "to make certain they [can] perform their duties for men in the camp," so that Captain Ono can focus on performing "life-saving procedures," he understands the girls' "value...to the well-being and morale of the camp" and "vigilance...in order" (166, 180). K's elder sister, one of the newly-arrived Korean "comfort girls," has her throat slashed and is killed by Corporal Endo, who is disturbed after witnessing her being raped by the camp commander the night before. Endo's act is viewed ambiguously, as both heroic charity and extreme misogyny, but it is concluded that the woman's life is not worth the charge of murder. Endo is "charged not with murder, but with treasonous action against the corps," "as guilty as any saboteur who had stolen or despoiled the camp's armament or rations" (189). This dehumanizes her victim not just as a sexual object but also as a part of the army's supplies. As a loyal servant and sympathizer of the Japanese Emperor, Hata believes in its grand "schema," under which "the commander had his level, the officers theirs, the enlisted men and others yet another, and so on and so forth, until it came to the girls, who had their own," which is "inviolable, like any set of natural laws,"

and takes Endo's act as "a failure" not "of ego or self, but of an obligation public and total—and one resulting in the burdening of the entire society of his peers" (227).

Therefore, he complies to "fulfill[] [his] duty for Nation and Empire" (120) as a medical assistant officer in charge of the "maintenance" of the "comfort girls" to prevent any malfunction—VD infection—as a tool to boost combat morale of imperial soldiers and officers and "to save [them] from the clap" (110), seeing them "only as parts of the larger mechanism of his living, the steady machine that grinds along each night and day" (251).

Hata's relationship with K begins when Captain Ono orders him to conduct a special mission to temporarily quarantine K from the comfort station and regularly examine her before his clandestine medical experiments on her. Captain Ono has so far separated K from other "comfort women" group and kept her away from the camp commander's "taking [of the girls'] maidenhood" and other soldiers (182), claiming that she is not a virgin and needs VD exams before her service begins. As a young man who keeps describing himself to be "not fond of women who are prostitutes" (106), notwithstanding his earlier "contracted" sexual experience with Madam Itsuda in Singapore (233), young Hata seems "naturally" drawn to K's "seemingly insoluble beauty" (231). He claims though that there is something other than her beauty that attracts him such as her ability to make him feel "unsettled by her forward bearing" and "at once amazed and strangely intimidated" (234). In his response to K, alongside his genial and likable personality, the reader senses that young Hata is not a typical colonizer who would take the colonized woman's willfulness and disobedience as a threat and attempt to suppress it like Captain Ono did when he struck K as soon as she arrived for her reluctance to obey his order. Hata rather appears sympathetic to K and begins to feel

“a certain connection to her,” in his estimation, “not in blood or culture or kind, but in that manner... that any young man might naturally feel for a young woman” (239). On the part of K, having previously unresponding and unyielding to Hata’s and any other soldiers’ orders, she seems to be moved by Hata’s Korean language and even relates him with her younger brother. They begin to converse about their biographical backgrounds and seem to bond. At one point, K reveals her wish for death and begs Hata to have “compassion” and “help” her to end her life before Captain Ono lays his hands on her body. Hata declines that entreaty as a dutiful medic to “preserve[]” life (246), and since this encounter, he becomes obsessed with K, which he interprets as love, and with the idea of saving her from Captain Ono and from the comfort system.

Meanwhile, through K’s storytelling of her past to Hata, Lee depicts K as a victim *and* a knowledge holder about the commission of the crime who testifies the coerced conscription in her own words, unfolding the illegality of mobilization legitimized anyway in the state of exception, and as such, the tripled structures of oppression on Korean women and girls: Korean patriarchy and the Japanese empire’s patriarchal colonialism and imperialist wars. K describes his father, “He would hardly ever speak to me...or to any of us girls. To him we were unaddressable, even before all the trouble that happened to our family.... [W]hat he had for me was mostly nothing at all, as if I were of the most distant blood” (245). She also recounts how her father as a Korean patriarch of a noble-class, well-educated and respectable family with four daughters and one son exchanged two of his daughters for one son to save his sole inheritor of the family lineage from conscription. Her father’s agency to make this patriarchal decision was though constricted as he as a colonized man “lost his influence and standing” with “no money

left to bribe” the recruiter and military police and was forced to give up either his son or two daughters to “work in a boot factory outside of Shimonoseki” under Japan’s colonial rule, which had devastated land ownership and economic power of Koreans and exploited their land and labor (250). K even testifies against the Japanese imperial doctrine and agenda to “revere our Asian heritage and protect it from foreign influences” and “develop an Asian prosperity, and an Asian way of life” “rooted of a common culture and mind” across national borders, which both K’s father and Hata uphold, by calling it “a Japanese life” (245) and showing her decolonized subjectivity. K’s testimony in the novel, albeit a private one, reveals the unlawful, criminal nature of Japanese imperialist mobilization and exploitation of colonized Koreans even before the sexual and murder crime, as well as the hierarchical order of life within the Korean patriarchal social structure that undervalued life of girls/women.

With this revelation in K’s testimony that challenges his previous beliefs, Hata begins to see the comfort system from a different angle, from the perspective of the Japanese soldier to K’s. He observes, looking at his fellow servicemen waiting outside the comfort house:

“Although it was the most naïve and vacant of notions to think that anyone would willingly give herself to such a fate, like everyone else I had assumed the girls had indeed been ‘volunteers,’ as they were always called. To the men in the queue, they were nothing, or less than nothing; several hours earlier I had overheard a soldier speak more warmly and humanly of the last full-course meal he remembered than the girl he’d been with the previous afternoon. He was a corporal . . . , a typically decent

young man. He crudely referred to the comfort girl as *chosen-pi*, a base anatomical slur which also denoted her Koreanness.... There was a casualness to his usage, as if he were speaking of any animal in a pen, which stopped me cold for a moment.” (251)

Hata’s change of perspective to identify with K leads him to “think otherwise, of how to preserve her, how [he] might keep her apart from all uses in any way [he] could” (251).

The passage above reveals that Hata’s seemingly ethical rage against the human rights violations of the “comfort girl” and identification with K based on their shared Korean ethnicity, discriminated by the Japanese in Japanese civil society and in the imperial army. So, no matter how he has tried to erase or hide it and verbally denied it as a reason for his feeling for K, Hata is unconsciously self-conscious of his inferiorized ethnicity.

Hata is suddenly moved by the dramatic shifts of their fate—Hata coming from a Korean family living “the twisty, cramped ghetto alleys of Kobe” to an eminent Japanese family and K “born into a noble, scholarly house” but thrust into a most debased status. Also driven by his minoritarian empathy and unexpected nationalist and humanitarian desires to restore her status, and perhaps that of the Korean nation as well, and to rescue her vulnerable life and ensure “a long and decent life” (246), just like he thinks his adoptive parents did for him, Hata suggests, “[W]e can go out of this place together, and I will take care of you and protect you no matter where we go” (258). Old Hata later speculates that moment, “I would have done anything then to lend her some peace. I would have executed whatever she asked of me, helped her even to escape” (260) and that he wished her to be his wife. However, Hata also blurts how his “sudden sense of her nearness” is “mixed with” his rage against the injustices committed against him by Ono and Japanese

boys that he experienced growing up in Japan as an ethnic minority and colonized subject, as K's stateless status triggered his "darkest fires" for "vengeance" (262-263), revealing his own interests in his work of representation and salvation.

By depicting Hata's chivalric language of protection, romantic gesture of love(-making), and imaginary revenges on Captain Ono and other Japanese soldiers for K's sake, Lee shows how his mission to save or represent K, which he feels he is obliged to serve with his life-saving job, ethnicity, and love, not only is bound to fail but also would further exploit her and put her in an even more vulnerable position. To Hata's romantic proposal, K, although she has been engaged in conversation with him about their imagined future life elsewhere or otherwise and let it ride for a moment, responds, "There is dreaming and dreaming talk and little else, which is happy enough, and maybe all that remains to us.... You can pretend, if you wish, and I'll pretend with you, as much as I am able. But I ask you please no more than that" (258). In the novel, it is intimated that their friendly bonding, or even romantic one, is only possible during the night, which visually hides Hata's "uniform or the shine of [his] boots or even [his] face" and phantasmatically veils their differences from reality, "in the almost civilian calm of the pre-reveille, with [them] set apart from all manner of order and rule" (233). However, this temporary bonding, which K concludes to be imaginative, soon completely shatters as Hata insists on it and rapes, or "makes love" with, K while she is asleep. He asserts, "It was a connection.... I believed already to be a special correspondence between *us*, *an affinity of being*" (263; emphases added). Unlike young Hata's heightened sense of affinity with K after the first rape or what he calls lovemaking, this incident in the novel widely opens Hata's complicity in the comfort system and crime. Hata's assertion of love and rescue

places K in an impossible position as at once a vulnerable victim without agency and thus in need of his help or rescue and a freely acting agent or a subject with politico-juridical rights who can afford “a long and decent life” (246) and love, which all comes out of Hata’s contradictory position as at once a colonial and colonialist/imperialist male subject. The novel reveals that Hata’s sense of “affinity of being” as a fellow human or as the colonized or minoritarian would not be possible without forcibly closing the distance and power difference between “us”—K and Hata, the male Korean Japanese imperial soldier and the colonial female Korean sex slave.

In the novel, it is K who testifies against Hata’s humanitarian or romantic gesture to save her. After Hata’s second rape of K committed again in the name of love and his final offer of help and protection, K defies:

“I don’t want your help!... I never wanted your help. Can’t you heed me? Can’t you leave me be? You think you love me but what you really want you don’t yet know because you are young and decent. But I will tell you know, it is my sex. The thing of my sex.... You are a decent man, Lieutenant, but really you are not any different from the rest.” (300)

K’s indictment against Hata’s insistence on help and rape/lovemaking suggests that Hata’s seemingly liberatory anti-colonial or minoritarian gesture of saving a Korean subaltern woman from the evil imperialist/colonialist power that dehumanizes her can be as violating and exploitive as Captain Ono’s and other soldiers’ patriarchal imperialism, with their underlying patriarchal assumption, desire, or right over her body and spirit. K’s murmur in her crying after the first rape/sex, which sounds like “*hata-hata, hata-hata*” (261), also signifies Hata’s participation in the imperialist necropolitical war and

anticipates her own death, which he takes part in. Hata has previously explained the meaning of his Japanese family name, Kurohata, in which “hata” means “a black flag” used in old days as a village banner to warn people of “contagion” of a disease, signaling “spreading death” (224), which makes K’s repeated onomatopoeic ominous. To his chilling surprise, Hata later notices that what he has thought was his romantic voice to K is not that different from the “decorous[]” way Ono is speaking to her (294).

At the climax of the novel, it is also K who decides on her own fate and death and carries out her plan, all the while Hata keeps imagining ways to avenge Ono for K and for himself but fails to make any of them happen. When Captain Ono comes to make some experiment on her body and embraces her, K manages to slay him while Hata is hesitating. Rejecting Hata’s futile language of romance and salvation for the final time, K instead begs him to kill her once more: “But if you loved me, Lieutenant, if you truly loved me, you could not bear to be with me. You could not see me like this, you could not stand for one moment longer the thought of my even living” (300). She solemnly declares, “There’s no escape. I know you dream of one but it doesn’t exist. This time won’t end. It will end for you, but not for me” (301), undoing Hata’s illusory identification with her. Still refusing to “help” her, Hata instead shoots the dead body of Ono, and when he is ordered to attend the camp commander in place of the dead captain, he leaves the scene leaving K with a sentry. Resisting his touch and executing her plan to suicide, K slices the sentry on his face with a scalpel when she can easily kill him, to provoke him to kill her, which eventually happens during Hata’s absence. By depicting K’s death in between suicide and murder, Lee underscores the “comfort woman”’s extremely limited agency as a colonized woman stripped of her rights, including human

rights, who though bravely maintains and asserts her resistant subjectivity and rights to her body, life, and dignity, and attempts to redress the victimology of the dominant “comfort women” discourse. K exercises the last right for the rightless, her human rights on her own, which can be easily violated or appropriated by others, regardless of their intentions, by deciding on her life through death, which may be at extreme circumstances the last resort or weapon to protect oneself against the state’s right to necropower.

Lee, however, does not reduce Hata’s failure or pardon his guilt with K’s decision on her death, a subversive act of a gendered subaltern, however it may look desperate, failing, and defeated. Old Hata recalls the event and why he left K at the critical moment, “I must have wanted her unto death, and I could not bear anyone else having her, and I allowed events to occur because of that feeling, even if it meant I would lose her forever” (296). Hata’s wanting of her death and leaving her “unto” it itself may seem identical to K’s wishing for death, but his motivation is to assert his own ownership over, and right to, her body, which is the same motivation to assert his protection and love, overriding K’s human right. Sensing that what awaits K is either the life as a sex slave or death, Hata runs away from the scene, abandoning her, which binds him forever with her through his guilt. Hata’s abandonment is worthy of attention in that K has been already abandoned by law, her family, and fellow humans and that K has saved Hata’s life after his bout with Ono who lets him live on the condition that K obeys his command: “[She] would give [her] life for [his]” although she finds that “the notion of her life being worth something was ridiculous” (292). At one point, both Hata and K describe how their lives are subject to the necropolitical power of the Japanese empire and war, embodied by Ono who like a specter haunts them both. However, their interpretation of this subjection or

subjectification is quite different. While Hata in his denial of the reality of the war and the comfort system lumps together, “the soldiers, officers, the girls” as “we” and insists that “we need[] only to persist for a short time longer... hold[ing] fast to the general order of things,” K, who has been arguing for their asymmetrical statuses and her inviolable will, or right to will, seems to realize the mechanisms of the bio/necropolitical system of the empire:

“Please don’t try to be brave for me, Lieutenant. I have not given up anything. Do you think if any of us girls is still living they’ll let us walk out of here when the war ends? That we will go unharmed if they do? In my mind I didn’t give the doctor my life. All he really wanted was a last small concession from me. What was left of my will. So he has that. But the doctor has always had my life and my death. Perhaps now, Lieutenant, he has yours, too.” (293)

In this conversation, K articulates that whether she gives in her will to surrender or not, her life is already subjected to the comfort system and to the necropower of the Japanese empire, that she has lost the ownership of her life, and that she now sees that Hata’s life is also precarious as hers. However, this commonality based on their status as precarious bare life soon breaks off as Hata betrays her by raping her for the second time and abandoning her and his responsibility at the moment of her impending death. Turning away from her is to give up on his relationship with her all together and denying the harm he has done and his responsibility, which eventually makes him fail to assume a position even as a proper witness of K’s death. In this way, Lee’s representation of the incommensurability of, and the unevenly distributed power even among, the precarious

lives warns us that any uncritical identifications with “comfort women” may restrain them with victimology or ventriloquization or even consume them to serve “our” interest(s) against “theirs”—sometimes even against ours—and calls for the need to mull over alternative, more “just” representations and relationships. Therefore, Hata’s guilt does not lie in his failing to save K’s life but in his very forcible “gesture” to love, represent, and save her, in his motives, ways, and objectives, and his failing to understand his crime involved and committed in the process as an imperial paramedic officer who has “helped” Ono for his necropolitical and biomedical consumption of human lives and as a Japanese soldier sexually consuming K’s body. Hata’s re-education in “twilight” begins with his gradual disorientation of his privileged life and confrontation with his crimes and guilt, which he has been avoided through his life.

American (Trans)National Liberal Biopolitics and the (Un)Making of Exceptional Racial Subjects

A Gesture Life begins with the certainty of Hata’s identity as a respected elderly Japanese American firmly grounded in the seemingly picture-perfect, well-trimmed, peaceful, happy, liberal middle-class suburb:

“PEOPLE KNOW ME HERE. It wasn’t always so. But living thirty-odd years in the same place begins to show on a man.... And in kind there is a gradual and accruing recognition of one’s face, of being, as far as anyone can recall, from around here. There’s no longer a lingering or vacant stare, and you can taste the small but unequaled pleasure that comes with being a familiar sight to the eyes. In my case, everyone here knows perfectly

who I am.... Whenever I step into a shop in the main part of the village, invariably someone will say, 'Hey. It's good Doc Hata.'" (1)

The reader is soon introduced to the history of Bedley Run and Hata's settlement in that town as an expatriate from Japan in the early 1960s and informed of how he has been quite skillfully and laboriously assimilated into the place to the point that "the question of [his] status mostly faded away, to...almost nothing" despite some difficulties he had from time to time to which he never responded (4). By not reacting or reporting the hostilities shown to him and proving his unthreatening innocuousness and civil terms with his white neighbors, Hata was gradually accepted by that society, for which he has "erred on the side of being grateful" (5). What he most desired in Bedley Run, or in anywhere in the world, was perfectly naturalized "into the picture" without conspicuous differences, achieving "transparence" of the sort, whose presence is never questioned by others and immediately accepted with their "certitude" like "a natural law" (21-22).

Hata is the only Japanese or Asian American in that neighborhood in the early 1960s, a situation understandable as pre-1965 Asian immigrant population was concentrated in metropolitan and rural areas, and Bedley Run remains mostly white dominant throughout the time, except a few recent immigrants from Southeast Asia in the 1990s who opened a laundromat. Given the suburban setting and the history of the Japanese internment and discrimination during and after WWII, Hata's "successful" adjustment in Bedley Run as a self-employed business owner can be considered exceptional. Hata's exceptional Americanization though was not naturally given and was a result of carefully-calculated and hard-earned efforts on the part of Hata in the post-WWII racially inclusive but still restrictive social milieu. Investigating the social

transformations of the time across the Pacific, Jodi Kim describes the post-WWII and post-internment U.S. “project of gendered racial rehabilitation” of Japanese Americans to domesticate the former “enemy alien” race into “a model minority” (108). Lee spends the first part of the novel to depict Hata’s persevere work and numerous little “projects” to fit into his adoptive land. Hata remembers how he was keen to abide the rules of community when Hata first bought and moved into an “immensely beautiful house” on Mountview Street (16), frequently symbolized as his position and selfhood in the U.S.:

“[A]s it mostly is in towns like Bedley Run, and particularly on streets like ours, being neighbors means sharing the most limited kinds of intimacies, such as sewer lines and property boundaries and annual property tax valuations. Anything that falls into a more personal realm is only tentatively welcomed.... [O]n the whole an unwritten covenant of conduct governs us, a signet of cordiality and decorum, in whose ethic...the whole wrong is to be drawn forth and disturbed.... Even when I received welcome cards and sweets baskets from my immediate neighbors, I judged the exact scale of what an appropriate response should be, that to reply with anything but the quiet simplicity of a gracious note would be to ruin the delicate and fragile balance.... I know that this helped me gain quick acceptance from my Mountview neighbors, especially given my being a foreigner and a Japanese.... [I]n fact, I must have given them the reassuring thought of how safe they actually were, how shielded, that an interloper might immediately recognize and so heed the rules of their houses.” (43-44)

In the fictional “advanced liberal” society, biopower does not manifest in the form of the state apparatuses, but rather in the terms of subtle civil and cultural codes of the dominant class and racial community. Hata’s integration was determined by keeping a “safe” distance from the neighbors. Hata was aware that his position was doubly vulnerable as “a foreigner and a Japanese,” which made him “an interloper,” and his heightened Asian race or Japanese ethnicity had to be safely whitewashed. Moreover, although unknown to Hata, who thinks his bachelorhood “by choice” allows him “the most available freedom” (68), it also seems to be conditioned by the U.S. exclusionary gendered racial politics and discrimination, domesticating or symbolically castrating his Asian masculinity and sexuality, which had long plagued earlier Asian immigrants who had to form Asian American “bachelor societies” (E. Lee 78) and perpetuated in the post-WWII era.

Hata’s Americanization in a liberal American suburb during the Cold War resonates with Slavoj Žižek’s critiques of contemporary post-political Western liberal democratic multicultural society where politics without “the political,” “deprived of its substance” reduces “the States to a mere police-agent serving the... needs of market forces and multiculturalist tolerant humanitarianism” (*The Ticklish Subject* 199). In his article, “Liberal Multiculturalism,” as well as in his other works, Žižek claims that today’s liberal multiculturalism shares the same body with the “old barbarism” of “racism” or “Western cultural imperialism” but “with a human face” for the liberal tolerance for racial or cultural difference can be maintained only insofar as it keeps a physical and emotional distance from the Other, securing the subject’s privacy and private properties. He maintains that the respect for the Other is possible only insofar as the Other is ‘detoxicated’ and “deprived of its Otherness”³⁸:

“Progressive liberals are, of course, horrified by... populist racism.

However, a closer look reveals how their multicultural tolerance and respect of differences share with those who oppose immigration the need to *keep others at a proper distance*. ‘The others are Ok, I respect them,’ the liberals say, ‘but they must not intrude too much on my own space.

The moment they do, they harass me....’ What is increasingly emerging as the central human right in late-capitalist societies is the right not to be harassed, which is *the right to be kept at a safe distance from others...*

Such people are toxic subjects who *disturb* my peace.” (“Liberal Multiculturalism,” emphases added)

Hata’s carefully negotiated inclusion and acceptance in Bedley Run were only possible insofar as his inscrutable and potentially dangerous racial/cultural difference or otherness was safely removed or “detoxicated” from him, which showcases the limit of the post-WWII American racial liberalism and has engendered Hata’s hyper-assimilation. Hata’s altering of his Japanese name, not only the first name (from Jiro to Franklin), but also the family name, which is shortened in half, may also be part of his self-detoxication.³⁹ The way he is called by townspeople, not Franklin, but Doc Hata, however, marks the limit of his exceptional inclusion and his interstitial status between Japanese and American.

Besides, this cultural detoxication of racial aliens was never gender neutral, and in the case of Japanese American men in the aftermath of WWII, their male/masculine sexuality was more closely scrutinized, checked, and disciplined. As Jodi Kim sums up, the sexuality of Asian American men has been historically posed either as sexually lecherous, a threat to white female sexuality, or “falling outside the bounds of proper

heteronormativity” (121). This hegemonic representation of aberrant Asian American male sexuality overdetermined by race, class, gender, and sexuality, or what David Eng calls “racial castration” to describe the material and psychical feminization of Asian American males, has not only conditioned Hata’s abstinent bachelorhood, but also affected his decision on transnational adoption, which allowed him to build a family without crossing the racial order of the white dominant society while maintaining his masculinity as a patriarch.

As many scholars have probed, American liberal multiculturalism, previously celebrated as a progressive discourse of racial equality and cultural diversity and tolerance, in fact evolved as the ruling liberal democratic ideology in the U.S. during the Cold War, promoted by the sovereign state to cope with its geopolitics, and served as a powerful ideological weapon of war in times of decolonization. Lisa Yoneyama in “Asian American Studies in Travel” states, “the liberal rendering of the world through the terms of ethno-national cultural differences and diversity has effectively served as a discursive mechanism for the Cold War management of the postwar world” (296). Liberal multiculturalism as a newly emerged racial paradigm in the post-WWII era was inextricably bound by Cold War U.S. geopolitics and biopolitics in foreign soil in such a way of including the very refugees produced by its sovereign violence via imperialist and race wars, formulating it in the rote rhetoric of humanitarianism, salvation, freedom, opportunity, and gift, and transnationalizing that knowledge. Mimi Thi Nguyen in *The Gift of Freedom* calls this transnationalization of American national multiculturalism “transnational multiculturalism” (30). Under the U.S.-led Cold War regime of liberalism, which legitimized military imperialist and race war in the name of the biopolitical

humanitarian salvation and optimization of life, the figure of the refugee, emerged from the humanitarian object to the subject of freedom—of course, at the expense of others’ life and freedom—was framed as a triumphant corporeal evidence of liberal democracy and multiculturalism and moral exceptionality, “render[ing] war seemingly benevolent through recourse to interlocking discourses about race and life necessity” (Nguyen 135). Along with the inclusion of adult refugees from war-torn regions, alien orphans under ten years of age for the first time in U.S. history were legally recognized as adoptable refugees and included in the refugee group in 1953 under the Refugee Relief Act within a couple of weeks after the Korean War armistice agreement. As explored in Chapter three, the inclusion of these Asian, then mostly Korean, orphans/adoptees during the Cold War period was a transnationally organized project, exceptionally permitted as a Cold War emergency measure in the context of the prolonged presence of U.S. troops in post-WWII Asian countries, with South Korea as a primary supply state and the U.S. as a major receiving state. Korean transnational adoption was cast in the U.S. mainstream media as a channel for ordinary Americans to participate in national and international politics and support the state’s Cold War project in Asia, creating a massive demand for Korean or Asian orphans to adopt in the U.S. For Washington, the inclusion of Asian orphans helped its Cold War containment agenda at home, as well as overseas, as they were integrated into predominantly white middle-class families, which also helped to lessen a national security threat and keep the culturally homogeneous nation. Transnational adoption of the time exemplifies “how international Cold War politics became domestic in the most profound way possible” (Oh 10). Insofar as the refugees were accepted under the state’s biopolitical imperative to preserve or save life and optimize it to the “modern”

and “advanced” American way of life, they were indebted to the U.S.

liberal/humanitarian empire or what Nguyen calls “the gift of freedom” to recoup its racial liberalism and were bound by its normalizing forces pressing them to “catch up” and making them into a population with productive economic capacities.

Although the Cold War plays only in the backdrop as the origin of Sunny in this post-Cold War novel, it is in those “transnational connectivities,” not only the networks of connections but also the knowledge and desires that travel through the networks (Grewal 22) that Hata’s adoption of Sunny from Korea through an international adoption agency and their failed post-adoption relationship were conditioned. Given his unmarried status, chances of adopting a child for him were very low, but he eventually managed to adopt a mixed-race girl by persuading and bribing his agent. Hata originally wanted a Japanese female orphan, specifically, who was though not available, and had to settle with a Korean girl. It was the day when Hata meets Sunny for the first time at the airport, he knew, to his disappointment, that she was a Korean-black girl, who he describes as “the product of a much less dignified circumstances, a night’s wanton encounter between a GI and a local bar girl” (204), and much older than he wanted her to be, one of the least desirable orphans/adoptees in the transnational order of life. Except for this remark, the history of U.S. occupation and the continued presence or Sunny’s history in Korea is curiously omitted throughout the novel, as if to forget it as a national and personal shame. Overcoming his initial disappointment, Hata soon invests in making Sunny into a “good” and deserving American citizen suitable to Bedley Run. He expected her to be not necessarily grateful to him, but at least “appreciative of the providence of institutions that brought her from the squalor of the orphanage—the best of which can be only so

happy—to an orderly, welcoming suburban home in America, with a hopeful father of like-enough race and sufficient means” (73), revealing the regime of U.S. humanitarian empire that governs the life of refugees in the U.S. Despite their shared cultural background—Korean language—and the conspicuous racial difference and exotic, “dark” beauty of Sunny, which he often notices and is amazed by, Hata’s internalized color-blind racism against Asians and blacks prevents him to speak in Korean to Sunny or about Korea or her mixed-race, insisting on their “like-enough-ness.”

Recent revisionist adoption discourses have addressed the power difference in the “adoption triad,” comprised of birth parents, adoptive parents, and adoptees. The representations of transnational adoptees and adoption experiences had been traditionally dominated by adoptive parents and adoption experts in the U.S. and elsewhere who spoke for then still young adoptive child(ren). This practice was shifted around the turn of the twenty-first century when adoptees who by then reached their 20s and 30s began to raise their voice and documents their radically different adoption experiences from their vantage point. The birth parents and families are the most marginalized, least represented, and often vilified group. Hata’s liberal American representation of Sunny as an adoptive parent with relatively more national, economic, political, and cultural power than the others in the triad fails tremendously, which leads to a failed relationship with her. With his color-blind love and on the ground of his own transethnic adoptee experience, he erases her blackness or mixed-race and forces her to assimilate with his Asian race and the white American culture, while disapproving and criminalizing black Americans she is associating, and more identifying, with, and condemning her birth parents, although he never verbally expresses it to Sunny. For Hata, Sunny has become, and has to be, part of

the American civil humanitarian project, which he made his own as a dutiful citizen, to “help” a potential “wayward child develop into a productive member of the community, or if ignored, risk allowing someone of essentially decent nature to become an adult whose social interactions are fraught and difficult, or even pathological, criminal” (67) and to offer the gift of “the relative freedoms of everyday, civilian life...liberties of America” just like he thinks he himself received in the U.S. (68). Paired with Hata’s remembrance, or rather forgetting, of the Cold War and military prostitution via Sunny, which is concurrent with the hegemonic American memory, or amnesia, of the Korean War and the U.S. military crimes overseas, Hata’s humanitarian effort to adopt and assimilate Sunny serves to resolve the population “problem” created by American military personnel and to erase the U.S. military crimes in Asia, as well as its military imperialism and race war.

Hata’s gentle but forceful normalization—his “wish” and hope for “perfection” and “success” (29) and taming of Sunny’s “willfulness” (148)—, however, meets fierce resistance. After she gives up on playing piano, Sunny argues that Hata is keeping the piano at home to show her failure, which Hata revises as “a symbol of [his] own failure, in inspiring the best in [her],” making it a double failure as Sunny puts it (31). Hata’s exceptional status as a model minority in Bedley Run, however, is first and throughout challenged by his adoptive daughter Sunny. In a hospital ward he is taken in after a fire accident in his house, old Hata recalls one of the confrontations with Sunny in her adolescent years. She once contested, “You make a whole life out of gestures and politeness. You’re always having to be the ideal partner and colleague.... How nice it is [for the townspeople] to have such a ‘good Charlie’ to organize the garbage and

sidewalk-cleaning schedule.... It's become your job to be the number-one citizen" (95). Hata also remembers Sunny's trouble with police officer Como who had been personally indebted to Hata and was, and still is, in a friendly term with him. Officer Como, aggravated by Sunny's defiance to authority, tries to give her a lesson, taunting her ungratefulness and intimate association with dangerous men including criminals of a drug-infested area, to which Sunny disobediently responds. This altercation all boils down to Sunny's being slightly hurt by Officer Como and Hata interrupting the scene, challenging the female officer to protect his daughter. After this incident and argument with Hata, Sunny leaves her adoptive house for good, and despite his disappointment and sadness, Hata tries to forget Sunny and covers up the truth with Sunny with some made-up stories: "I wanted to hide the real depth of the trouble, put it away not (as Sunny always contended) for the sake of my reputation or standing but so I could try to forget she was my daughter, that she had ever come to live with me and had grown up before my eyes" (98).

Hata's humanitarian and normalization work to protect Sunny from deviant, "disgraceful" life both in Korea and the U.S., firmly grounded upon his belief in the superiority of the American liberal way of life, develops into a patriarchal, classist, and racist biopolitical regulation and control of her racialized, gendered, and sexual body according to the white American or Asian American order of life. When Hata drives to The Orchids, a "never fully developed" neighborhood with "lower-income housing units" to meet Sunny who is known to be staying in a "derelict" house owned by a drug criminal Jimmi Gizzi (98-99), he encounters "'mixed' gatherings" of partygoers of color, from black and Puerto Rican, "a rare sight in Bedley Run," as he presumes and compares it

with his white former girlfriend's country club (98-99). He peeps into the room where he finds Sunny in a sexual activity with two African American men (116). Thinking that he has witnessed the sexual pleasure of Sunny, "laughing...maniacally," and concludes it as a sexual deviance, he leaves the scene. However, the remark, "his blood already trying to forget, growing cold," as well as his voyeuristic gaze, reveals racial and sexual anxiety over the sight of an Asian woman engaging in what he perceives miscegenation and confounds his position as an adoptive father (116).

What makes this scene even more troubling is Hata's paralleling of the high-crime area and house of an underdeveloped neighborhood in the U.S. inhabited by low-income people of color with squalid red-light districts and comfort houses in Asia. Looking at a handful of women surrounded by many "colored" men in the Gizzy house reminds him of prostitutes in Japan, "the women who sat on stools outside certain alley shops of [his] native seaside town, their faces painted the colors of crimson and ash, languorous popular songs filtering out beneath the lanterned eaves of their tiny 'houses'" (102). He recalls the Korean "comfort girl" she met in Singapore while "loitering in the shadows of a party house in America, peering into private rooms" (113). In his liberal middle-class Asian American man's mind, working-class women and men of African and Latin American descent in a high-crime area of the U.S. resemble prostitutes, "comfort women," and Japanese men and soldiers in Asia, which criminalizes low-income people of color and orientalizes Asians.

A similar transference of the Asian into the disenfranchised American racial minority also occurs in Hata's relationship with Sunny. While his decision for adoption was originally irrelevant to K as he preferred a Japanese female baby than a Korean girl,

Sunny's character, being a Korean girl and her "willfulness," which appeared on the early stage of their relationship and often echoed K's defiant words, seems to have unconsciously reminded Hata of K. As Hata's former and late white girlfriend Mary Burns once comments in the novel, "[Y]ou act almost guilty, as if [Sunny]'s someone you hurt once, or betrayed, and now you're obliged to do whatever she wishes" (60), his relationship with K has been transferred to that with Sunny. His wish for Sunny's success is therefore mediated by his wish for redemption for K. Recalling the indigenous "fallen women" sexually servicing Japanese imperial soldiers he encountered in Southeast Asia, Hata has once tried to warn Sunny of "what could happen to young women who strayed from the security of their families, how they would inevitably descend to the lowest level of human society and be forced to sell every part of themselves, in mind and flesh and spirit" (144). With his androcentric orientalist notion of Asian women as sexually promiscuous prostitutes (including Sunny's birth mother) or (literal or potential) sexual victims (including K), which is projected to Sunny or Sunny's presence with two black men evokes in him, Hata strives to contain Sunny's sexuality. In Hata's orientalizing of low-income American people of color, the high-risk neighborhood in the U.S. is imagined as a toxic, sexual-crime-infested, liberally segregated space, from which one should be safely distanced and a law-abiding, middle-class, "good" liberal (Asian) American man like Hata should rescue innocent women of color. This blatant sexism, racism, and classism, though never openly blurted in the "post-racial," politically-correct liberal society Hata and Sunny belong to, is to be redressed later in the novel with what I call Hata's "re-education," and yet, "it [is] the moment's picture of" his racism, classism, sexism, and orientalism "that linger[s] with" the reader in the meantime (146).

Hata's biopolitical regulation of Sunny's body culminates when he forces her into an aggressive full-term abortion, violating her human right to reproductive freedom, which eventually makes Sunny disappear and disconnect with him for fourteen years and is not revealed until the end of the novel. To press the unwilling doctor, Hata tells him a stereotypical story of teen pregnancy and drug abuse to appeal to the biopolitical order he assumes he shares with the doctor, revealing to the reader his racist, classist, and sexist undertones:

“I tell you she cannot have it. There are many unhappy reasons. She barely finished high school last spring and doesn't have a job. The father is somewhere in Washington Heights, and he has practically abandoned her. He is a long-time drug addict besides. I'm afraid she has also begun taking the drugs with him. You will know there's a chance the fetus may have grave injuries as a result, if not certain mental deficiencies.” (342)

Lee depicts the doctor's protest, “I have done them this late but not in this country. There are different standards” (343), but by showing his eventual consent, making it an exception, he subverts the normative American ethical superiority. Hata not just succeeds to persuade the doctor, but also assists the surgery in place of a nurse, demonstrating his complicity again in the American bio/necropolitical operation, resonating his complicity in K's death and her aborted fetus (which I will come back to soon).

Lee further intervenes in the normative transnational adoption relation in the U.S. between the giver and the recipient, the American parent(s)/country and the non-Western child/country, founded upon the U.S. geopolitical power and the discourses of U.S. benevolence and economic, cultural, and moral superiority, by shifting the relation. In the

novel, Sunny's challenge to Hata reframes the refugee/adoptee from the powerless Third World victim in need of Western salvation and recipient of the gift of freedom and opportunity into a giver, however exposed to exploitation: "[Y]ou've made it so everyone owes something to you. You give these gifts out.... You burden with your generosity.... I never needed you. I don't know why, but you needed me. But it was never the other way" (95-96). Then what is the orphan/adoptee/refugee giving to her adoptive parent and country? What did and does Hata need from her when he decided to adopt her and after adoption? What is known to him and unknown to him? Recalling the past when he first met Sunny, Hata narrates how he wished to make a family "one that would soon be well reputed and happily known, the Hatas of Bedley Run," having "a ready, natural affinity, and that [his] colleagues and associates and neighbors, though know her to be adopted, would have little trouble quickly accepting our being of a single kind and blood" (204). Given that he originally wanted a Japanese female baby and then settled down with a Korean girl, to form a racial "affinity" for social affirmation of his supposed-to-be relatively normative family. It was from the outset Hata's need and desire, sometimes unbeknownst to him, to avoid a racial isolation, secure his position as a head of a family and a racial minority, make his bachelorship less queer, and therefore fit in his beloved, white-dominant, family-oriented suburb, that not only actualized the adoption but also used his adoptive daughter to meet and fulfill that need and desire, aside from his altruistic motives and sense of civil duty. Therefore, contrary to Hata's claim about the gift he gave to Sunny to "live with [him] in comfort" (128), it was she who is brought to "comfort" him and the U.S. humanitarian empire, a role which she defiantly rejects. She rather disturbs and discomforts Hata's and America's transnational multiculturalism with

her willfulness not to succumb to the U.S. biopolitical order and then achieves her independence in her own terms and ways.

Nevertheless, the author's objective is not to establish or affirm Hata's exemplary American identity in Bedley Run, symbolized by his immaculate, "immensely beautiful" house (16), or write a *Bildungsroman*, but rather to undo or deconstruct it. Hata confesses early in the novel "this happy blend of familiarity and homeyness and what must be belonging, is strangely beginning to disturb me" (21). Through the course of the novel, the certainty of Hata's identity and status in Bedley Run, which he previously deemed a "triumph[]" or success he had strived to achieve for his life (5), is gradually destabilized and shattered as he is caught by his unresolved past in the retired "twilight" phase of his life and begins to be disillusioned about his "gesture life." Such an identity, Hata realizes it, can be constituted only by properly containing and forgetting what he has lost to maintain his fantasy, the troubling memories of his past relationships with others, especially with K and Sunny, which would never be possible. Walking through the flashback memories of Hata's past and revisiting the scenes of his crimes and guilt in both Asia and the U.S. that keep asserting their presence in Hata's seemingly concern-free post-Cold War American life, generating a temporal, spatial, and emotional tension and suspension between the narratives, he is finally able to come to terms with the past and admit his failures, albeit not without limitations.

Toward a Decolonized Transnational and Interracial Representation and Coalition

Then, through his "too-late-in-coming, too-late-in-life" spiritual awakening (220), to what exactly has Hata been re-educated? If he is finally able to confront injustice and

his own complicity, what does he do to redress it? Does he confess his guilt, seek full acknowledgment, make an apology, and make reparations for victims, like “comfort women” survivors have demanded? How can one, especially as a former Japanese soldier in the Asia-Pacific War and an Asian American diasporic subject, make proper amends without Americanizing “comfort women” and the Pacific War that would “uphold American imperialism and its myth of liberation and rehabilitation” (Yoneyama, “Traveling” 61)? What does the author try to get at or suggest through Hata’s remembrance and reeducation? Recalling how young he was at the time of war, old Hata narrates, “I bring this up not to excuse myself or to try to mitigate my actions or to confess. Rather, I mean it to stand simply as a fact” (296). Composed of Hata’s recollection of fragments of his past in his present life as the first-person narrator, Lee’s novel, which may as well work as Hata’s memoir as mentioned above, aims at documenting or representing “facts” of the past events, which Hata has involved in, seen, and heard as an insider, rather than justifying or confessing his guilt seeking for atonement. Besides, as Belina Kong rightfully points out, the novel “is not a ‘comfort woman book’” (3) proper in that the fictional “comfort women” are mostly unindividuated and only distantly observed from the narrator even when he examines their bodies, except K. It is rather about “comfort women,” Japanese imperial soldiers in the Asia-Pacific War, and the rest of us, especially the novel’s American and global readership, about how “their” lives are related to “our” lives, and how “we,” as the imagined community of America, and I, as an individual reader of the novel, make(s) relations with them involved in the representation and consumption of the represented others in Asia, as well as in the U.S. Lee’s novel, or Hata’s remembrance, therefore

neither aims to represent or recover “comfort women” and their past as an objective reality or a transparent “truth,” nor seeks for a closure through an apology or reparation. *A Gesture Life* instead, through its depiction of Hata’s multiple failures of representations and his attempt to redress such failures in his much later years of life, shows the interplay and interdependence of the politics of representation and the sovereign bio/necropower: how the former can enhance or challenge the latter and the latter’s logics and ideologies can mediate, guide, or even blind the former. In doing so, the novel tries to redress the hegemonic nationalist modes of representation of those considered displaced and victimized like “comfort women” and those deemed evil and criminal to intervene in the political, legal, and cultural formation of the others by “us” upon existing social logics and human relations coded from above. In other words, it seeks to disclose and question “our” normative modes of political and epistemological relations and representations in order to call for alternative transnational and interracial relations for more democratic and just representations, or vice versa. Having said that, *A Gesture Life*, however, does not fulfill or complete the task within the novel and leaves justice as a possibility and hope that has yet to come.

In the matter of representation, whether political or descriptive, what would be more important than who speaks for whom *per se*, at least in the system of representative democracy, is *how* one speaks for herself or others. As Spivak poignantly questions the agency of the gendered subaltern and challenges the possibility of appropriation of her voice and silence, one cannot always speak for oneself in his or her best interest, especially under duress. As for Korean “comfort women,” it has been paid attention that some of the women’s private or public testimonies have become formulated, “serving up

tales of horrific suffering and cathartic drama for the visitors' edification" (Kong 13).⁴⁰

My position, and Lee's too, considering his failed attempt to write a "comfort woman" book, is not to undervalue the "comfort women" survivors' testimonies, which are invaluable without question. It rather attempts to recognize the high-risked task of representation itself, whether self-representation or not, and focus on the pitfalls in our normative representation process, in order to propose not the most adequate representation, but a possible way to reach that end, which would eventually require radical changes in our socioeconomic relations and juridico-political structures but can only be initiated by changing our mind about us and them, society, and "humanity."

In the novel, two different modes of representation are critiqued in its representations of a former Imperial Japanese Army officer, "comfort women," military prostitutes, a Korean American mixed-race orphan/adoptee, and other ethnic minority groups in the U.S. One is to uncritically relate and identify with others and represent them without his or her own privileged subject-position and power relations between the representing and the represented, at the risk of effacing their unreducible gap and the latter' subjectivity, replacing it with the former's. For instance, Hata's identification with, and representation of, K and Sunny, which turns them into objects of his humanitarian salvation and victims who cannot speak for themselves while overriding their voices resisting his help, which Spivak finds is typical of the Western imperialist representation of the subaltern in India. The other problematic mode of representation is to represent the others by othering them from us, viewing or treating an individual or a group of people as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself and us, which Edward Said critiques characterizes the hegemonic Western representation of the non-West in *Orientalism*. This

differentiation often leads to inferiorizing and/or demonizing the others as opposed to one's superiority, based on socially imagined material evidence and feeding that imagination. In the novel, the Japanese imperial soldiers' treatment of the Korean and other nations' "comfort women" as sexual service workers or slaves and of other vulnerable lives as consumable bodies for the Emperor is represented as a result of the Japanese empire's patriarchal, colonialist, and imperialist representation of the subjects of its colonies, as different from the Japanese, which has blinded them to see their own subsumed, vulnerable, and consumable lives, ending up "feeding [them]selves and one another to all-consuming engines of war" (299). It goes without question that the seemingly opposite modes of representation both serve to make the others into the "Other," premised upon and replicating our unquestioned superior position over them and fixing our and their positions in the epistemological and political relations. In these relations, the others are trapped within the binary frame of victimology and voluntarism, and their lives are determined whether worthy of living or not, based on our concept or standard of "humanity," which has never been identical or transparent across time and space and changed to serve historically specific societal needs accordingly. This is exactly what makes it possible for Hata to view K and other coerced comfort women as victims to be saved and the subjugated native women in Southeast Asia and the dispossessed men of color in the U.S. as "fallen" or dangerous criminals to stay away or undeserving of life.

Moving beyond this double bind of representation of "comfort women," Lee further attends to the continent (trans)national bio/necropolitics deployed by the Japanese empire and the U.S. empire. In the post-WWII U.S. political social memory, the

former has been represented as an exceptionally totalitarian, inhumane, and “unjust” one while the latter as an exceptionally democratic, humanitarian, and “just” one, which has also been transnationally transported under the so-called “victor’s justice.” Korean and other Asian “comfort women” from the former Japanese colonies may have been recalled to ideologically serve the American version of justice, as shown in the photographed images of the women taken with soldiers of the Allies and “rescued” by them at the end of the war. However, turning to the continuity between the two empires is not to, and must not, conflate their particular historical differences or reduce the extraordinary atrocities of Japanese imperialist wars and colonial practices. It is rather to recognize the structural continuation of injustice, albeit at different levels and intensities, sanctioned, committed, and nurtured by exceptional bio/necropolitical sovereign regimes and underscore its exemplarity, or what Hannah Arendt phrases as the “banality of evil” in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, which the exceptionalization or singularization of the comfort system may inadvertently downplay. Such an emphasis on unparalleled exceptionality of the comfort system as an effect of Japanese war atrocities, invested too much in proving difference between us and them and affirming our moral superiority over the others, might fail to redress the injustice and crimes in full scale or see the possibility of their repetition in a variety of forms within and across a national territory, conveniently closing the case and unthinking our own possible complicity and responsibility, however remote it may appear, especially in our representations of “comfort women,” WWII, and the post-WWII U.S. geopolitics and biopolitics.

Recalling his “unexpected[ly] awkward[ly]” encounter with a fellow American-born Japanese man at a business conference when he was much younger, Hata states, “I

remember all this now because it seems to me that truer feeling of the time was somehow that uncomfortable one, rather than the collegial atmosphere of the convention...and it makes me now consider my many good years here in Bedley Run in a slightly different light" (21). Revisiting his past "uncomfortable" memories and feelings with K, Sunny, and many others, Hata, unlike Eichmann, begins to realize, "I see now, I was in fact a critical part of events" (299). Rather than making a formal apology of his guilt to redress the past, though, Hata instead turns to making some amends as if to compensate his past inaction with his present action. He acts out to rehabilitate his failed relationship with Sunny and rebuild it once again not for anyone's or societal need, or "duty and responsibility," but for "something like love" (212). When it is known to him that she has moved to a working-class neighborhood near Bedley Run, Hata goes to meet her and finds her with her five-year-old son named Thomas. Spending some time with him, he feels strong feelings for the boy. Lee shows Hata's affirmation of Sunny's present life as a single working mother of a black boy and revised, love-based relationship with Sunny and Thomas in a working-class neighborhood, which he feels proud and grateful, and his renewed relationship with his South Asian American friend Renny Banerjee, which he finds are not "fraught and weighted with 'value'" (38) defined by society. Attending Mrs. Hickey's funeral, Hata declares to himself that he would stop being a "witness":

"And I think that like Mr. Hickey, I can hardly bear to be a witness anymore. I couldn't watch for long as his wife's casket was slowly cranked down into the earth, the ending-ness and rank finality brutally apparent, the nothing-more of that lowering.... It wasn't only poor Anne Hickey I felt going down, but her husband, and Patrick, and the

mourners...and then myself as well, who is afraid not of death but of the death of yet another living chance through whom I might reconsider, and duly reckon.” (332)

With Hata's sudden resort to love for humanity and life-saving, not based on the societal orders or values of life, which he demonstrates with his heroic acts of saving Thomas and Renny from drowning at sea and helping Mr. Hickey to get Patrick a transplant surgery, Lee seems to suggest Hata's transformation from a man of socially or nationally ordained duty and responsibility to a man of love, unbound or unlimited by social norms and contracts. In the novel, with Hata's disidentification with the dominant nationalist and imperialist state ideologies of Imperial Japan and the Cold War America, unexploitive and undiscriminating transnational, cross-racial understanding and solidarity becomes possible. This attempt at revision, though, only remains to be potential at best in that Hata's affection for a little black boy cannot sufficiently redress his racism and classism against disenfranchised black men and so cannot show that his approval of Sunny's responsible and respectable single motherhood in the U.S. cannot cancel out his sexism against the "fallen" women in Asia. It is only vaguely hinted that Hata's close relationship with Thomas will re-educate Hata's racial prejudice against black American men in the future as he observes the boy's peculiar racialized behaviors. Hata has once said, "the idea entreats me once more, to wonder if something like love is forever victorious, truly conquering all, or if there are those who, like me, remain somehow whole and sovereign, still live unvanquished" (216). Now that he is bound by love with Sunny and Thomas, and some other friends of his, Hata seems to appear to find his home without his much-praised house. And yet, as the prophetic commercial slogan he earlier

has encountered at a shopping mall, "*Luv Conquers All*," next to a contemporary-looking portrait of Jesus," ominously celebrates and warns of what love can do and what can be done in the name of love.

Unlike Sunny and other people in the U.S., for whom Hata has tried to redress his guilt and provided reparations and gifts unasked for, it is K and other Asian "comfort women" who remain thoroughly unredressed in the novel. Apart from K's brave action, which contrasts with Hata's inaction, the novel leaves the "truth" about K eclipsed in the fight between Hata and Ono over K's body and its "truth." Earlier on, Hata has shown his disbelief in K's narrative of the forced and tricked conscription: "I could not quite accept the whole truth of it. But it was more perhaps that I had reached the limits of my conception, than thinking there was something in her story to doubt" (250). This doubt about her story returns though at the end of Hata's memory of K. When Hata confronts Ono demanding to set K free from the comfort system, Ono divulges that K was pregnant even before being raped by the commander and himself and scolds Hata for his naïveté and selfishness for keeping K for his own "private uses and pleasures, rather than the larger concerns." Ono preaches his legitimate use of K, who possesses a "special and high character," for an eugenic purpose to serve as a "rare vessel of us [the Emperor]" for "a Pan-Asian prosperity as captained by our people" (268). Hata disbelieves Ono's story about K's pregnancy and lying because he has seen her menstruating, which Ono disclaims as her trick. When he is delivered back to the infirmary where K is confined after his failed argument and physical assault on Ono, Hata asks about her pregnancy, doubting her, "Are you lying to me, K?" and demanding to examine her body to find out the truth. To this, K denies persistently and says, "No.... There's nothing in me. There

can't be. If there is, then God forgive me for what I'll do" (294). However, when Hata arrives at the site of K's murder/suicide belatedly, what he finds is only "remains" of her mutilated body and a fetus in a perfect form:

"Yet I could not smell or hear or see as I did my medic's work. I could not feel my hands as they gathered, nor could I feel the weight of such remains. And I could not sense that other, tiny, elfin form I eventually discovered, miraculously whole, I could not see the figured legs and feet, the utter, blessed digitation of the hands. Nor could I see the face, the perfect cheek and brow. Its pristine sleep still unbroken, undisturbed. And I could not know what I was doing, or remember any part." (305)

Between seeing and not seeing in Hata's irrational state of mind, the truth of K's pregnancy and of her trustfulness remains unresolved or rather, if anything, betrays K's words. As Belinda Kong trustfully points out, "Lee leaves open the possibility that even the comfort woman may not be a trustful witness to herself... ultimate[ly] refus[ing] to let her voice access any truth, even concerning her own body, beyond Hata's" (9). This undermines what K has constituted through her powerful voices and actions in the novel, given her previous denial, whether from her childish ignorance, psychic trauma, or trick, destabilizing her credibility. The ambiguity of this scene also serves the reader as Hata's failure as a witness, who can neither testify the ineffable violence onto the "comfort woman" nor deliver the truth of K properly. Hata's, or perhaps Lee's, troubling focalization in this final scene of K's death on the fetus, not on her dismembered body, allegorizes the impossibility to recover the truth of "comfort women" and what he could

do “as a medic” is only to salvage what remains to him, and to us, as material evidence may only shadow the woman’s subjectivity once more.

The novel does not attempt to appease or sublimate the women’s unresolved *han*—a Korean feeling of unresolved resentment against structural injustices suffered often by women. It instead leaves “comfort women” as unrepresentable or inaccessible, at least to Hata, by turning K into a specter that haunts Hata’s psyche and house, allegorized as America. Although it is only one chapter of the novel where K’s specter creeps into the text, it is alluded that K has appeared to him from time to time, often evoked by the “black silken flag” he brought from the war. It is also when Hata’s consistent realist mode of representation, as well as his sense and perspective of his selfhood, is destabilized, and his language falters with confounded tenses and personal pronouns: “The sight of her shook me, I saw her more clearly than I ever had before, as I was not dreaming or conjuring but simply reacquainting myself with her, as I might any friend of my youth. And so she visited me” (285-286). He also narrates that the moment he thinks “K has finally come back for me” is when he thinks he “feel[s] at home” (286), and although he is “almost sure she [is] a spectral body or ghost,” he also knows that she is “absolute, unquestionably real, a once-personhood come wholly into being” (286). They soon begin their “demure[.]” conversation about what they talked about in the war, about their imagined future of traveling somewhere other than the site of violence. K then urges him to go to Shanghai, Kyoto, and Seoul with her. To Hata’s protest, “we have been welcomed as warmly as anyone can expect. Everything is in delicate harmony,” K responds, “I cannot die here. I cannot die here. And sometimes, sir, I so wish to” (287). He is initially confused by her reply but soon interprets that “I thought she was saying

this wouldn't be a suitable place for her to pass over to the next life. But then I realized she meant that it wouldn't be possible, as if this house were some penultimate trap of living, sustaining her beyond the pale" (287). Here, K's insistent rejection of the U.S. and directing Hata to Asia defiantly delegitimizes the U.S. as the proper site of redress or justice for "comfort women." Hata's last words to her, "I want you to live with me forever," seem to serve his ethical remembering of her and his crime, but chillingly echoes his words delivered to her earlier in the war. Likewise, to Hata, K's ghost still looks "chaste to [him], almost sisterly, alabastrine," which again mirrors his admiration of her beauty and sanctification of her back in Southeast Asia (288), revealing the limit of his reeducation and making his interpretation of K's words unreliable. Hata's unrepresentability of K animates what Rey Chow has called "the familiar masculine habit of using women as a symbol (from *within* representation) for the meanings of excess, exoticism, or even mysticism (that are *beyond* representation)" (40).

Lee's spectralization of K has been read by some critics as a subversive, albeit limited, agency allowing the most extremely exploited woman to not only haunt Hata but also to "rupture... the novel's realist commitment" and historiography, suggesting her uncontainability within Hata's narrative as Christopher Lee interprets (104). This "gothicizing" has been though criticized by Kong for "encipher[ing] the Asian subject as inexorably other to Asian America" and historicizing the figure when "comfort women" survivors were actively speaking and making their powerful presence demanding redress in the late 1990s, the time of the novel's publication (20). These opposing arguments are both convincing and have a point, and I agree with Kong that Lee's poststructuralist illustration of Hata's constant slippage between the "comfort women" as an epistemic

object and the women as historical beings may limit “justice” to the realm of descriptive representation (20). Nonetheless, I would like to turn to the gap of power and status between the Korean (comfort) women then and now, belonging to different national and international historical eras and material and social conditions. I think that attending to the “comfort women” of the past, their predicaments then, and the particular sites of violence is as significant as listening to the survivors’ voices, memories, and ongoing pains, which are also fading into history as most of the survivors have passed away, to redress the injustices inflicted by the sexual slavery system then and by the system of silence and denial now, which cannot be closed or healed with the gestures of recovery, rehabilitation, reparation, and reconciliation. K’s afterlife in the novel holds even a stronger presence in the 2010s as most of the survivors have passed away and their voices also fading into history. Besides, albeit in her ghostly form, K cannot be simply reduced to “victimized ghostliness” (Kong 21) for it is only K, not Hata or no one else in the novel, who is the subject of knowledge, ethics, and justice, refusing Hata’s unconscious wish to “pass over to the next life.” Hata’s inability or inadequacy to represent K, which otherwise would have been exorbitant for a former Japanese imperial soldier, ironically leaves us, the readers, the failed and tough task to take over. What resonates most in this scene is the powerful presence and voice of K’s specter that has shaken, disoriented, and discomfited him surrounded by the comforts of his life and Hata’s inability to win her: “I keep winning her over with hardly an argument, though each time an ill feeling comes over me, the soiling, resident sickness you develop when you have never in your life been caught at something wrong, when you have never once been discovered” (288).

Hata has long denied his guilt not only about K and Sunny but also about the war and his seemingly perfect middle-class life itself—arguing that he never used his pistol to shoot anyone or only “did [his] medic’s work” at the site of K’s death and his fellow soldiers’ brutal crime (305)—by simply doing his military and civil duty and making the life-consuming machines of two empires work, while containing or avoiding “uncomfortable feeling[s].” However, remembering the day of Sunny’s abortion at the end of the novel, old Hata is eventually able to confess to his crime and guilt not just as a witness, but also as a participant, assisting the bio/necropolitical procedures of killing, violating, exploiting, and colonizing others’ lives in the name of saving ours in Asia and the U.S.:

“The doctor was right about my presence and participation. For what I saw that evening at the clinic endures, remaining unaltered, preserved. And if in my life I’ve witnessed the most terrible of things, if I’ve seen what no decent being should ever look upon and have to hold in close remembrance, perhaps it means I should be left to the cold device of history, my likeness festooning the rapiers of every house and town and district of man. But it is not. And I do not live in broad infamy, nor hid from righteous pursuers or seekers of the truth. I do not mask my face or screen my doings of each day. I have not yet been banished from this earth. And though nearly every soul I’ve closely known has come to some dread or grave misfortune, I instead persist, with warmth and privilege accruing to me unabated, ever securing my good station here, the last place I will belong.” (345-346)

With Hata's testimony and confession, Lee shows how ethnic, racial, class, or gendered minorities can be violated and exploited not just by the sovereign states but also by themselves in their strong allegiance with the nationalist ideologies, abusing their subject-position with more power than others and blinded of their shared oppressed position. Hata's belated admission of his crimes leads him to self-punish for his unprosecuted crime, which would be to give up the "warmth and privilege" he has enjoyed and decided on voluntary unbelonging.

The novel ends with Hata's narration of his plans to sell his house, buy his medical store and building back, transfer its legal title to his adoptive daughter, and leave Bedley Run to travel "to the south and west and maybe farther still, across the oceans, to land on former shores" (356), signaling the long-planned travel with K. The novel ends with Hata's beginning of his journey: "But I think it won't be any kind of pilgrimage. I won't be seeking out my destiny or fate. I won't attempt to find comfort in the visage of a creator or the forgiving dead. Let me simply bear my flesh, and blood, and bones. I will fly a flag.... I will circle around and arrive again. Come almost home" (365). This ending of the novel, as many have noted, is no less ambiguous and confusing than other issues left unresolved in the novel, including Hata's re-education itself, leaving no justice sufficiently achieved—none for K—but only "a private epiphany" without any meaningful political or social change (Kong 8) within the novel, resisting a conclusion or a closure and highlighting impossibility of representation. The traveling companionship between Hata and K is though worthy of attention as Hata's gradual feeling of displacement and eventual embrace of unbelonging and homelessness turns him from a diasporic Japanese American nationalist citizen into a cosmopolitan nomad, while K's

forced statelessness and death makes her into a spectral or invisible refugee who cannot even afford a tomb or refuge. With such an unusual companionship, the author seems to suggest a possible way to make change and bring justice by “flying a flag,”—neither the rising sun flag or the American flag, but “the black flag,” a warning sign of a “contagion” and death (224) and the sign of K’s exploitation and death—around the world, including Korea and Japan, all accompanied by K. In doing so, *A Gesture Life*, like other literary texts examined in the previous chapters, locates the hope or possibility for a different, decolonized future within minor transnational solidarity or what Susa Koshy calls “minority cosmopolitanism” that “offer[s] alternative visions of cross-cultural exchange and transnational affiliation” (“Minority” 594), among denationalized minority subjects beyond traditional west-east, major-minor, and center-periphery binaries and nation-state bounds. This move for alternative democratic cosmopolitan forms of the coalition does not itself guarantee anything and the “capacities for doing so have not yet arrived,” as Timothy Brennan has duly warned in his critique of cosmopolitanism as the internationalization of localism concealing its local origins (42). Yet it may still serve as a first step towards “remain[ing] somehow whole and sovereign, still liv[ing] unvanquished” by (trans)national bio/necropower and redressing the “comfort women” injustice from below.

Notes

¹ The U.S.O.'s official webpage introduces itself as "a nonprofit, charitable corporation chartered by Congress that relies on donations from individuals, organizations and corporations to support its programs" designed to support America's military service members. They currently have six offices located in Korea. As Ji-yeon Yuh in her ground-breaking study on Korean military brides states, the objective of the intercultural education program "is not only to prepare the women for life in America, but also to prepare them for the realities of an intercultural marriage." However, such preparatory programs are offered only for Korean wives not for the American husbands (71).

² The mixed-race children of camptowns, abandoned by their fathers and raised by Korean mothers, may have been technically conferred Korean citizenship at birth before 1997, based on paragraph 3 of article 2 of the Korean Nationality Act of 1948 that granted citizenship to those whose father was unknown or without nationality and whose mother is Korean. However, since the establishment of the family law of 1957 and the implementation of the family registry system (*hojuje*), Korean nationality was exercised in reality through *hojŏk*, a patrilineal family register, which allowed only a Korean male to be the household head, those children without a Korean father could not be officially registered as Koreans.

³ Orphans born in Korea were rendered virtually or temporarily stateless in that they were technically Korean nationals at birth, based on paragraph 4 of article 2 of Korean Nationality Act of 1948, but when they were not registered in a family register (*hojŏk*).

Korean orphans could create their own family register, composed of only herself or himself, but until then, they were temporarily. Besides, many lived without a family register in the shadows of society. For more information, see Kim Aram's historical research on mixed-race Koreans and their international adoption in the 1950s.

⁴ Schmitt and Benjamin have both noted the inherent violence in law, but taken distinct approaches to it. For instance, Schmitt in *Political Theology* as a conservative Nazi jurist and political theorist is terrified by the chaos of lawlessness in his discussion of the state of emergency or exception. Benjamin, on the other hand, in "Critique of Violence" critiques the sovereign exception or violence, but finds the possibility of political change and justice in the instable dynamics of law-preserving violence and law-founding violence, or constituted power and constituting power. To elaborate the state of exception, Agamben borrows from Schmitt's insights on the state of exception as a new *nomos* of modern liberal-democratic society and turns to Benjamin for his elaboration of a politics grounded on anarchic and messianic possibilities of the state of exception and human potentiality. For further discussion on Agamben's take on Benjamin and Schmitt, see, for example, David Pan's "Against Biopolitics: Walter Benjamin, Carl Schmitt, and Giorgio Agamben on Political Sovereignty and Symbolic Order."

⁵ The studies on law and the Asian race trace back much further to Lisa Lowe's *Immigration Acts*, Karen Shimakawa's *National Abjection*, and Mae Ngai's *Impossible Subjects*.

⁶ For the studies on the myth and ideology of American exceptionalism in relation to its foreign policy, see, for instance, Debora L. Madsen's *American Exceptionalism* and

Hilde E. Restad's "Old Paradigms in History Die Hard in Political Science: US Foreign Policy and American Exceptionalism."

⁷ See for instance Alan Nadel's *Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age*, Steven Belletto and Daniel Grausam's *American Literature and Culture in an Age of Cold War: A Critical Reassessment*, Jodi Kim's *Ends of Empire*, Alan P. Dobson and Steve Marsh's *US Foreign Policy Since 1945*.

⁸ Despite the U.S.'s commitment to domestic racial equality and reforms during the Cold War, scholars have addressed the limits of these policy changes for racial integration and multicultural society in its Cold War assertion of the U.S. universalism and political primacy, pointing out colorblind integration, continued racial division, repressive culture, normalization, and persistent white supremacy and racial discrimination. See for more information: Nikhil Pal Singh's *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy*, Mary Dudziak's *Cold War Civil Rights*, Christina Klein's *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961*, Steven Belletto and Daniel Grausam's *American Literature and Culture in an Age of Cold War: A Critical Reassessment*, Thomas Borstelmann's *The Cold War and the Color Line*.

⁹ The newspaper articles I consulted include the following: "Soldier's Trial Triggers New Anti-American Protest in Seoul," *Seattle Times*, 02/17/1993; "U.S. Soldier in Seoul Guilty of Murder," *Seattle Times*, 04/14/1993; "U.S. Soldier Given Life Term for Slaying," *Tulsa World*, 04/15/1993; "World in Brief South Korea GI Gets Life Term

in Slaying of Prostitute,” *Los Angeles Times*, 04/15/1993; “GI Sentenced in Korea,” *Newsday*, 04/15/1993; “In the World,” *The Sun*, 06/02/1993; “G.I. Gets 10 Years in S. Korea Prison,” *USA Today*, 10/23/1993.

¹⁰ This coding goes back to the 1950s and was predominant in the 1960s and 1970s in South Korean film and literature on U.S. military camptowns. See, for instance, Ch’oe Jōng-hi’s *Endless Romance* (kkūdōp nūn nangman), Shin Sang-ok’s *The Even Night* (akya) and *A Flower in Hell* (chiokhwa), Song Pyōng-su’s “Shorty Kim” (Ssyori Kim), Nam Jōng-hyōn’s “Land of Excrement” (punji), and Chōn Sūng-se’s “The Scream of a Yellow Dog” (hwanggu ūi pimyoŋg).

¹¹ The 104 special districts were exempt from the Prostitution Prevention Law of 1961, under the control of the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare, as well as by non-government organizations like the Korean American Friendship Society (KAFS) and the Special Tourism Association (N. Lee 118- 122). This law virtually allowed government-sanctioned prostitution catering to foreigners including U.S. soldiers, while officially prohibiting domestic prostitution.

¹² Henry Heller points out in *The Cold War and the New Imperialism* the ultimate neoimperialist interest of Washington throughout its support for decolonization of the Third World and participation in the Cold War, which was to ensure “free access to markets and investment opportunities worldwide [which] had been the bedrock of U.S. foreign policy since 1899 when Secretary of State William Hay proclaimed the Open Door Policy” (79).

¹³ Those women were officially called ‘*wianbu*’ (comfort women) by the Korean government while ‘*yanggongju*’ (Western princess) was the most commonly used among Koreans from the mid-1940s through the 1970s (N. Lee). However, the former is now exclusively used for Japanese military comfort women, the conscripted Korean female sex slaves for the Japanese army during World War II, and the latter is a pejorative term. To refer to the women who cater sexual services to U.S. servicemen stationing in South Korea around U.S. military bases, I use “camptown (military) prostitutes” and “camptown (military) sex workers” disproportionately throughout the chapter, translated from *kijich'on changyŏ* or *kijich'on sŏngnodongja*, now widely used in South Korea. I choose the term ‘prostitute’ to accentuate particularity of prostitution as a systemized, often forced gender-based crime and violence occurring in the context of debt bondage, especially originated from the *kongchang* system—state-organized licensed prostitution, i.e. a system of institutionalized violence—established during the Japanese colonial rule, and to address the violation of their human rights. I also use ‘sex worker’ to recognize extreme labor exploitation and the urgent need for reframing the women as a gendered, racialized, unskilled, unorganized, debt-bonded, migrant labor force. I sometimes use the term ‘*yanggongju*’ that most liberally and extensively encompasses camptown prostitutes, private military prostitutes, military brides, and interracial couples.

¹⁴ The only exception is the one-year “gap between withdrawal of U.S. combat forces in July 1949 and the war that came a year later,” but as Bruce Comings points out, “In reality they never left” as “American [military] advisers were all over...in the South” (*Korea's Place* 245).

¹⁵ The public or state interest in the camptown sex workers in the present moment has been sharply dropped since the turn of the century as the ninety percent of the population was replaced by Filipinas and Russians by 2004 (N. Lee 187; 211-214).

¹⁶ These gestures include that “America has never been an empire. We may be the only great power in history that had the chance, and refused...preferring greatness to power, and justice to glory” in George Bush’s words (qtd. in Ferguson 64) or that “Americans could never be imperialists, we were altruistically supporting Koreans until they could take wing on their own, so on and so forth” in Bruce Cumings’ words (Cumings 175).

¹⁷ For the concepts on metaphor and metonymy, see the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson’s “Two Aspects of Language and Two types of Disturbances,” which theorizes metaphor and metonymy in terms of the two poles of similarity and contiguity, and the follow-up work by Jacques Lacan and Paul de Man.

¹⁸ For the scholarship on representations of camptown prostitutes in the U.S., see Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi’s *Dangerous Women*, Ji-Yeon Yuh’s *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown*, Grace M. Cho’s *Haunting the Korean Diaspora*, Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon’s *Over There*, and Sealing Cheng’s *On the Move for Love*. As for representations of Korean Amerasians in the aftermath of the Korean War, see Christina Klein’s *Cold War Orientalism* (2003), Eleana J. Kim’s *Adopted Territory*, Kristi Brian’s *Reframing Transracial Adoption*, Soojin Pate’s *From Orphan to Adoptee*, Arissa Oh’s *To Save the Children of Korea*, and Kim P. Nelson’s *Invisible Asians*.

¹⁹ According to Bruce Cumings in *Korea's Place in the Sun*, although the U.S. troops officially withdrew in July 1949, with the establishment of the First Republic of South Korea in 1948, “they never [fully] left” in actuality (245).

²⁰ Criminal jurisdiction provisions of the U.S.-South Korea SOFA signed in 1966 under the Mutual Defense Treaty and revised twice in 1991 and 2001 apply to crimes committed by USFK servicemen in South Korea. Before the first revision, offenses such as murder and sex crimes committed by USFK personnel against Korean civilians were tried in American military courts-martial, not in Korean civilian courts. The Korean public have been demanding “a more equitable share [of] sovereign prerogative” on criminal, civil, and environmental jurisdiction (Koo 108).

²¹ Regarding the role of the Vietnam War in South Korea's economic “miracle,” see, for instance, Bruce Cumings' *Korea's Place in the Sun*, Jinwung Kim's *A History of Korea: From “Land of the Mourning Calm” to States in Conflict*; and Charles K. Armstrong's “America's Korea and Korea's Vietnam.”

²² See the work of Korean adoption scholars on the cultural representations of Korean adoptees in the U.S., including Christina Klein's *Cold War Orientalism* (2003), David Eng's *The Feeling of Kinship* (2010), Eleana J. Kim's *Adopted Territory*, Kristi Brian's *Reframing Transracial Adoption*, Soojin Pate's *From Orphan to Adoptee*, Arissa Oh's *To Save the Children of Korea*, and Kim P. Nelson's *Invisible Asians*.

²³ See Tobias Hübinette's “From Orphan Trains to Babylifts,” Eleana J. Kim's *Adopted Territory*, Oh's *To Save the Children of Korea*.

²⁴ The Park Chung Hee administration implemented adoption programs to help family preservation and encourage domestic adoption, but to a little avail, and the 1970s and 1980s became the heyday of Korean transnational adoption (E.J. Kim, *Adopted* 73-75). More corroborated efforts and policy measures to promote domestic placements were made and enforced with the revised Special Adoption Law of 2012 (“History of Adoption in Korea”).

²⁵ The family-head system, widely used as an official record verifying one’s identity in Korea for social, administrative, or legal purposes, had long been criticized for its institutional gender discrimination and colonial legacy and was declared unconstitutional and abolished in 2008 (Yang 45-59).

²⁶ Orphan *hochŏk* is an independent family registry with a single child without any parent, which officially confirms his or her orphan status and requirement for adoption in South Korea. It was created to conform to U.S. immigration and adoption law and sometimes falsified for children already registered in a family registry to facilitate their adoption placement.

²⁷ In the lack of sustainable child welfare programs or policies, Korean orphanages in the 50s through the 80s functioned as a surrogate day care or a temporary foster home for many impoverished families with a plan to take the child(ren) back eventually.

²⁸ For a scholarly body of work that situates Korean transnational adoption within U.S. Cold War foreign policy in Asia employing adoptees as a buffer against the charges of U.S. imperialist expansion and an ideological bearer of national democratic and moral exceptionalism, see Hübinette’s “Orphan Trains to Babylifts” (2006), David Eng’s *The*

Feeling of Kinship (2010), , Eleana Kim's *Adopted Territory* (2010), Soojin Pate's *From Orphan to Adoptee* (2014), and Arissa Oh's *To Save the Children of Korea* (2015).

²⁹ See also Soojin Pate's *From Orphan to Adoptee: U.S. Empire and Genealogies of Korean Adoption*.

³⁰ For the studies on the exceptional racialized position of Asian Americans at once interior and exterior to national, juridical, economic, and social structures of belonging, see, for instance, David Palumbo-Liu's *Asian/American*, Mae M. Ngai's *Impossible Subjects*, Karen Shimakawa's *National Abjection*, Joshua Takano Chambers-Letson's *A Race So Different*, and Rachel C. Lee's *The Exquisite Corpse of Asian America*.

³¹ The Nationality Law of South Korea, which defines South Korean citizens, traditionally did not allow for dual or multiple citizenship after the age of 21. However, with the 2010 amendment, ethnic Korean adult adoptees, along with foreigners of exceptional talent or with an important contribution to South Korea, are exceptionally entitled to hold Korean citizenship without giving up their citizenship in their adoptive country.

³² See David L. Eng's and Shinhee Han's "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia" and Anne Anlin Cheng's *The Melancholy of Race*.

³³ Raymond Williams coined the phrase, "structures of feeling," or "structures of *experience*," to refer to sets of "affective elements of consciousness and relationships" of the lived and felt social and material experiences that are internally "at once interlocking and in tension" (132). Williams brings in the concept to highlight the realm of social

experiences that cannot be reduced by, or exceed, the hegemonic ways of thinking or beliefs.

³⁴ For the history of human rights, see, for instance, Micheline R. Ishay's *The History of Human Rights*, Michael Barnett's *Empire of Humanity*, and Susan Koshy's "From Cold War to Trade War: Neocolonialism and Human Rights."

³⁵ The Cold War origin of Asian model minority is discussed, for instance, in Robert G. Lee's *Orientalism: Asian American in Popular Culture* and Thomas Ambrosio's *Ethnic Identity Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy*.

³⁶ Although "comfort women" is now the most well-known and widely-used term to refer to the women who served as sexual slaves for the Imperial Japanese Army during the Pacific War, there has been a controversy over the terminology. "Comfort women" is a direct translation of the Japanese *ianfu* and the Korean *wianbu*, as a euphemism for military prostitutes or camp followers (*chonggun wianbu*), persistently used by the Japanese government to whitewash its crime of coerced sexual slavery. These women have been also commonly called in Korea and Japan "Women's Volunteer Labor Corps" (*joshi rōdō teishintai* in Japanese and *yōja kullo chōngsindae* in Korean), which is also inadequate as only a portion of the women's labor group, coercibly mobilized to serve the Empire of Japan, were "selected" to be "comfort women."

³⁷ This summary of the comfort women redress movements in Korea, Japan, and the U.S. is based on the following scholarly work, aside from the aforementioned articles from the JAAAS: Yoshiaki Yoshimi's ground-breaking historical research, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*; Ueno Chizuko's

Nationalism and Gender and “The Politics of Memory: Nation, Individual, and Self”; Chunghee Sarah Soh’s “The Korean ‘Comfort Women’: Movement for Redress” and *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan*; Margaret D. Stetz and Bonnie B. C. Oh’s *Legacies of the Comfort Women of World War II*; Evelyn Goh’s *The Struggle for Order: Hegemony, Hierarchy, and Transition in Post-Cold War East Asia*; Bang-Soon L. Yoon’s “Imperial Japan’s Comfort Women from Korea: History & Politics of Silence-Breaking”; and Hee-Kang Kim’s “Should Feminism Transcend Nationalism? A Defense of Feminist Nationalism in South Korea”; Chungmoo Choi’s Guest Editor’s introduction”; and Laura Hein’s “Savage Irony: The Imaginative Power of the ‘Military Comfort Women’ in the 1990s.”

³⁸ The similar critique of liberal multiculturalism appears in his journal article, “Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism.”

³⁹ David Eng in *Racial Castration* mentions the historical record that “certain Japanese and Japanese Americans, attempting to disguise their racial identities, did change their surnames after America’s entry into World War II” (105).

⁴⁰ See for more discussion on this topic, Kim-Gibson’s *Silence Broken*; Choongmu Choi’s introduction to the 1997 special issue of *Positions: Asia Critique* titled, “Comfort Women: Colonialism, War, and Sex”; and Laura H. Y. Kang’s “Conjuring ‘Comfort Women’: Mediated Affiliations and Disciplined Subjects in Korean /American Transnationality.”

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