



PROJECT MUSE®

---

"I Would Cry for You, Mommy": A Korean American Daughter's  
Response-Ability in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*

Kodai Abe

Journal of Asian American Studies, Volume 23, Number 1, February 2020,  
pp. 125-147 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jaas.2020.0000>



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/749525>



## “I WOULD CRY FOR YOU, MOMMY”

*A Korean American Daughter's Response-Ability in  
Nora Okja Keller's Comfort Woman*

**Kodai Abe**

**ABSTRACT.** Shedding light on a Korean American daughter's sense of guilt toward her mother, a former Korean comfort woman, this essay reads Nora Okja Keller's novel *Comfort Woman* (1997) as a text that addresses not so much responsibility as legal duty, but rather *response-ability* as ethical capacity. After her mother's death, the protagonist Beccah recognizes her own unwitting complicity in American neo-colonial violence under the Cold War regime that silences Asian wartime victims, including her mother, which evokes within her the need for engagement with the temporally and geographically distanced war legacy of the comfort women issue. The novel, I will argue, critically reconfigures the idea of postwar responsibility, paving a way for us outsiders toward the possibility of response-ability that grows from within ourselves.

**A**mong a multitude of negative legacies from World War II, the so-called “comfort women issue” remains one of the most persistent and volatile in East Asia and beyond, even in the present, at the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup> Although the issue had not been utterly unknown, it was the epochal speak-out in 1991 from Kim Hak-sun that for the first time in history drew worldwide attention to and inaugurated global discussion around this “forgotten” issue. She, as a former “comfort woman”—a euphemism designating a wartime military sex slave, many of whom were recruited, deceived, or kidnapped by the Japanese occupying force with the aid of, as is now confirmed,

the systematic administration by its government<sup>2</sup>—publicly demanded an official apology and compensation from the Japanese government, representing, ideally, all the former comfort women. At that time, Kim herself was around the age of seventy and many other victims had already deceased during and after the war. Hence, no sooner did the issue attract belated attention than it was confronted with practical exigency since its last remaining survivors—and also perpetrators—were passing away. Thus the comfort women issue implicates not just those who were directly involved but posterity as well; the question as to how to address and redress the issue is therefore to a large extent entrusted to us all, who are more or less “outsiders” of the issue, so to speak. With this context in mind, this essay examines Nora Okja Keller’s 1997 novel *Comfort Woman*, a story about the idiosyncratic relationship between the former comfort woman Akiko and her Korean American daughter Beccah who learns of her mother’s history only after her death in the 1990s.

What merits particular attention in this simply titled novel are two distinct yet closely interrelated characteristics that complicate it: Beccah’s identity as an Asian American and the belatedness of her cognizance about her mother’s past. Both serve as obstacles in the first place for the daughter to respond to her mother and the comfort women issue in general. Beccah, who was born circa 1962 in the United States, is both temporally and geographically alienated from the issue. In the present of the story, 1995—the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II—the first belated acquisition of knowledge regarding her mother’s theretofore untold experience at once demands and impedes Beccah’s response: How would it be possible for her to do something, or anything, in the face of the distanced issue wherein her now deceased mother was involved? While a former comfort woman’s daughter may not be called an “outsider” of the issue in the strict sense, the novel nonetheless thematizes her outsidership in terms of her capacity to respond; it is none other than Beccah who finds herself to be an outsider. Concerning this enquiry, as the Japanese leftist critic Takahashi Tetsuya—one of the most salient scholars in Japan engaging with the Japanese wartime crimes and their postwar status—suggests, an etymological consideration of the English word “responsibility” (*sekinin*, 責任) would prove instructive. In the context of criticizing postwar Japanese insincere irresponsibility, he draws our attention to its definition, the “*capability of fulfilling an obligation or duty*,”<sup>3</sup> and then proposes to translate it as *ōtō-kanōsei* (応答可能性); to retranslate it back into English quite literally, the possibility of response.<sup>4</sup> For the present study’s sake, i.e., to best express the relationship between the comfort women issue and posterior “outsiders” like Beccah and most of us, I would like to further amend it

as *response-ability* since what is expected from us is less responsibility as *legal duty* than that as *ethical ability*, ability to respond, response-ability.<sup>5</sup> While Takahashi's criticism is chiefly focused on his own country, the question of response-ability with regard to the comfort women issue extends beyond East Asia. That said, it is one thing to simply admit that *We are all responsible*, and quite another to put a response into concrete practice in an ethical way. How are we able to respond to a remote issue such as the comfort women from which we are alienated in time and space, while eschewing appropriation of victimhood or excessive identification? More broadly, what are the ethical conditions of an outsider's response-ability?

To answer these queries in the context of Keller's novel, we will need to consider Beccah's racial, national identity, which is linked to the problem of the so-called Americanization of Asian issues, a discourse that has been eagerly formulated in recent Asian American scholarship. For second-generation Asian Americans, the problem of response-ability is not merely ethical but historically charged as well. In considering the postwar handling of World War II-related issues in Asia, we can no longer disregard the consequences of U.S. interventionist efforts, even more so after "the end of the Cold War," which itself is a Western master narrative. Basically, there are two pivotal moments when the United States comes into play with regard to postwar Asia: immediately after the end of World War II and from the 1990s to the present. Not only did Japan and the United States have a common interest in absolving Japan of its wartime atrocities through silencing its former colonial subjects; the comfort women issue is now also exposed to the danger of assimilation by American discourse through the process of redress activism by means of the U.S. juridical system, possibly erasing the specificity and historicity of Asian issues through universalizing, distorting, and thus perpetuating them. Keller's novel is deeply aware of this hazard in revealing such neocolonial American violence to be the very thing that Beccah has performed vis-à-vis her mother. By the time Beccah finally confronts her need to respond to her late mother, she finds herself to have already subscribed to the American, rather than Asian, subject position. Consequently, this Asian American daughter's personal and familial way of responding to her Korean mother in the 1990s necessitates critical consideration from an international perspective; within this narrative, the victimizer is not so much Japan as the United States as represented by Beccah's father and Beccah herself. Here, the ethics of response-ability hinge on the extent to which the daughter can de-Americanize her own Americanized frame of reference. After the end of the Cold War, it is imperative to take U.S. neocolonial interventions into account when studying the repercussions of World War II in Asia.

Paying heed to the tension between response-ability and Americanization, this essay aims to advance the current theoretical, literary discussion by shedding light on a key element of the novel: Beccah's sense of guilt toward her mother. Beginning with the mother's crucial "confess[ion]," "I killed your father," and the daughter's silencing response "Shh, Mommy,"<sup>6</sup> the novel initially stages a postwar allegory of the relationship between an Asian wartime victim and an American neocolonial victimizer. While Akiko was alive, Beccah was utterly unable to understand her mother's eccentric behavior—"superstitious nonsense" (116), to borrow Beccah's father's wording—and even detested it so much as to wish her mother to be dead. When this wish "finally . . . come[s] true" (13), Beccah learns of her now deceased mother's secret past, which compels her to remember and reinterpret her mother's extraordinary posttraumatic way of life, but is unable to do anything but be stupefied by her sense of guilt. It is in this way that the novel depicts the hardship of an outsider's response-ability on the familial level in the first place; Beccah's Americanized attitude seems to deprive her of the capacity and the *right* to respond. Interestingly enough, it is Aunt Reno, an outsider proper who is neither Beccah's actual "aunt" nor, it seems, Asian American, who plays a catalytic, pivotal role in facilitating the process of Beccah's mourning by, paradoxically, criticizing the daughter for her irresponsibility. This episode testifies to the novel's commitment, as Lisa Lowe emphasizes its significance for Asian American studies in general, to the "cross-racial" or "cross-national" understanding of Asian issues through having a racial, ethnic, and national outsider participate in the process of response, thereby opening the familial, national concern to a broader, international framework.<sup>7</sup> What is more, the novel reveals that Akiko intentionally implanted the seeds of the sense of guilt in her daughter, anticipating their posthumous germination. This, however, was not to impel her daughter to blame herself; rather, paradoxically again, it was for Beccah to be able to begin responding to her mother by remolding her sense of guilt into a means of ethical response. It is ethical, I contend, because a response that emerges from a sense of guilt registers, not erases, Beccah's subject position as an American who has already collaborated, albeit unwittingly, with its neocolonial violence. This is the only place from which Beccah is allowed to respond. Owing to Akiko, the compunction is sublimated into the condition of ethical response-ability, one that is not forced by others but that grows from within an outsider. By way of mutual assistance and the emergence of internally motivated will for engagement, *Comfort Woman* opens up a path to outsider response-ability that could involve all of us.

### The Comfort Women Issue and (Post-)Cold War America

It was in December 1991 that "three South Korean former comfort women (*ianfu*) filed suit in the Tokyo District Court seeking an apology and compensation from the Japanese government."<sup>8</sup> While "any military personnel with wartime experience knew of the existence of comfort women,"<sup>9</sup> the issue has gone unfairly unheeded for nearly half a century partially due to what Ueno Chizuko terms "the prostitution paradigm," an evasive ideology that obliterates the Japanese government's criminality by foregrounding the victims' supposed volition in choosing prostitution as their professional occupation to earn a living.<sup>10</sup> This deceptive paradigm not only was adhered to by Japanese conservatives, but was a universally dominant idea as well until its replacement by "the military sexual slavery paradigm" in the 1990s, a gradual shift of perspective brought about especially by virtue of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights in 1993 and the Coomaraswamy Report to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1996.<sup>11</sup> This special rapporteur on wartime violence against women demanded of the Japanese government an official apology and compensation, and its stubborn rebuff rendered and has been rendering the issue smoldering along for the past three decades. As she often states in interviews,<sup>12</sup> it was in 1993 that Keller herself was first informed of the comfort women issue; hence, her 1997 novel was a fairly quick interventional response to this contemporary dispute.

If these survivors had been forced to remain silent for almost half a century, what enabled them to raise the issue and (to some extent) succeed in attracting worldwide attention in the early 1990s? Among several other significant historical backgrounds, such as the upsurge of feminism in Korea in the 1980s,<sup>13</sup> the international Japanese textbook controversy in 1982, and Emperor Hirohito's death in 1989, the most crucial condition that prepared the way for the momentous speak-out was, in the context of the present study, the end of the Cold War. Or, to put it the other way around, it was the structure of the Cold War regime that effectively stifled former comfort women's voices. This is where the United States comes into play. As is well known, the Tokyo war crimes tribunal convened in 1946 was orchestrated and arrogated by the United States, resulting in the arbitrary absolution of a number of war criminals headed by Hirohito,<sup>14</sup> since it was mutually profitable "for both the Japanese and their anti-Communist allies to write off past rivalries, and concentrate on the present while conveniently overlooking issues of human rights."<sup>15</sup> "As the U.S.-Soviet rivalry intensified," Takashi Yoshida opines in his study of the historical construction of Nanjing Massacre discourse—another

unresolved World War II issue—Allied powers were “no longer vigorous in [their] pursuit of Japan’s wartime criminals for fear that such inquiries might embarrass Japanese political and economic leaders in power under U.S. occupation.”<sup>16</sup> Thus the international connivance of downplaying Japanese wartime atrocities was formed, authorized by the conspicuous presence of the American global power. Then, from around the middle of the 1980s, détente gradually began to alter the power balance among Asia, Japan, and the United States.

Consequently, by the time it first gained public attention in the 1990s, the comfort women issue was already profoundly internationalized. My suggestion here is not that internationality necessitates all other nations to share responsibility for Japanese wartime crimes, but that in order to address an ongoing internationalized discourse such as the comfort women issue, a myopic viewpoint limited to a bilateral or East Asian perspective is no longer viable. It was under such political circumstance that Keller learned about and decided to commit herself to this particular issue as a Korean American woman who was born in Seoul in 1966 and raised in Hawaii at a temporal and geographical distance from Korea and World War II. While some critics argue that *Comfort Woman* establishes Korean national cultural identity through dramatizing the reconciliation between a Korean mother and a Korean American daughter,<sup>17</sup> this essay, though ultimately aiming to open the issue to the international arena, seeks first of all to foreground its distinctive American, *national* aspect that initially hampers Beccah’s response-ability. This difficulty is the very thing that Keller, I hope to demonstrate, bore in mind and attempted to tackle during her belated engagement with the comfort women issue. From the middle of the Pacific, she intervenes in both Korean nationalistic and American global discourse through self-criticism without effacing her distinct subject position as an Asian American. To achieve this goal, the narrative theorizes that the ethics of a second-generation Korean American cannot be constituted without admitting in the first place that her Americanized frame of reference has been unwittingly obfuscating and perpetuating Asian victimhood. Beccah must invent her response-ability as none other than a Korean American woman.

In so doing, Keller first reproduces and then dismantles an American national/global framework, a discourse of Americanization. As Lisa Yoneyama argues in *Cold War Ruins*, “The post-1990s shift in the location of redress activism, from Asia and the Pacific Islands to U.S. juridical and legislative venues, is best viewed as an instance of the Americanization,” or “transborder redress culture,” she terms, a culture that seemingly contests but in actuality perpetuates the unredressability of Japanese wartime

atrocities. Viewing retrospectively World War II legacies in Asia through "U.S. juridical and legislative venues," it establishes American "parameters of what can be known as violence and whose violence, on which bodies, can be addressed and redressed."<sup>18</sup> In brief, Americanization is a kind of political, juridical, and cultural appropriation.<sup>19</sup> In the chapter that deals with the particular novel in question, Yoneyama aptly notes, "The novel suggests that historical justice concerning Japanese imperialist violence in Asia cannot be enunciated without intimating the volatile contradictions in the U.S. ideology of Asian assimilation."<sup>20</sup> As shall be seen, it is precisely the lens of Americanization that distorts Beccah's optics concerning their familial relationship especially in terms of the attribution of victimhood, thus disabling the Korean American daughter from rightly appreciating and responding to her suffering mother. By way of addressing these structural difficulties, Keller does not depict Beccah simply as an innocent figure, but rather initially has her reiterate the violence of Americanization against her mother and then realize her own misdeeds, her involvement in and internalization of the Americanized standpoint. It is in this way that the narrative offers presentist (self-)criticism, and thereby claims that an ethical condition of outsider response-ability can be formed only after fully considering her or his own subject position, a position, in Beccah's case, that does involve responsibility toward the comfort women issue because of her complicity in the postwar perpetuation of her mother's victimization. Beccah's endeavor to de-Americanize her internalized Americanized attitude is what we now need to take a closer look at.

### **Curse of the Mommy: American Culture, Korean History**

To begin with, the perception of the protagonist—a Korean American daughter living in Hawaii like Keller herself—is thoroughly Americanized in cultural terms. Her worldview is almost always mediated by American cultural productions, especially films, which provide her with the framework to apprehend and interpret her own familial situation. This Americanized viewpoint of Beccah is a typically symptomatic instance of what Laura Kang observes: "a particularly American grammar and regime of representation and knowledge production constrains the terms of their legibility and legitimation as part of U.S. culture, scholarship, and politics."<sup>21</sup> When she was a girl, for instance, Beccah believed as she was told that her mother had been a famed singer in Korea, where she encountered her future husband, and at one point Beccah fantasizes about being discovered by a movie agent who would be impressed by her singing, and shout, "The new Marie Osmond!" (27). Without clear memory of the face of her father, who died on



her when she was five, she conceives of his appearance as “look[ing] like Robert Redford,” “Liat’s and Lieutenant Joe Cable’s in *South Pacific*,” and “an aging Charlton Heston in the role of Abraham” (46, 127). Seemingly common childlike imaginations notwithstanding, Beccah’s proclivity needs to be distinguished from ordinary fantasies. After referring to the incredulity of her mother’s stories—likewise Americanized—she reminisces,

In fact, I repeated several of her [Akiko’s] stories, telling teachers and other students version of them that I supplemented with my own favorite movies: *West Side Story*, where Maria, my mother, was left pregnant with her love child, who was, of course, myself; *The Little Princess* and *The Poor Little Rich Girl*, where I, the brave and suffering orphan, am reclaimed in the end by a rich and loving father, who was alive. (32)

Remarkable in this passage is that Beccah, through these filmic transformations, is attempting to manage her familial predicament, above all their poverty and her father’s death (she is bullied in the school partly due to the location of their residence, an impoverished district called “The Shack”). Additionally, she narrates toward the end of the novel, “I often looked at my mother through the finger frame, trying to put her in perspective” because “I liked the way my fingers captured her, making her manageable. . . . I could make her shrink, smaller and smaller, until she disappeared with a blink” (198). What with poverty, father’s absence, and mother’s eccentricities, the psychological stress necessitates a “framing” that capacitates her to render her reality “manageable”; these American stories above all help her cope with familial hardships.

Among numerous examples of Americanization in *Comfort Woman*, the most salient (mis)representation might be the ones associated with violence since it problematically conflates victim and victimizer, which is performed by all the family members. From the mother’s point of view, on the one hand, the wartime Japanese atrocities have been transferred to American men, epitomized by her husband (who is still alive in the Akiko sections, which alternate with the Beccah sections). Her way of speaking sometimes makes it sound as if it is America, not Japan, that is her most detested victimizer/enemy. Escaping from the rape camps after surviving two years from twelve to fourteen as a military sexual slave, she takes refuge at a mission house where she is permitted to stay until the end of the war. Then, in August 1945, she is compelled to decide whether to remain in Korea or to marry the missionary Richard—she rarely mentions his name, referring to him just as “my husband”—so as to move to the United States, and opts for the latter. During and after their time in Korea,

almost everything he does is associated with Japanese soldiers' violence: he calls her by the Japanese name Akiko, "the name the soldiers had assigned to me" (her real name is Soon Hyo); their first sexual intercourse is depicted as a rape reminding her of "a cubicle at the camps, trapped under the bodies of innumerable men"; in the reverberation of a pulpit he hits she detects "the sounds of women's naked buttocks being slapped as they were paraded in front of a new arrival of troops" (93, 106, 70). For Akiko living in the United States in the age of the Cold War, Japanese wartime violence *literally* has been Americanized. In the context of the present study, we might interpret this transference of the agency of violence as figuratively indexing the novel's gesture toward the postwar complicity between Japan and the United States.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast, Beccah catches a much more ambiguous timbre in her father's violence. At the beginning of the novel, she recalls that "at night before I fell asleep, I would try to imagine my father as an angel coming to comfort me," supposedly to protect her from "Korean ghosts and demons," but "when he rolled me into the sweater, binding my arms behind me, my father opened his eyes not on the demons but on me. And the blue light from his eyes grew so bright it burned me, each night, into nothingness" (2). While the text does not seem to provide sufficient evidence to conclude that Beccah was sexually abused by her father,<sup>23</sup> he surely turned his Janus face toward his daughter; as angel and demon, he could be as destructive as protective. Importantly, this ambiguity is partially rooted in Beccah's conception of her parents' relationship. As mentioned earlier, the very opening episode of the novel is the mother's confession that she "killed" her husband, Beccah's father. She continues, "I wished him to death. . . . Everyday I think, every day I pray, 'Die, die,' sending him death-wish arrows, until one day my prayers were answered." Beccah then informs the reader that the "death-wish" is the very thing that she herself flung out onto her mother (12–13). Throughout the major part of Beccah's narrative, Akiko is represented as a victimizer rather than a victim, who, from the daughterly point of view, not merely torments her but also goes so far as "killing" her father. While the figure of the American father remains ambiguous in terms of morality, the mother is associated with "*Korean* ghosts and demons." In this case, Beccah's perspective is somewhat distorted by her father's ambiguous but seemingly benevolent affection, thereby suppressing her capacity to imagine the reason why her mother behaves in a strange way. This can be understood as a literary demonstration of the tension between Americanization and response-ability, with the former hindering the latter.

This inversion of victim/victimizer is dramatically reinverted toward the end of the novel through a reinterpretation of a childhood memory wherein

the depiction of the parents' relationship in terms of victimhood is at its most ambiguous. At the moment Beccah becomes belatedly cognizant of her mother's experience as a comfort woman through a posthumous testimonial cassette tape, she wonders, "How could my mother have married, had a child, if she had been forced into the camps? And then, given new context, came the half-forgotten memory of the night *my father was taken to the hospital.*" On that particular morning, she watches *Curse of the Mummy* (Mommy), which results in a nightmare of a mummy chasing her, and after awakening up in the middle of the night, "I waited for the mummy to devour me, but when *she* reached me, *she* merely turned my head toward the open window" (196, emphasis added):

I opened my eyes and, as if caught in another dream in which I had no control, saw my mother dancing in the ally of our yard and my father on his knees before her, begging her to come inside, come inside before someone saw them.

"Bow down before God, for he alone can heal your wounds." . . .

But my mother laughed and spat at my father. "I will never, never again lay down for any man." . . .

My father stood and clasped his hands to his chest. "Forgive her, Father. She knows not what she speaks."

"I know what I speak . . . I speak of laying down for a hundred men . . . over and over, until I died. I speak of bodies being bought and sold, of bodies—"

"Put away perversity from your mouth: keep corrupt talk from your lips, or—," my father yelled.

"Of bodies that were burned and cut and thrown like garbage to wild dogs by the river—"

"Or ye shall be struck down!" My father grabbed my mother's shoulders and shook her.

"I'm the one! I'm the one to strike you down, and God down too!" my mother screamed, charging my father, scratching at his face.

But my father was the one to strike *her* down, pushing her into the damp ground in an attempt to cover her mouth. "Quiet! . . . What if Beccah hears you? Think of how she would feel, knowing her mother was a prostitute." . . . "Shush," he murmured. "It is not for me to judge. But know that 'The sins of the parent shall fall upon their children and their grandchildren.' I ask you to protect our daughter, with your silence, from that shame." (197–98)

This theretofore dissociated "primal scene" demands close analysis. First of all, it would not be obvious at all to the five-year-old Beccah that it is the

father who is the aggressor. Rather, as the mummy/mommy pun suggests, she is less afraid of her father than of her mother (this is not so much the night on which her mother was struck down, but her "father was taken to the hospital"). He certainly seems relatively passive compared to Akiko's belligerent behavior and language, and he even appears to be concerned for Beccah's well-being ("What if Beccah hears you?"). At least it would be safe for us to assume that it is not until she gains the "new context"—a relatively de-Americanized frame of reference that retrospectively enables her to decipher the nature of this affair—that the "half-forgotten memory" could flashback to her with its new significance. Within the familial domain, Americanized overall, the mother's eccentricity could not but be construed exclusively as violent. As Tina Chen concisely maintains, "Keller reveals how Beccah's lack of cultural and historical context necessarily results in her inability to interpret properly the role and function Akiko occupies in her life."<sup>24</sup> Given the "new context," Beccah now begins to critically reinterpret her father's seemingly benign, typically Cold War American deceptive rhetoric—violence in the name of protection—through which she had also constructed the image of her mother and her own self. Thus the knowledge of Akiko's past finally leads Beccah to embark upon a process of de-Americanization of her thought and perception in pursuit of response-ability, a process that soon confronts her with another difficulty: the sense of guilt.

### **"You Nevah Know Shit about Her": A Korean American Daughter's Sense of Guilt**

The Beccah sections abound with expressions of repentance. At the moment of her mother's sudden death, each of them is living alone. Since moving into her own apartment the year before, Beccah has been stopping by at Akiko's residence to confirm that she is alright, but as she later recalls, "I missed only one day, and on that day she chose to die. I think she did it on purpose, to punish me. Or, maybe, to release me" (121). Thus she cannot help feeling a sense of guilt; her mother died due to her negligence: "When the time came, when she needed me, I had failed to rescue her" (51). Noteworthy in this context is its auditory tropes—let us remember that the novel begins with Akiko's confession and Beccah's silencing gesture—associated with her compunction: "Even now I wonder why I didn't know my mother was dying; after so many years of training myself to listen, why didn't I hear that she had stopped breathing?" or, later she realizes, "my mother . . . waited for me to tell her I was ready to hear what she had to say. I never asked, but maybe she was telling me all the time and I wasn't listening" (126, 191). It is only after the mother's death that

Beccah appreciates that she herself has reiterated the postwar American attitude of silencing, unlistening.

As can be seen from the juxtaposition of the two verbs “punish” and “release” in the aforementioned quotation, however, Beccah’s reaction to the mother’s death is ambivalent. As we have already taken a brief look at familial quandaries that Beccah suffered, it is true, at all events, that her mother prevented Beccah from leading a “normal” life. Examining this situation, one critic maintains that Akiko “forces Beccah herself to assume the maternal role.”<sup>25</sup> On Akiko’s second attempt at suicide, Beccah “realized that our roles had reversed. Even at ten, I knew that I had become the guardian of her life and she the tenuous sleeper.” Further, during Akiko’s last days, Beccah is playing a kind of caretaker’s role for her, from which she is indeed “released.” Elsewhere, Akiko encourages Beccah as an adult to get married, to find “someone to take care of you.” In retrospect, “I remember thinking how ironic and how convenient that my mother thought of taking care of me only when I was a grown woman. And even then, to delegate the responsibility of that care. But . . . I drowned my memories of myself as a child that rose to the surface.” Then, after enumerating a number of her unsatisfactory childhood episodes, she continues, “I swallowed words soaked in anger,” and stifles questions such as “Why are you worried about me now, Mother?” and “Where were you when I needed you?” (125–27). In short, Beccah has been irresponsive toward her mother; she neither listens nor talks to her mother. One might characterize the parent-child relationship as discommunication.

Nonetheless, Beccah’s justifiable discontents are still to be problematized, or rather self-criticized through the deliberate introduction of another character into her own narrative, Auntie Reno, who levels harsh criticisms at Beccah. She is an individual who first employs Akiko at her restaurant and then, discovering Akiko’s mystical ability to communicate with the dead, sets her up as a renowned shaman and promotes her business as a means of providing for the poor family’s livelihood. Beccah has long suspected Reno of pilfering part of her mother’s profits as a kickback, which is revealed as mistaken at Akiko’s funeral in a quarrel over her dead body. What is more, the thing that comes to light in the scene is that Beccah’s misunderstanding of Reno is linked to that of her mother. Convincing Beccah that it is categorically impossible to steal money from such a clairvoyant, she retorts,

“You was her daughter, dah one come from her own body. But you nevah know shit about her, did you? . . . I telling you I know what I know. You maddah was one survivah. Das how come she can read other people. Das how come she can see their wishes and their fears.

Das how come she can travel out of dis world into hell, cause she already been there and back and know the way. . . . Who you see?" Reno asked, gesturing toward my mother.

"My mom," I said, without looking, without thinking. Then: "I don't know."

Reno shook her head. "You better tink long and hard, Beccah. Den you better look again." (203–5)

Reno's criticism exposes not only Beccah's carelessness toward her mother but, more significantly, that Reno, a Hawaiian woman, has been looking at, listening to, and caring for Akiko much better than this Korean American daughter. Immediately after the unprecedented confession from the mother via cassette tape, Beccah finds that Reno has long been cognizant of Akiko's traumatic history even if we do not know whether or not Akiko ever confided her directly. In any case, Reno brings to light Beccah's prejudice toward both elder women who, in reality, have been helping each other out, largely for the sake of Beccah, simultaneously coping with Akiko's trances by sublimating them into a business. This reprimand from the pseudo-aunt seems to represent Keller's political stance, positing a negative answer to the question posited by Laura Kang: "Do Korean Americans bear a particular responsibility for and authority in telling this history?"<sup>26</sup> Through this episode, the novel dismantles, or at least relativizes, Beccah's and perhaps even Keller's own authority to address the issue based solely on racial, ethnic, and national identity. Rather, we have witnessed that Beccah's identity impedes rather than guarantees her response-ability.

This seemingly supplementary character who has largely gone unnoted by critics thus proves to occupy a vital position with regard to the international context of the comfort women issue. Having a non-Korean criticize a Korean American daughter's attitude toward this (inter)national issue, Keller resists not only Americanization but Korean nationalization of the issue as well, thereby opening it for outsiders. It is as if the introduction of a national, racial outsider is the very condition to de-Americanize the Asian immigrant's familial issues because Reno is the only person who is able to enlighten Beccah. Through her capability of caring for a Korean immigrant victim better than her Korean American daughter and playing a role as a trigger for the daughter to reflect upon herself and respond to her own mother, this episode portrays Reno's outsider response-ability, ironically and bitterly contrasted with Beccah's. Not relying on nationality or blood relationship, this "aunt" serves as a catalysis, a model, and a venue for Beccah toward the development of her own response-ability. It is in this way the Hawaiian woman embodies the novel's endorsement

of cross-racial, cross-national commitment to the comfort women issue. This text thus depicts a process of the initiation of outsider response-ability that would be hard to theorize in forms other than cultural, literary, and fictional narrative.

Now, as readers of this novel, we must be aware that Reno's warning extends to us all as well. As the Beccah sections alternate with the Akiko sections, we readers are allowed to enjoy an advantageous position from which to readily interpret Akiko's eccentric behavior as a consequence of her traumatic wartime experience as a comfort woman.<sup>27</sup> On the contrary, Beccah knows nothing about her mother's past until she dies, leaving her a cassette tape whereby she constitutes and bequeaths her secret history. Therefore, I would like to carefully note that we do not occupy a privileged position from which to criticize Beccah's misconception about her mother; let us imagine that we read all the Beccah sections first and then the Akiko sections.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, for a fuller understanding of the novel, we need to pay due heed to the temporal structure that Beccah's narrative is created *after* the unnerving realization of her misunderstanding of her mother throughout her life.

### **"I Would Cry for You, Mommy": A Korean American Daughter's Response-Ability**

Importantly, the text does not provide explicit evidence about the origin of the Akiko sections, a conundrum that most Keller criticism has left untouched perhaps because of its ultimate undecidability. Yet, undecidability is not tantamount to unthinkability; the undecidability of the origin of Akiko's voice resides in the text demanding interpretation. To the best of my knowledge, only Patti Duncan and Lisa Yoneyama have incorporated this problem into their literary inquiry of the novel so far. Yoneyama, on the one hand, after referring to the important aspect that "there is no point at which the two women's subjective worlds meet," continues, "Beccah cannot access her mother's past except as traces, through her remains and a disembodied voice left on a cassette tape. Even while readers know that Akiko was a survivor of the Japanese military comfort system, Beccah cannot confirm the final truth in her mother's absence."<sup>29</sup> For Yoneyama, Beccah, unlike the reader, never has access to the Akiko sections. On the other hand, drawing attention to (1) Beccah's current occupation as a newspaper's obituary writer and (2) the differences of Akiko's English in the Beccah sections (she speaks "broken" or "fractured" English) and Akiko sections (her first person narration is "seamless" and "perfect"), Duncan concludes, "Beccah is inspired by her mother's death to produce a narrative of her life," and "[Akiko's] past

is reconstructed through [Beccah's] memories."<sup>30</sup> No doubt the structure of the text encourages us to read the Akiko sections as composed by Beccah, a fictional narrative like the whole novel *Comfort Woman* itself. Despite the probability and persuasiveness of Duncan's speculation, however, I would rather suggest that it is none other than the textual undecidability itself that ought to be preserved and construed as such. Contrary to Yoneyama's observation, we should not efface the possible connectivity between the two characters' seemingly unrelated narratives, especially for the purpose of examining Beccah's response-ability.

In terms of the undecidability of voice, one might find Dominick LaCapra's observation instructive. As one possible way for an outsider to address a traumatic event or traumatized victims, he proposes the feasibility of an apparatus that he terms "the middle voice," whose liminal example would be, he suggests, free indirect speech: "Free indirect style is itself a hybridized, internally dialogized form that may involve undecidability of voice. In it the narrator interacts with objects of narration in various ways involving degrees or modulations of irony and empathy, distance and proximity. . . . Undecidability takes the free indirect style to its limit in a kind of discursive return of the repressed middle voice."<sup>31</sup> Also, according to LaCapra, empathy must be distinguished from identification: While identification implies the conflation of subject positions between an outsider and a traumatized victim, empathy is a means "for one born later" to be able to respond, and is "closely linked to ethical, social, and political demands and responsibilities that relative good fortune (. . . for those in different life situations and subject positions) should call forth and enable one to recognize and to take up."<sup>32</sup> Thus, the employment of a vocal undecidability is not a pretext for an appropriation of the insider's voice but rather a means whereby one might be able to join forces with the traumatized, unvoiced survivor so as to unearth the otherwise unheard voice by way of emotionally unsettling involvement. Hence literary texts are crucial in order to theorize the condition of outsider's response-ability.

From this perspective, we might read the Akiko sections on the whole as a middle-voiced obituary constituted by way of free indirect speech, although, by definition, not necessarily (solely) by Beccah. Indeed, there are multiple possible sources of Akiko's history. Apart from the cassette tape whereby Beccah learns of her mother's secret past (which is also highly fragmental), there is also a box containing not only this very medium but a bundle of clips from the *Korea Times* newspaper about World War II as well (Akiko herself has inherited the box from her own mother). Besides, while Beccah is at a loss for how to memorialize her mother—"I found that I did not have the facts for even the most basic, skeletal obituary. And I found



I did not know how to start imagining her life" (26)—it is none other than Reno, another outsider legatee of Akiko's history, who fulfills the task as a temporary measure, after which Akiko's middle-voiced sections are composed. For all these possible resources of Akiko's history, to repeat, the fact nonetheless remains that we cannot positively validate the authorship of Akiko's personal narrative; it is patently an amalgamation of plural voices. Without erasing the varying subject positions among Akiko, Beccah, and Reno, *Comfort Woman* thus attempts to evoke Akiko's untold stories from somewhere between "distance and proximity," through the hybridized middle voice. If an outsider's reconstitution of history inevitably runs the risk of the misappropriation of insiders, the employment of the middle voice can be interpreted as a testament to the novel's gesture toward the ethics of response-ability: when an outsider is required to address remote issues, she must take into account the subject positions of both respondent and respondee in order not to erase either. It demonstrates the urgent necessity and acknowledges the inherent limitation of an outsider's reconstitution of an insider's singular experience.

That said, Akiko is far from a meek character who just passively waits to be reconstructed by those who outlive her. Instead, quite to the contrary, Akiko during her lifetime seems to have strewn numerous, if fragmental, seeds around herself to be posthumously revisited and reinterpreted by her survivors. Moreover, these legacies are arranged not only to serve for herself to be remembered but also to thereby empower Beccah to manage her sense of guilt and to respond to her mother's death. Among Beccah's memories about her mother, the most vital would be her stories, mostly composed of Korean folklore;<sup>33</sup> it is as if Akiko has embedded those allegorical tales in Beccah's subconscious to resurface in future with the help of "new context." One day, when Beccah finds Akiko's jade frog gifted to her by Reno stashed in the aforementioned box, Akiko tells her the story of "Little Frog." The frog is so perverse that it always does the exact opposite of what its mother tells it to do, and Beccah asks, "Am I the Little Frog, Mommy? . . . That's not me, huh, Mommy, is it?" The mother frog, expecting her child's defiance, asks to be buried by the river, not on the mountain, when she dies. Out of grief, however, the Little Frog on this particular occasion decides to follow her request. Beccah queries, "What do you want, Mommy? What do you want me to do? . . . Ask me and I'll do it. Okay? Just tell me." Consequently, that night, Beccah dreams an adaptation version of the story, recast by means of scenes from *The Wizard of Oz* (170).

This multilayered episode requires careful scrutiny. First, in light of our earlier analysis of Beccah's sense of guilt, we can now readily decipher this as an allegory for failed mourning: the Little Frog is Beccah, unable to keep

her promise. On the second level, conversely, this story serves as an anticipatory preparation for Beccah against the remorseful sense of inability to mourn, the very thing Beccah the narrator presently confronts. Indeed, at the end of the tale, Akiko concludes, "worry[ing] that the river would wash up her corpse and carry it away," the Little Frog hops to the grave every time it rains, "croaking and crying to heaven" (170). In the very following episode, Akiko has Beccah listen to her recorded crying voice engaged in a practice of so-called professional mourning, and declares, "This will be you one day." Overwhelmed with Akiko's shrieking voice, Beccah initially demurs and yet eventually professes, "I would cry for you, Mommy." Akiko answers, "I know. . . . Every year, on my death anniversary, that will be your gift to me" (172). The juxtaposition of these two episodes thus encourages the reinterpretation of the tale, remolding the Frog's/Beccah's seeming failure into periodic mourning: the Frog's rainy repentant croaking is now construed as a gesture of mournful response by a naughty child. In fact, the Little Frog episode urges the present Beccah toward its reinterpretation: "I find myself second-guessing my interpretations of her stories, and wonder, now that she is dead, how I should remember her life" (171). Finally, the process of reinterpretation traces the de-Americanizing process, though imperfect, since the episode is originally transformed through *Oz* and then corrected through "new context" to serve as a guide toward response-ability. Beccah is now able, and at the same time required, to revisit and reinterpret her mother, her stories, and their familial relationship. As the narrator of the Akiko sections prognosticates, "Later, perhaps, when she is older, she will sift through her own memories, and through the box that I will leave for her, and come to know her own mother—and then herself as well." She was deeply aware that it is difficult for young Beccah to appreciate the significance of the mother's words and deeds, and therefore arranged a venue to be retraced afterward. However, though mourning is achieved through Korean components, this is not the Koreanization of memory whatsoever; the incorporation of her mother's (hi)story equips Beccah with a multifaceted, relativized, or middle-voiced vision of history (remember, the frog is a gift from Reno). While Akiko succeeds in being remembered through her own design, Beccah, thanks to her deceased mother's delayed support, succeeds in mourning and thus finally begins to respond, becoming response-able vis-à-vis her mother.

In further considering the problem of reinterpretive de-Americanization and its sublimation into response-ability, we lastly need to take a look at an important recurrent dream of Beccah's: "Since my mother died, I dream the dream from my childhood." Throughout the novel, there are at least four versions of it. At first, while she is swimming in a river, someone

tries to pull her underwater, and “when I know I will drown, I wake up, gasping for air” (121). At this point of the present study, it should probably come as no surprise that this individual, in the third instance, turns out to be Akiko, who cannot swim, “holding on to me as though I can save her” (141). Obviously, this is another symptom of Beccah’s sense of guilt; the dead mother is seeking to punish her. However, in the very last paragraph of the book, this dream, too, is in a sense “reinterpreted” and sublimated:

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

The task of fully reinterpreting this literary passage is consigned to readers. First, this is a dream wherein Beccah cannot reach her mother, which represents Beccah’s sense of guilt stemming from unlistening to her and letting her die alone. Next, it is because she might be able to be duly punished that she “yields” of her own will when she notices it is her mother who is pulling her down, perhaps trying to kill her. Contrary to her previous Americanized understanding, Beccah now sees herself as a victimizer and Akiko as a victim, so the daughter seeks to compensate for her “crime” in exchange for death. However, this is of course not what Akiko demands; she knows that there is freedom underwater, for both of them, to which they can swim through their mutual support. Most important, it is none other than the mother’s seemingly violent gesture that is transfigured, sublimated into salvation, providing another example of reinterpretation of the past through a de-Americanized framework. Here, to accept the sense of guilt is a paradoxical way in which Beccah can respond to her mother. It is only after the process of de-Americanization and the recognition of her perpetration that Beccah can make her way to response-ability. Hence, Beccah’s posture in the final sentence that could represent melancholic anxiety (“coiled tight”) can be viewed as the fetal position, a preparation for rebirth. Embracing the fully reconfigured image of her mother, personally and historically, Beccah is now “waiting to be born,” to learn what it is to be a former Korean comfort woman’s daughter as a Korean American.

### Coda: Toward a New Configuration of Responsibility for Outsiders

In her study of transgenerational trauma, Gabriel Schwab maintains that actual victims' "children need to patch a history together they have never lived by using whatever props they can find—photographs and stories or letters but also, I would add, silences, grief, rage, despair, or sudden unexplainable shifts in moods handed down to them by those who bring them up."<sup>34</sup> No matter how prudent and sincere one might be, outsiders' response-ability would inevitably run the risk of misunderstanding, misrepresentation, and misappropriation due to the indelible distance from the firsthand witness and the fragmental nature of legacies. In the novel we have scrutinized, the heroine is already caught in this pitfall when she realizes her own complicity in Americanization—in the same way as Keller herself when she first learned of the comfort women issue—and one needs to bear in mind that Beccah's commitment is no more than a secondhand reconstitution of Akiko's wartime and postwar experience, as is the literary text *Comfort Woman*. Nonetheless, again, especially when the last survivors are passing away, the situation increasingly demands outsiders' engagement. What the positionality as an outsider necessitates, then, is not to remove but to preserve the tension between the impossibility and possibility of ethical commitment; for Beccah, it means to probe for a way of responding precisely as an American daughter. Key contributions of *Comfort Woman* to our understanding of response-ability would be that it depicts this engagement (1) as reciprocal between Akiko and Beccah and (2) as spontaneous from within Beccah as an outsider. It is Akiko's lifetime arrangement that arouses Beccah's response-ability, and it is not that the daughter reluctantly takes on responsibility. This subjective cooperation between a deceased Asian war victim and an (Asian) American postwar generation epitomizes one way in which an ethical condition of outsider response-ability can be constituted. For that purpose, we must be careful lest we misread the extant legacies.

Finally, let the preceding discussion bring us to the question of Japan. As we are all aware, Japan as a nation has yet to fulfill its responsibility for its war crimes, which is of course a major (inter)national issue. In like manner, as typified by the establishment of the Japanese Society of History Textbook Reform in 1996, there is also an ongoing conservative political movement against progressive endeavors to acknowledge and atone for Japanese atrocities, especially the Nanjing Massacre and the comfort women issue. Denigrating liberal discourse as the "masochist view of history," revisionists are still zealous to blot out Japanese war crimes that they insist have already been settled. It is no less difficult to persuade the younger postwar

generation asserting their own disconnection and thus nonresponsibility for the historical crimes in which they were surely not directly involved, increasingly so as we become temporarily distanced from the memory. It is unfair, they would say, to be regarded as if to be a criminal and responsible simply because of their national identity. In my opinion, the liberal's moral contention that *we are nonetheless all responsible* for the most part ends up being a mere provocation of antipathy hindering communication.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, even with a willingness for engagement, as we have seen in the case of Beccah, one will inevitably encounter a variety of difficulties. Can we even constitute an argument that could encourage them—and us—to engage with such seemingly “irrelevant” issues? It seems that the idea of responsibility now requires reconfiguration.

At the very outset of this essay, I differentiated responsibility as legal duty from response-ability as ethical capacity. Now that not only the last victims but also their victimizers are passing away, Japan too incurs the response-ability problem as a former perpetrator country. What antagonizes the Japanese postwar generation, it seems to me, is the imposition and redistribution of responsibility from above; to be more specific, it is the identitarian reprimand based on nationality. While I personally believe identity can be helpful in terms of willing engagement, we know that there are a number of people who abhor it. If so, we might be able to situate *Comfort Woman* as a cultural work suggesting a certain way of evoking a sense of response-ability among the irresponsibles. We have witnessed Beccah's recognition of her indirect implication in, not direct victimization of, the comfort women issue. Her sense of guilt, the thing that triggers her personal need for engagement, is neither imposed from above nor attributed due to her identity, but emerges from within itself. I am not suggesting that conscience shall solve the problem; rather, my contention is that a sense of guilt stemming from the knowledge of one's actual, if indirect and unwitting, but still ongoing involvement in these ostensibly irrelevant issues could kindle within us the motivation for ethical engagement. It is not a reprimanding, top-down imposition of responsibility but rather a voluntary, bottom-up awakening of response-ability. I believe this is why Akiko implanted the sense of guilt into her daughter's mind. To invoke response-ability from within outsiders, we must in the first place study their personal history, searching for a seed that could grow into it. Keller's novel cultivates a way for a new configuration of outsider responsibility that can lead to an awakening of response-ability dormant within all the outsiders.

## Notes

1. As shall be mentioned soon in the text, the term "comfort women" is a problematic euphemism that misrepresents the reality; they were sex slaves of the Japanese military. With that in mind, however, the present article employs the term following extant scholarship that I draw on. *Comfort Woman* only once refers alternatively to "Battalion slave" (193). See also note 10 below.
2. The Japanese historian Yoshimi Yoshiaki was among the first to reveal the direct involvement of the military government by turning up and publicizing historical evidence. See *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military during World War II*, trans. Suzanne O'Brien (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
3. *OED*, "responsibility," emphasis added. Takahashi himself does not draw on *OED*.
4. Takahashi Tetsuya, *Sengo sekinin ron* (Tokyo: Kōdan-sha, 2005), 29–40.
5. In Western academic discussions, this idea of response-ability has recently undergone theoretical development in the field of animal studies, especially in Donna Haraway's work on the relationship between animals and human beings, which largely draws on Jacques Derrida (Takahashi, too, is a Derridean). See Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 69–93; Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 1–51. In the realm of literary studies, David C. Stahl also employs this term to examine the Japanese film *Black Rain* (1989, dir. Imamura Shōhei, an adaptation of Ibuse Masuji's 1966 novel of the same title). See Stahl, *Social Trauma, Narrative Memory, and Recovery in Japanese Literature and Film* (New York: Routledge, 2020), chap. 4.
6. Nora Okja Keller, *Comfort Woman* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 1. Subsequent page references are given in the text parenthetically.
7. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996).
8. Yoshimi, *Comfort Women*, 33.
9. *Ibid.*, 33.
10. Many of them were deceived, sold, and kidnapped. See *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*, ed. Keith Howard, trans. Young Joo Lee (New York: Cassell, 1995); Yoshimi, *Comfort Women*, chap. 3, "How Were the Women Rounded Up?"
11. Ueno Chizuko, *Nationalism and Gender*, trans. Beverley Yamamoto (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2004), 82–91.
12. Mika Tanner, "Q&A with Nora Okja Keller," *News Watch* 5, no. 1 (1998): 56.
13. Ueno, *Nationalism and Gender*, 71–72.
14. See John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: Norton, 1999), 443–521.

15. George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (New York: Norton, 1994), 276.
16. Takashi Yoshida, *The Making of the "Rape of Nanking": History and Memory in Japan, China, and the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 77.
17. Paula Ruth Gilbert, "The Violated Body as Nation: Cultural, Familial, and Spiritual Identity in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*," *Journal of Human Rights* 11 (2012): 486–504; Samina Najmi, "Decolonizing the Bildungsroman: Narratives of War and Womanhood in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*," in *Form and Transformation in Asian American Literature*, ed. Zhou Xiaojing and Samina Najmi (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 209–30.
18. Lisa Yoneyama, *Cold War Ruins: Transpacific Critique of American Justice and Japanese War Crimes*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 24, 8.
19. For the cultural appropriation of the comfort women issue, see Silvia Schultermantl, "Writing Rape, Trauma, and Transnationality onto the Female Body: Matrilineal Em-body-ment in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*," *Meridians* 7, no. 2 (2007): 72.
20. Yoneyama, *Cold War Ruins*, 166. The *Comfort Woman* section of this book was first presented at a conference on the comfort women issue and published as "Traveling Memories, Contagious Justice: Americanization of Japanese War Crimes at the End of the Post–Cold War," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6, no. 1 (2003): 57–93.
21. Laura Hyun Yi Kang, "Conjuring 'Comfort Women': Mediated Affiliations and Disciplined Subjects in Korean/American Transnationality," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6, no. 1 (2003): 32.
22. See also Naoki Sakai, "Transpacific Complicity and Comparatist Strategy: Failure in Decolonization and the Rise of Japanese Nationalism," in *Globalizing American Studies*, ed. Brian T. Edwards and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 240–65; Naoki Sakai and Hyon Joo Yoo, eds., *The Trans-Pacific Imagination: Rethinking Boundary, Culture and Society* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2012), especially its introduction and the Sakai chapter.
23. Schultermantl, "Writing Rape, Trauma, and Transnationality onto the Female Body," 85.
24. Tina Chen, *Double Agency: Acts of Impersonation in Asian American Literature and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 123.
25. Najmi, "Decolonizing the Bildungsroman," 220.
26. Kang, "Conjuring 'Comfort Women,'" 26.
27. Yoneyama, *Cold War Ruins*, 167; Gilbert, "Violated Body as Nation," 496.
28. Keller testifies that she "did the mother's narrative first, and it wasn't until I was almost finished with that that I realized that we needed to be brought up to date with the daughter's narrative." See Robert Burlingame, "Sweet Smile of Success," *Star Bulletin*, 1997, <http://archives.starbulletin.com/97/04/01/features/story1.html>.

29. Yoneyama, *Cold War Ruins*, 167.
30. Patti Duncan, *Tell This Silence: Asian American Women Writers and the Politics of Speech* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), 185, 189, 176.
31. Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 196–97.
32. *Ibid.*, 212.
33. See also Kun Jong Lee, "Princess Pari in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*," *positions* 12, no. 2 (2014): 431–56.
34. Gabriel Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 14.
35. In my opinion, Takahashi is not fully aware of this hazard. See Takahashi Tetsuya, "Japanese Neo-nationalism: A Critique of Katō Norihiro's 'After the Defeat' Discourse," in *Contemporary Japanese Thought*, ed. Richard F. Calichman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 193–210. This is a translation of a chapter from Takahashi, *Sengo sekinin ron*, 147–77.