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Ghostly Bodies: A Site of Haunting

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Introduction: The Haunting Memories of Camptowns

“Something like her shadow breathed through the empty spaces, but it was not the shadow itself. The physical form of her body was somewhere, dislocated. As the years wore on the wind that blew through the house became increasingly like her shadow breathing. Meanwhile, her body grew more fixed, sitting still on the couch for hours on end while she watched the time pass. She looked upward at certain moments, reading the time on the clock, repeating the time on the clock at those moments once the hands had come full circle. The shadow-like thing whose breath blew through the house acquired a voice and soon began to whisper clues about things that have been left unsaid. She repeated dates in tandem with the clock display, moments in history evoked by watching time tick towards the future. The historical marks left on the present were the very words that gave more breath to that thing that was like her shadow.”¹ (Nora Okja Keller, *Fox Girl*)

Although this passage from *Fox Girl* by Nora Okja Keller is a fictional account of life in *kijich'ons*, or camptowns that arose outside of American army bases in South Korea, it is not a complete fabrication. The economy of camptowns, comprised of bars, brothels and nightclubs with neon signs and booming music, shops with cheap souvenirs, and occasional food carts, thrived on prostitution². The setting of Keller's novel reflects this historical reality. Additionally, the characters and the experiences they have, mirror those of the 1 million women who worked in camptowns. Many examples of Camptown literature, like *Fox Girl*, are based on historical events, and though it is fabricated, it is written with the specific purpose of relaying the reality of camptowns and the hardships experienced there. Though America Town and the people who lived there were created by Keller, this story is not completely imagined.

The act of writing theology, specifically Christian theology, is similar to the way Keller writes about camptowns in *Fox Girl*. Remembering and imaging the body of Jesus and memories

¹ Grace Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy and the Forgotten War* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008): 27

² David Vine, "My Body was Not Mine, but the US Military's' ," *Politico*, 2015 <https://www.politico.eu/article/my-body-was-not-mine-but-the-u-s-militarys/>.

of his life may be partially fabricated or have multiple meanings that may not be immediately clear, or interpreted differently by readers. The dominant memory assumes that everyone has similar experiences and sentiments relating to a particular memory but this does not mean that everyone truly has the same experience or memories. Individual experiences and memories often differ from the dominant memory. The memories of Jesus' body are individually different, however, despite personal particularities within individual memory, truths about structural issues can be reflected.

Literature and theology both have the ability to criticize dominant memory, and create a space for multiple memories to exist. In doing so, the melancholia birthed from silence surrounding memories of trauma can be disrupted, and pathways that lead to hope and potential healing can be paved. Literature has been used to create multiple memories, and disrupt melancholia, and in examining how, I will argue that theology can also be used similarly. When the definition of theology is expanded to include its value as a created work, capable of navigating and understanding people's lives and the trauma that occurs within them, rather than only an analysis of God and God's impact on the world, it can become a vital tool in producing multiple memories. If theology is applied to a specific context as a created work it becomes capable of unveiling traumatic, haunted memories. As I will show, applying theology to the historic context of military prostitution in South Korea, can reshape and widen our understanding of how theology can be implemented across multiple contexts. It is important to address how historically, religion, and more specifically Christianity, has been used to dominate and colonize others; it can also have a role as a source of hope and potential healing in a post-colonial context. Christianity offers a unique lens into haunting and haunted memories when the cross is read as a site of trauma and subsequent haunting when the crucifixion of Jesus is read as an execution

carried out by the imperial power of the Roman Empire, and the resurrection is simultaneously understood as a reminder of the traumatic memory of the crucifixion and a site for potential hope and healing.

Korean American biblical scholar Jin Young Choi examines the first appearances of Jesus after the resurrection as hauntings as the collective, unspeakable memory of the crucifixion haunts the disciples. “The body of Jesus is not what they cannot both see and touch. Rather, their memory of his body is that of the body on the cross. Jesus’ body was executed by the imperial power. It was a body beaten, broken, bleeding, and rotten. Thus, this body is abject and porous. Rather than seeing the resurrected body with flesh and bones, the broken body on the cross revisits only as a ghostly body.”³ The disciples’ individual and collective memories of Jesus’ horrific death on the cross, paralleled by his physically healed, resurrected body embodies the way haunting sticks to us. Despite the inability to completely vanquish trauma, as shown by the visceral memory of Jesus’ body on the cross, there is simultaneously a potential for hope, represented by Jesus’ healed body. In the context of the Korean War and its aftermath, like Jesus, the figure of *Yanggongju* embodies the collective, traumatic memories of women who have been historically silenced. Because her ghostly body cannot be erased, it acts as living proof of the haunted memories of the camptowns, despite the silence surrounding them. There is an inherent connection between the body of Yanggongju and Jesus. Jesus’ “body beaten, broken, bleeding, and rotten”⁴ is not a far cry from the body of Yanggongju who carries the traumatic memories of violence of Korean women involved in military prostitution, and the haunted memories of comfort women, transgenerationally passed down to her. She too has been beaten, and broken,

³ Jin Young Choi, *Postcolonial Discipleship of Embodiment: An Asian and Asian American Feminist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillian, 2015): 50-84

⁴ Ibid

and yet, her presence, though it holds these horrific memories, creates a space for these haunted memories to exist, unsilenced.

My research delineates memories of trauma and haunting told and retold through creative work such as narratives, film, literature, art. I will argue that theology, like literature, can criticize the narratives constructed by the dominant memory. By understanding theology as a creative way of writing and rewriting memories, I contemplate how theology opens up multiple memories or counter memories challenging a nation's dominant memories of war and victory that do not necessarily include ordinary people's deaths and survivals in the midst of violence. . Theology can conjure the memories, haunted by history's silenced victims, thus criticizing the construction of dominant memories, disrupting the melancholia born of the silence that generates ghosts. When theology is written as a creative work, telling the traumatic memories and the unspoken experiences of history's victims, it becomes a source for hope and healing, especially in a postcolonial context.

Theology, like literature, can be warped to fit the narrative of dominant memory, but theology too can be an avenue to create multiple memories. Within the writings and memories of Jesus exists multiple memories, I will further explore the crucifixion and resurrection as a haunting alongside the dominant memory of the time that claimed Jesus did not resurrect, but his body was stolen. In the context of Jesus and Yanggonju, the ability to construct multiple memories allows for the silence that creates to be disrupted. Finally, I will argue that writing theology guided by lived experiences of individuals, instead of relying on history's grand narratives or the dominant memory, will allow a counter memory or multiple memories of trauma to emerge. Theology that relies on lived experiences and simultaneously recognizes the

memory of the resurrection as a site of trauma, hope, and potential healing can be used to connect the contextualized trauma of Korean women embodied by Yanggonju

Haunting, (Counter) Memory, and Melancholia

Writing about haunting makes multiple memories, including haunting memories visible, and although it is impossible to erase a ghost, repair may become possible. Using Viet Thanh Nguyen's construction of just memory in combination with melancholia, I will look at the historical case of prostitution industries around U.S. military bases in South Korea through the lens of haunting. Understanding how melancholia can be deeply interwoven with haunting will show how complex and consuming haunting truly is. Combining Nguyen's construction of just memory will show how important implementing multiple perspectives is when unpacking haunting.

Memories, particularly those constructed surrounding war, are established by the "winning" side. Memory is an invaluable resource and can be constructed by government, politicians, and media to relay a warped narrative. In *Just Memory* Viet Thanh Nguyen argues "all wars are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield and the second time in memory."⁵ Memories of war are often distorted by ties to national identity. A crucial part of what Nguyen establishes as just memory is remembering people from all sides of war-- those who lost, and those who died that can no longer speak for themselves. The "winning" side is able to dictate how a war is remembered in history's grand narrative. Here, the experiences of people who lived through war and trauma are invisible. A just memory or counter memory allows for multiple memories and experiences to be incorporated into the narrative of war. It "strives both to

⁵ Viet Thanh Nguyen, 2017. "Just Memory." In *Nothing Ever Dies*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press): 12

remember one's own and others, while at the same time drawing attention to the life cycle of memories and their industrial production, how they are fashioned and forgotten, how they evolved in change.”⁶

In the context of the Korean War, casually known as the “forgotten war” in the U.S., Wonhee Anne Joh begs the question “What does it mean to want to represent or ‘remember’ a war that has been ‘forgotten’ and erased in the U.S popular imagin[ation], but that has been also transgenerationally seared into the memories of Koreans and Korean Americans, and experienced anew every day in a still divided Korea? ”⁷ The Korean War has been virtually obliterated from U.S memory, and on the occasion it is remembered, it is seen as a historical event with no ramifications in the present which further feeds into the US’s “fantasy of itself as a nation of [white] saviors” in the global context.⁸ However, the ongoing, traumatic aftermath of the Korean War still lingers, in the memories of Koreans and Korean Americans, haunting those who do remember it, and the people around them.

In South Korea, where memories of “pain and suffering, post-conflict communities paradoxically search to ‘forget’ the horror of war while simultaneously becom[ing] emotionally fixated and constituted by it.”⁹ In a postcolonial context, haunting is something more than the spirit of a dead person coming back with a vengeance, it is a collective memory of trauma shrouded in silence. Grace Cho explains trauma alone does not necessarily manifest as a

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Wonhee Anne Joh. "Affective Politics of the Unending Korean War: Remembering and Resistance." In *Religion, Emotion, Sensation*, edited by Karen Bray et. al. New York, New York: Fordham University Press, 2019.

⁸ Grace Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy and the Forgotten War* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008): 12

⁹ Wonhee Anne Joh. "Affective Politics of the Unending Korean War: Remembering and Resistance." In *Religion, Emotion, Sensation*, edited by Karen Bray et. al. New York, New York: Fordham University Press, 2019.

haunting, rather ,it is the silence surrounding trauma that generates ghosts¹⁰. Avery Gordon explains haunting as “unexamined irregularities of everyday life”¹¹ rather than something supernatural, and silence, or the “absence of a story,”¹² is the foundation of haunting. Unpacking haunted memories is the crux of just memory. Haunted memories are proof of individual experiences that conflict with the dominant memory. Understanding all perspectives of a war, and its aftermath shows how memory has evolved and transformed to silence history’s victims. To unearth haunted memories is to understand war from multiple perspectives.

However, describing and understanding the effects of haunted memories proves difficult. Haunted memories are deeply interwoven with melancholia. Melancholia exists when people are consumed by an unspeakable sorrow. When consumed by melancholia one is unable to separate themselves from the what or who they are grieving. Melancholia attempts to grasp and explain the ways trauma sticks to us, it is something much larger than grief. It is a complete physical and emotional consumption. Freud distinguishes traits of melancholia from grief as a “cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches”¹³ Melancholia is nothing short of a complete physical and emotional consumption. However, despite the debilitating effects of melancholia it can prove quite difficult to articulate what its origins are, or what exactly has been lost. Melancholia is an embodiment of haunting. Memories of trauma

¹⁰ Grace Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy and the Forgotten War* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008)

¹¹ Gordon, Avery F. and Janice Radway. 1997. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and Sociological Imagination* . New Edition, Second ed. University of Minnesota Press.

¹² Grace Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy and the Forgotten War* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008)

¹³ Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works, 237-258*

cannot (and perhaps should not) be completely erased, thus, when one must learn to coexist alongside memories of trauma, they are always haunted.

When deeply rooted trauma cannot be forgotten, “it generates a grief so deep it is passed onto the next generation”¹⁴. The theory of transgenerational haunting advanced by Abraham and Torok suggests that trauma does not vanish with the first person who experienced it. “Rather, it takes on a life of its own emerging from the spaces where secrets are concealed. In the context of South Korea, where the systems of sexual slavery designed by the Japanese Imperial Army went unspoken of for nearly 50 years, their secrets were passed down to the next generation of women. “Some research suggests that the early generations of camptown workers were the former daughters of comfort women who had inherited their families secrets of forced sexual labor...the study of transgenerational haunting enables us to understand how the falsification, ignorance, or disregard of the past—whether institutionalized by a totalitarian state . . . or practiced by parents or grandparents—is the breeding ground of the phantasmatic return of shameful secrets.”¹⁵ The ghosts of war and gendered violence were only nurtured by the silence and shame generated by the trauma of war. It is possible to capture and begin to decipher the internal haunting of trauma created by war through melancholia.

Melancholia captures the way in which one is irreparably bound to and haunted by traumatic memories, there is an indescribable yet visceral feeling at the foundation of melancholia. In an attempt to articulate what has been lost and construct a memory that is not contorted by history’s grand narrative or national biases, memories of haunting must be conjured. Haunted memories are living proof of lived experiences history has attempted to erase. “Art is

¹⁴ Wonhee Anne Joh. "Affective Politics of the Unending Korean War: Remembering and Resistance." In *Religion, Emotion, Sensation*, edited by Karen Bray et. al. New York, New York: Fordham University Press, 2019: 92

¹⁵ Ibid

crucial [in unearthing haunted memories].... the writing, photography, film, memorials, and monuments.... are all forms of memory and of witnessing.”¹⁶ Additionally, theology is another crucial tool of memory and witnessing to be utilized.

As in the case of Korean diaspora, Grace Cho claims, “silence is the absence of a story.”¹⁷ When people who have experienced trauma and subsequent haunting are given space to share their experiences, it disrupts the dominant memory and allows counter-memories to emerge. In “*Western Princesses—A Missing Story*” by Keun-joo Christine Pae, she recounts her first visit to The Rainbow Center, a shelter for abandoned Korean military wives. At the end of her visit, one of the sisters said to her “We will see you again, right? And you speak English and have studied a lot. Speak for us to Americans. Tell people our stories, so someday no Korean women will live like us.”¹⁸ As her experience shows, sharing the narratives and experiences of women whose lived experiences are interwoven with *kijich’ons*, (and in this specific instance have migrated to the United States) is a way to disrupt the silence surrounding these haunted memories and challenge the dominant memory, crafted by the United States, that erases the lived experiences of military prostitution. In addition to challenging the dominant memory, creating a space wherein these experiences can be shared, there becomes a potential for healing. Even if the lingering ghosts of camptowns cannot be erased, perhaps there is solace, or even hope embedded in the thought that no other Korean woman would have to suffer the way they did.

Since I have established the connection between melancholia, just memory, and haunting, I will draw connections between the body of Jesus and the body of the Yanggonju. Both are

¹⁶ Viet Thanh Nguyen, 2017. "Just Memory." In *Nothing Ever Dies*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press): 15

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Christine Keun-joo Pae. "Western Princesses—A Missing Story: A Christian Feminist Ethical Analysis of U.S. Military Prostitution in South Korea." *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 29, no. 2 (2009): 121-39. Accessed July 25, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23562801>.

representative of haunted bodies harboring haunted memories that criticize history's dominant memory. Then, I will show the trajectory of camptown literature, how it has been used to construct memories of *kijich'ons* over time. This study of camptown literature will show how retellings can be both a second assault on victims or an active criticism of the dominant memory. I will focus on narratives that utilize feminist and bi-racial perspectives to show how these narratives can lead to repair.

The Yanggongju: Material Presence of Haunting

“*Yanggongju*. Yankee whore. Western princess. GI Bride...GI plaything. U.N lady...*Wianbu*. Fallen woman. Formerly a comfort woman. Formerly called a comfort woman. Daughter of a comfort woman. Camptown Prostitute. Military bride.”¹⁹ The haunting figure of the Yanggongju is a material presence of the silent, unspeakable, history surrounding camptowns in South Korea. The body of Yanggongju carries the haunted memories of women, both living and dead, who have suffered as a result of the camptowns. The melancholy felt by Korean women is embodied by Yanggongju. The sorrow sticks to her. Her body, which is living proof, a material presence and an active criticism of the dominant memory that erases the very memories she carries. Her body haunts US and Korean relations in a post-colonial context, reminding both of the way Korean women were used by American soldiers and by the Korean government for economic gain and to maintain US relations. Korean women involved in military prostitution were looked down upon by US soldiers, and again by Korean society.

In the film *The Women Outside: Korean Women and the US Military*, which documents the lives of women working and living in camptowns, one woman interviewed shared that her

¹⁹ Grace Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy and the Forgotten War* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008): 3

own family was ashamed to be seen with her after she had left the camptown. She had become an outsider in her own family, and her own country. She returned to the army base because she felt more comfortable there than in her own home.²⁰ Many women in camptowns have given up mentally and physically, after experiencing life in *kijich'ons* it becomes rather difficult to regain their former lives.²¹ Many women living and working in the camptowns were kidnapped, and many more were in debt, or had to find a way to support their families. And regardless of circumstance, they cannot return home or marry a Korean man because Korean society no longer sees them as respectable. These are just a few examples of the memories and experiences embodied by the body of *Yanggongju*. The rejection, shame, hopelessness and trauma experiences of over one million women involved in military prostitution are at the core of the melancholy embodied by *Yanggongju*. She endures the weight of secrecy, silence, and shame created by the state-organized prostitution in created as a vehicle to maintain the alliance between the United States and Korea and “boost morale” of the American GIs. The body of *Yanggongju* haunts the personal and political structure of the US empire, wherever American soldiers are, so is *Yanggongju*. In recounting her experience working in the camptowns, one woman who chose to be referred to by her surname, Jeon remarked “[w]omen like me were the biggest sacrifice for my country’s alliance with the Americans... [l]ooking back, I think my body was not mine, but the government’s and the U.S. military’s.”²² In order to understand *why* the figure of *Yangganju* embodies the haunting memories of Korean women involved in military prostitution, it is important to understand the historical context surrounding her.

²⁰ *The Women Outside: Korean Women and the U.S. Military*. Directed by J. T. Orinne Takagi and Hye Jung Park. San Francisco, California: National Asian American Telecommunications Association, 1995.

²¹ *Ibid*

²² David Vine, "“My Body was Not Mine, but the US Military’s’ ,” *Politico*, 2015 <https://www.politico.eu/article/my-body-was-not-mine-but-the-u-s-militarys/>.

“[Yangganju] is the westernized woman working in the bars around U.S military camptowns Who is officially condemned by both the Korean and US governments unofficially praised for providing R and R to the American soldiers and dollars to the Korean economy. She is both the patriot who serves our country by keeping U.S. interests engaged and the tragic victim of U.S. imperialism who fans the Flames of anti-American politics.”²³ The US has had troops stationed on the Korean peninsula since September 1945, to aid the transfer of power from the Japanese colonial empire. American military bases and soldiers had a growing presence in Korean society, before 2013 there was no time where less than 37,00 soldiers were present.²⁴ Military prostitution began the same year. Despite the formal prohibition of prostitution the US government attempted to control the spread of venereal disease among soldiers and utilized many other, similar practices designed Japanese colonial government to control the system of licensed prostitution such as designating red light districts, testing women (and not American soldiers) for venereal disease and developing a registration system for women.²⁵ When the US military government in Korea shifted the location of public brothels to the camp towns surrounding the US army bases, the US became responsible for medical surveillance and prostitution industry. Oftentimes near U.S. military bases, sex industries are formed, but in South Korea, state-organized systematic prostitution took the form of camptowns completely controlled by the United States military. Katherine Moon explains that camptowns were “virtually colonized

²³ Grace Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy and the Forgotten War* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008): 4

²⁴ Wonhee Anne Joh. "Affective Politics of the Unending Korean War: Remembering and Resistance." In *Religion, Emotion, Sensation*, edited by Karen Bray et. al. New York, New York: Fordham University Press, 2019: 94

²⁵ Ibid

space where Korean sovereignty was suspended and replaced by the U.S. military authorities.”²⁶
From this point forward, prostitution became a booming, commercialized industry.

Since camptowns were virtually colonized spaces, the Korean government had no jurisdiction when violent and horrific crimes such as rape, assault, theft, and arson occurred in U.S.-controlled lands and camptowns. Soldiers were not held accountable or charged for their crimes.²⁷ The system of military prostitution in place allowed GIs to exploit Korean women who were in poverty, abused, widowed, or orphaned by the war. However, despite the horrors of sexual conquest enacted upon the South Korean women working in *kijichans*, (by the U.S. Empire and military) the women were seen as carrying out their patriotic duty, as the state-sponsored prostitution was seen as a vehicle to maintain the alliance between the United States and Korea. Yet despite the burden placed upon these women, they are seen as outsiders in both camptowns and Korean society. However, nothing quite captures the extent of the United States Empire and Korean governments’ blatant disregard for the humanity of women engaging in military prostitution than the monkey house.

The monkey house is a physical, living testament of the blatant disregard for women’s lives and agency during the height of U.S. involvement in South Korea. The monkey house, which was a quarantine facility for women suspected to have a venereal disease, was akin to a prison. Women who were thought to have a venereal disease were forcefully examined, pumped with penicillin by American medical staff, and held indefinitely until they were “cured.” This

²⁶ David Vine, "Women's Labor, Sex Work and U.S. Military Bases Abroad." *Salon*, 2017
<https://www.salon.com/2017/10/08/womens-labor-sex-work-and-u-s-military-bases-abroad/>.

²⁷ Tim, Shorrock, "Welcome to the Monkey House." *The New Republic* 2019.
<https://newrepublic.com/article/155707/united-states-military-prostitution-south-korea-monkey-house>.

facility was referred to as the monkey house because drugged women's "arms hung down, and they walked like this [hands by their knees], like monkeys in a cage."²⁸

In an attempt to "clean up" the camptowns, women who worked in *kijich'ons* were forced to be examined for venereal diseases, and if they were found to have one, they would be sent to the monkey house indefinitely. Monkey houses were built by the South Korean government to ensure the health of American GIs who partook in the state-sponsored prostitution industry within the camptowns. The systematic organization of sex work by the U.S. and Korea was created to maintain the 70-year alliance with the United States and in turn, both are complicit in exploiting women who were displaced after the Korean War. The *kijichons* were another example of the U.S Empire "saving" another nation for its own gain.

The body of Yannonju serves as a living testament to the Korean War, the US neocolonialism in South Korea, poverty, national insecurity, and the traumatic experiences of Korean women-- including societal ostracization and violations of human rights. Yanggongju embodies the rough underbelly of the Korean War and its aftermath that the dominant memory in both the US and Korea would like to bury. Yanggongju suffers alongside Korean women and embodies the deep, agonizing pain and sorrow they feel. She carries the haunted memories of war, prostitution, poverty, and suffering. She will continue to haunt and criticize the dominant memory that works to erase her.

Yanggongju in Camptown Literature

Yanggongju embodies the collective trauma of militarized sexual violence in South Korea and her presence in literature shows the necessity of writing about ghosts. Sharing stories of haunted memories makes them visible and "not only repair[s] representational mistakes but also

²⁸ Ibid

strive[s] toward a counter memory.”²⁹ The memories embodied by Yanggongju are conjured from the depths of silence criticizing the dominant memory that erases the experiences of military sex workers. Even in the 1990s when discourse around global sex work and human rights gained traction amongst activist groups, there was very little mention of military prostitution. While academia chose to further ignore the lasting trauma left by the U.S Empire in Korea, Yanggongju became the subject of film and literature within Korean diasporic communities. Some of these works are partly autobiographical and writers, filmmakers, and artists creating this media may question how the ghost of Yanggongju has touched their own familial history. Additionally, a large number of these artists belonged to the generation of children who were born out of a marriage between a Korean woman and U.S serviceman or were adopted in the US.³⁰ Through space and time, the ghost of the yanggongju traveled and the next generation “inherited the unconscious and traumatic memories that belong to someone else, and the writing of the imagined secrets is a way of “reducing the phantom.”³¹

Writing the stories of Yanggongju, whether fictional accounts or true familial stories, make her visible. The novel *Fox Girl* by Nora Ojaka Keller, albeit fictional, is just one of many examples of media that captures a story of the Yanggongju captures and focuses on the damaging effects of the American Empire, militarism, sexual violence, and transgenerational haunting. *Memories of my Ghost Brother* by Heinz Insu Fenkl, is an autobiographical account of the experience of a bi-racial child, that similarly to *Fox Girl*, shows the complexity of gendered and racial biases within Korean society and the struggle biracial Korean children face in straddling two identities. In *Memories of My Ghost Brother*, the trope of ghosts is used to articulate both

²⁹ Grace Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy and the Forgotten War* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008): 27

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

trauma and melancholia: “The outcries of the ghost to critique, correct, and heal survival traumas and Asian America.³²” It is not a coincidence that haunting is a common trope used to articulate trauma and disrupt the silence that nourishes it. Many examples of literature that use the trope of ghosts offer their presence as a criticism of societal structures-- such as racial and gender hierarchies, and the suffering that occurs at the hand of them. However, despite the historical truths embedded within literature, it can offer the barriers of fictionalized events, characters, and half-truths. When literature is used as a method of disrupting or criticizing dominant memory the author is given the freedom to mask their experiences or the experiences of others behind story-telling and fiction. They may claim an experience does not belong to them, but someone else, or, it may be difficult to separate facts and truth. But nonetheless, I will show that literature and storytelling are viable methods of challenging the dominant memory and creating a counter-memory, and spreading it to a larger audience. As I will show, camp town literature has evolved over time to reflect the lived experiences of military prostitution, ultimately becoming a viable way for literature to challenge the dominant memory that has erased these silenced narratives.

The earliest examples of camp town literature appeared in the 1950s and early '60s. During this time examples of literature where military sex workers were present, the narratives focused on life in the aftermath of the Korean War. It emphasized the economic impacts of war and the destruction of families. The women and girls who worked in camptowns were written as part of a marginal social category. “In canonical short works.... produced in the mid-1950s and early '60s, the figure of the military prostitute remains fundamentally tied to her specific economic and social circumstances without being transformed into the allegory for masculinist

³² Jung Ha Kim, "What's with the Ghosts?: Portrayals of Spirituality in Asian American Literature." *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 6, no. 2 (2006): 241-248. doi:10.1353/scs.2006.0061.

nationalism that she is to later become.”³³ However, the next generation women to work in camptowns were not associated with the same degree of desperation or sacrifice as the women living in the immediate aftermath of the Korean War, and thus, military sex workers were further ostracized and stigmatized by Korean society.

From this shift in perspective surrounding military prostitution emerged, the subgenre of “camptown literature or *kijich'on munhak*-- a figuration of the camptown and the body of a female military prostitute as a metaphorical site of the US hegemony over South Korea”³⁴ emerged and the reality of systemic sexual violence was trivialized into an allegorical depiction of the power imbalance and domination of the US over South Korea. Camptown literature became a space wherein anti-American sentiment was loudly expressed, but the experiences of women who were experiencing the brunt of US neocolonialism were shadowed by the masculinist perspective dominated by a “nationalism...sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope...protest against the US hegemony relies on an allegorization of the power hierarchy between South Korea and the United States in terms of gendered and sexualize relations; a raped, prostituted and/or violated South Korean woman stands in for Korea as an American GI represents the U.S. Imperial Conquest.”³⁵ The lived experiences of military sex workers were ignored and replaced with an allegory for the power relations between the US and South Korea.

Early examples of camptown literature do not reflect the lived realities or hardships of military sex workers. Rather, these depictions from a masculine perspective contain extremely

³³Jin-kyung Lee "Military Prostitution: Gynocentrism, Racial Hybridity, and Diaspora." In *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea*, 125-84. University of Minnesota Press, 2010. Accessed June 21, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctts4z4.7>.

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

pornographic images and descriptions, promote ideas of ethnonationalism, attempt to control women's sexualities and restore the damaged masculinity of Korean men and national sovereignty. The most popular examples of early masculine, allegorical camptown literature include "Land of Excrement" and "*Scream of the Yellow Dog*."³⁶ "Land of Excrement". In these examples, male protagonists are constructed as heroes tasked with "saving" Korean women from camptowns or acting with vengeance against the United States. These examples are nothing short of a second assault on the women who work and live in camptowns. The lived experiences of military prostitutes cannot be told through allegory or graphic pornographic descriptions. The story of men saving Korean women or seeking vengeance are not the stories that will show the harsh realities of camptowns. They cannot begin to pick apart the challenges met by women who have experienced sexual violence and trauma. These are not the stories about camptowns the world needs to hear. While there are several viable examples of literature that works to show readers the lived experiences of military prostitutes, biracial children, and others left vulnerable to the effects of American Imperialism I would like to focus on two examples; *Fox Girl* by Nora Okja Keller and *Memories of My Ghost Brother* by Heinz Insu Fenkl. As I will show, literature, even when the accounts are fictional, can be written with the specific purpose of relaying the lived experiences of camptowns. Works of literature that allow access to memories other than the dominant memory while crafting the lived realities of people who have been historically silenced can disrupt the silence surrounding traumatic experiences, while challenging the dominant memory.

The novel *Fox Girl* by Nora Okja Keller chronicles the life of Korean teenagers living in a camptown and highlights the impact of American Imperialism and Empire, the distinct struggle of bi-racial children, and unlike many other examples of camptown literature, the emotional and

³⁶ Ibid

physical trauma faced by women working in the camptowns. The three main characters in the novel, Hyun Jin, Sookie, and Lobetto are all in search of a way out of the camptown and ultimately, escape the grasp of the American Empire. Hyun Jin, who is unknowingly the daughter of a military prostitute is kicked out of her house by the woman who raised her when she believed she had slept with a bi-racial boy, Lobetto. As her pseudo mother forced her to leave she shouted “blood will always tell.”³⁷ To Hyun Jin’s “mother” this instance was merely confirmation that Hyun Jin could not be anything other than a sex worker. She continued, “Get out of here!...Get out, go be a GI whore. Like your sister. Like your mother” (Keller 124). Hyun Jin’s “mother” had already decided Hyun Jin could only be a sex worker because she believed it was mapped out in her blood. Hyun Jin’s “mother” represents Korean society’s negative perception of military sex workers. The stigma and trauma of life as a military sex worker were transgenerationally passed down to Hyun Jin, and her first night working Hyun Jin was violently assaulted. However, Keller does not focus on the graphic details; instead, Hyun Jin “flies away” separating her mind from what is physically happening to her body. She imagines her childhood and fond memories. There is an emphasis on Hyun Jin’s lived experience of sexual violence and emotional trauma. As a result of her assault Hyun Jin becomes pregnant, but loses the baby soon after. Again, the deep grief and sorrow she experiences is emphasized. Through creating the Hyun Jin, Keller humanizes the experiences of military prostitutes. Readers are meant to connect with her character and be invested in her experiences.

Through stories like *Fox Girl*, the lived experiences of military prostitution become tangible-- the trauma is no longer being experienced by an anonymous woman. Suddenly, there is a face to the suffering. When readers become invested in stories of characters, like Hyun Jin, it becomes possible for them to empathize, and challenge the dominant historical narrative

³⁷ Nora Ojka Keller, *Fox Girl*. New York: Viking. 2002: 89

surrounding the American Empire's presence in South Korea. Sharing the stories of camptowns, fictional or otherwise, allows readers to understand the larger historical context of memories they did not experience first hand, as well as the interior emotions of the women experiencing camptown life; something they would not have access to otherwise.

In addition to Keller constructing the lived experiences of military prostitutes, she is able to articulate the social context of camptowns. As shown in both *Fox Girl* and the documentary *The Women Outside* some women who worked in the camp towns held the hope that they would meet an American GI, he would propose, they would get married and move to America to start a family. Military prostitutes had been ostracized by Korean society, and America came to represent. However, despite Korean women attending classes about Western culture and etiquette and learned English, many of the marriages that did happen failed. Jin Soo, a survivor of domestic violence, noted the power imbalance of marriages between women working in camptowns and soldiers rhetorically asking “who would take my word over against an American GI?”³⁸ Additionally, when women have children with American GI's their children, who are bi-racial often experience racial inequality. Much like military prostitutes, bi-racial children are often ostracized from Korean society, existing in a liminal space between American and Korean identity. By understanding the cultural and social context surrounding camptowns it becomes possible to identify the underlying social structures that uphold

The Body of Jesus: A Site of Haunting

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? ... I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws ... For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me. My

³⁸ Diana S. Lee & Grace Yoon-Kung Lee *Camp Arirang* BW, US/South Korea 1995

hands and feet have shriveled; I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me ... and for my clothing they cast lots.”(Ps. 22: 1– 2, 14– 18)

“We found no Crucifixions in any of Ravenna’s early churches. The death of Jesus, it seemed, was not a key to meaning, not an image of devotion, not a ritual symbol of faith for the Christians who worshipped among the churches glittering mosaics. The Christ they saw was the incarnate, risen Christ, the child of baptism, the healer of the sick, the teacher of his friends, and the one who defeated death and transfigured the world with the Spirit of life.”³⁹ In *Saving Paradise*, authors Rebecca Ann Parker and Rita Nakashima Brock, travel through Europe analyzing early Christian artwork. Though the crucifixion is a central theme in modern western Christianity, images of Jesus’ horrific death on the cross were not seen in churches until the 10th century, and they wanted to know why. On their journey, they discovered that within early Christian artwork the death of Jesus was not a main theme, or very relevant at all. Instead of a crucified God, they found images of Jesus as a rescuer or healer -- they did not find one image of a dead Jesus.

Despite the lack of importance the crucifixion had in early Christianity, in modern western Christianity, the death of Jesus is crafted as the pinnacle of sacrifice, or the greatest expression of God’s love. Yet, it is this same interpretation that allows for violence to be framed as an act of love or selflessness, and ultimately, violence is justified in daily life. If there was no emphasis on the crucifixion in early Christianity, it is possible to reconstruct the modern, traditional, understanding of the crucifixion without challenging the core values of Christianity. Constructing an alternative stance on the death of Jesus allows the question “who has constructed memories of Jesus?” to be asked. In this final section, I will use the work of Korean biblical

³⁹ Rita Nakashima Brock, and Rebecca Ann Parker. *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire*. Boston: Beacon Press 2008

scholar, Jin Young Choi, to construct the memory of Jesus' violent death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection as a haunting. I will explore how the collective, social memory of Jesus's death haunts the early Christian community (specifically the disciples), and how the effects of Jesus' presence and absence define what haunting means in a contemporary, post-colonial context. I will then show the connections between the body of Jesus and the body of Yanngonju, ultimately showing how writing theology as a non-fictional creative work is a valid avenue for disrupting haunting and revealing hidden stories.

Within the Roman Empire, games and public festivals acted as a stage for the empire's social hierarchy to be dramatized and broadcasted. During an event, the emperor sat atop the amphitheater where societal outcasts such as bandits, thieves, or runaway slaves were expected to die in a horrific, violent way for the entertainment of regular, law-abiding citizens.⁴⁰ These violent games represented the power of the state, and the terror it could unleash if its citizens did not obey their rules. However, some bodies were spared public humiliation and brutality if they were of a higher social class. Only those lowest in the Roman Empire's social hierarchy "could suffer the full severity of Roman criminal law, namely flogging and torture, forced labor condemnation to gladiator shows and beasthunts, and executed by crucifixion."⁴¹ Crucifixion was a theatrical spectacle used to demonstrate state terror and power, and silence the oppressed of Rome. The bodies of the oppressed exist as material reminders of the Roman Empire's state terror. "Crucifixion caused public shame as well as physical pain making the body docile by using the physical and symbolic penetration of the naked body through flogging, nailing, and public gaze."⁴² The bodies of the crucified-- beaten, bruised, and bleeding illustrate how

⁴⁰ Jin Young Choi, *Postcolonial Discipleship of Embodiment: An Asian and Asian American Feminist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015): 77

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid

colonized, otherized bodies are perceived in society. The bodies of the oppressed become a part of a public spectacle meant to warn the rest of the community of what will happen to them if they challenge the existing social order. Through the crucifixion of Jesus, the trauma, shame and humiliation of crucifixion experienced by countless bodies is materialized. Jesus' crucified body is the material presence of the trauma experienced by the oppressed. The memory of Jesus' body on the cross haunts the community who witnessed and relived his murder. The image of Jesus' broken body lingers creating the collective, traumatic social memory of his death.

Jesus was crucified by the imperial authority and the collective social memory of Jesus' broken body, nailed to the cross, embodies the pain of those colonized and terrorized by Empire. As Jin Young Choi argues, early Christians contested the perception of colonized bodies through the collective memory of Jesus' abject body. She further argues that the lingering social memory of Jesus' broken body creates an alternative reality (or a counter-memory) in which Jesus is present in his absence. The dominant memory constructed by the Roman Empire attempted to control the narrative of Jesus, "in their descriptions of Jesus's corpse, they said he had no broken bones, was removed intact, and was properly buried by members of his community. These details indicate that Rome was impotent to erase Jesus from memory."⁴³ Additionally, they declared that Jesus had not resurrected, and his body had been moved elsewhere. The Roman Empire understood the weapon memory can be used as. To control the memory of Jesus would allow the Roman Empire to maintain the social and political structure in place. If the state killed Jesus, the hope he brought out within the community would die with him, and without hope, the community would have no reason to advocate for change. By controlling the memory of Jesus the Roman Empire would be able to maintain complete control. However, the authors of the

⁴³ Rita Nakashima Brock, and Rebecca Ann Parker. *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire*. Boston: Beacon Press 2008

Passion Narratives used literature to cement the memory of Jesus' horrific death on the cross in history, resisting the stigma and shame often spurred by crucifixion. The Passion narratives are evidence of a counter-memory meant to challenge the narrative of Jesus' death constructed by the imperial power.

The Passion narratives “created a literature of disclosure and wove the killing of Jesus into the fabric of a long history of violence against those who spoke for justice.”⁴⁴ The Passion narratives are material evidence of Jesus' horrific death, and crucial in constructing a counter memory that captures Jesus' suffering on the cross. Jesus did not die silently on the cross, an unleashing of trauma. The Passion Narratives “ expose what torture did to the soul and to communities.”⁴⁵ Writing about the crucifixion made it visible. The Passion Narratives reveal that Jesus was crucified by the imperial power. He did not die in a manner of self sacrifice or an ultimate act of love; he was executed. As I will continue to prove, writing about haunting makes it visible, and can cement a counter-memory into history. Writing about haunting makes the voiceless and their experiences more visible. The body of Jesus, and narratives of suffering he embodies, is not much different from the body of Yanggongju, who embodies the suffering of Korean women involved in military prostitution. Even though the ghosts of trauma cannot be silenced or vanquished, there is hope in knowing others can be spared from suffering. When space is created for multiple memories to exist, the narratives of the dominant memory can be challenged and the experiences of the voiceless become visible. If the crucifixion is understood as a haunting, a counter-memory, where the collective memory of Jesus' crucified body contests the imperial social hierarchy, becomes visible.

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Ibid

The trauma embodied by Jesus' broken body is evidence of how colonized bodies are treated and perceived. "The Passion Narratives broke silence about the shame and fear that crucifixion instilled. To lament was to claim powers that crucifixion was designed to destroy: dignity, courage, love, creativity, and truth-telling."⁴⁶ The Passion Narratives are an example of Jesus' memory and body being present despite its absence. In the Book of Mark, another example of multiple memories, shows that Jesus was always present, even in his absence. After the crucifixion the early Christian community struggled with the painful reality of Jesus' absence in the face of imperial power. The absence of Jesus generated a deep despair and fear within the disciples. The feelings of despair and fear felt throughout the community are a kind of melancholia. As I previously showed, melancholia is a complete consumption, and the community was completely consumed by the absence of Jesus, and were unable to separate themselves from the traumatic memory of the crucifixion. This trauma sticks to them. The community is paradoxically trying to forget the traumatic memory of crucifixion though they are consumed by Jesus' absence. They cannot forget the memory of Jesus' body broken and bleeding on the cross. The collective memory of the crucifixion haunts the community, and thus Jesus cannot truly die, and his ghostly body haunts not only the disciples but the power structures of the Roman Empire. In Jesus' absence attributing melancholia to the disciples further enriches Choi's argument that the disciples did not question their faith during Jesus' absence but they were stricken by fear and terror. The disciples continued faith allowed for Jesus to be present in his absence. Through the lens of multiple memories, it is possible to understand Jesus' resurrection through the Book of Mark as Jesus' continued presence despite his absence.

Choi uses several examples of Jesus' absence creating fear within the disciples, including when the disciples return to the tomb expecting to find Jesus' crucified body and it is no longer

⁴⁶ Ibid

there. The young man at the tomb tells them: “Do not be alarmed; you're looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He has been raised he is not here” (Mark 16:6) As Choi analysis shows, the man’s statement emphasises Jesus’ absence, and combined with physical absence of Jesus’ body, the disciples are focused again on Jesus’ absence. In the face of imperial power, reminders of Jesus’ absence are a continued source of fear. The overwhelming sense of fear among the disciples is apparent again in Mark 6:45.

In Mark 6:45, the disciples encounter Jesus for the first time after his horrific death on the cross. However, they do not rejoice, but cry out in fear. In this story, the disciples are on a boat to Bethsaida, but because of an impending storm they are struggling to paddle, working against rough winds. Jesus sees the plight of the disciples, and walks across the sea toward them, and they are consumed by fear when they notice his ghostly body. Choi argues that the fear among the disciples is not merely in response to an act of divine power, but that in seeing Jesus’ body they were reminded of the deep, haunted memory of Jesus on the cross, broken and beaten. The disciples believe they are seeing a ghost, “seeing him...they cried out, for they all saw him and were terrified” (Mark 49-50). In seeing Jesus as a ghost, the disciples are responding to the memory of Jesus’ absence in the face of imperial power. The simultaneous reaction of both awe and fear among the disciples is representative of the haunted memory of the crucifixion and the healed body of Jesus appearing before them.

Within popular imagination, ghosts are not often envisioned as healed, and yet when Jesus appears his body no longer bears the scars of state induced terror. Ghosts often are imagined as vengeful, in some stories a spirit is not able to continue to the next life because they still carry trauma. However, Jesus returning to his community with his body healed shows that while the haunting born of his crucifixion may never completely vanish, it is possible to heal

from it. The images of Jesus painted in early Christian churches are not of a crucified Jesus, but of Jesus a healer. Jesus did not return to earth to assert himself as the true king. He returned to the community of disciples and to the oppressed living with the memories of life as colonized subjects at the mercy of state terror in his absence, with the intent of undermining the stigma of crucifixion and healing the community. This appearance of Jesus comes is an example of a counter-memory. Haunting becomes a mode in which multiple memories can be formed, the power and presence of the Roman empire are disrupted, and repair and healing can become possible.

Haunting is a space wherein traumatic memories are recovered. Choi positions haunting as “a hybridization of the colonial past into the present.”⁴⁷ Applying haunting to memories of colonization is a way to disrupt the dominant memory, and bring forth multiple memories. In a post colonial context, haunting becomes a liminal space where memories of a colonial past can exist within the present. In this space, the memories that the dominant narrative has attempted to erase or silence can be reclaimed, introducing a counter-memory that criticizes the dominant memory. Haunting does not have to manifest negatively, communities that carry deep memories of trauma can use haunting as a tool to recover their voices and interrupt the dominant memory that excludes their experiences.⁴⁸ When haunting becomes a site wherein haunted memories can be unearthed and the memories of the history’s victims can be recovered, haunting becomes a resource as powerful as memory. Understanding the resurrection of Jesus as a haunting in a postcolonial setting, allows for the memories of Jesus to embody the trauma of the voiceless. When the bodies of Jesus and Yangonju are understood as the material presence their ghostly

⁴⁷ Jin Young Choi, *Postcolonial Discipleship of Embodiment: An Asian and Asian American Feminist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillian, 2015): 50-84

⁴⁸ Ibid

bodies haunt the dominant memory that attempts to erase them. Through haunting, Jesus is present even in his absence.

In comparing the biblical narratives of Luke and Mark, Choi shows how Mark has an acute awareness of Jesus' absence, and how in his mind Jesus' body will always be absent. In Luke 24:36-43, the ghostly figure of Jesus has flesh and bone: "Touch me and see for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have." This version shows that Jesus is not an illusion, and has a real body.⁴⁹ However, for Mark, only the absent body of Jesus returns. "Rather than seeing the resurrected body of flesh and bones, the broken body on the cross revisits only as a ghostly body, which is boundless."⁵⁰ Seeing Jesus' absent body is a liminal space wherein the memory of Jesus' broken body met with the ghostly presence of Jesus' absent body. However, Jesus is present in his absence. The haunted memory of his body nailed to the cross-- broken, bloody, and beaten will always stick to the disciples and (early) Christian communities. "This ghostly presence intensifies the sense of absence but that disfigured body is still a presence-- a different way of being present⁵¹." Jesus' body lives on in its absence. The haunted memory of Jesus on the cross is a criticism of the dominant memory that denies his presence, and holds the anguish of colonized bodies and identities. The broken body of Jesus haunted the Roman Empire the same way the body of Yanggongju haunts the United States Empire.

Conclusion: Connections Between Theology and Literature

The bodies of both Yangonju and Jesus are a material presence of narratives the dominant memory attempts to erase and conceal. In both instances, the haunting their bodies embody an active criticism of the dominant memory allowing for multiple memories to emerge. Haunting is

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

a space of resistance, recovery, and repair for postcolonial memory, and history. “Haunting is even a way of life, a method of analysis, and a type of political consciousness that must be passed on or through.”⁵² Christian theology itself is constructed upon the haunted memories of Jesus. The Roman Empire collapsed nearly 1600 years ago and Jesus lived 2000 years ago. Christian theology has produced and reproduced memories of Jesus’ body. Doing theology in the modern age is an act of writing a creative nonfiction based on the memories of Jesus passed down through centuries. Theologians are merely remembering Jesus in their own way and using the memories of his life to analyze and interpret his life. The job of theologians is to sift through the reproduced memories of Jesus’ life and try to understand who he was. In the context of South Korea, the scholars who analyze camptown life may not have experienced the traumatic memories of camptowns, but their work analyzes the memories of camptown women. Literature is not much different. Authors writing restorative camptown literature build upon the haunted memories of camptowns and create narratives that convey the memories of the voiceless. Theology and literature are attempting to reach the same end goal. If both theology and literature are understood as works of creative nonfiction built upon navigating traumatic, lived experiences of peoples’ lives. Camptown literature and theology are constructed upon haunted memories, and they can be used as tools to break the silence surrounding the historical traumas those memories are based upon.

The role of literature, theology, and other media are not as different as they appear to be. JT Takagi, who co-directed and produced *The Women Outside: Korean Women and the US Military* shared that her purpose for creating the documentary was to challenge our own understandings of historical events: “Media has the power to make people rethink, it redistributes

⁵² Ibid

power, sharing people's voices who have never been heard"⁵³ The purpose of both theology and literature is to bring attention to the stories of the voiceless. Camptown literature disrupts the silence built around military prostitution the same way Christian theology works to bring attention to the plight of the oppressed within the historical context of the Roman Empire. Ancient theological literature, as represented by The Passion Narratives, shared the lived experience of colonized bodies and identities that had always been suppressed by the dominant narrative. The Passion narratives document Jesus' horrific death on the cross and solidify its place in history. Storytelling prevents the memories of the voiceless to fall into the cracks of history. "In telling [Jesus'] story his community remembered his name and claimed the death-defying power of saying his name aloud." Storytelling created a counter-memory wherein the traumatic memory of crucifixion could materialize and be shared with others. Similarly, sharing memories of camptowns disrupts the silence surrounding them. "The purpose of such writing is assuredly not to valorize victims, to praise their suffering as redemptive, to reveal, to praise their suffering as redemptive, to reveal "true love" as submission and self-sacrifice, or to say that God requires the passive acceptance of violence."⁵⁴ The purpose of writing about traumatic memories or haunting is to disrupt the silence that creates ghosts, and swells into a melancholia so deep it travels across generations. The purpose is to share the stories of those history renders voiceless, and prevent the suffering of others. Understanding theology as a work of creative nonfiction akin to literature allows it to address the traumas of lived experiences, and work to heal them.

⁵³ Roselly Torres. Free Film Streaming and Talk! The Women Outside and Camp Arirang: Anti Asian Misogyny and War. H-Asia. 07-27-2021. <https://networks.h-net.org/node/22055/discussions/7975301/free-film-streaming-and-talk-women-outside-and-camp-arirang-anti> Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License

⁵⁴ Rita Nakashima Brock, and Rebecca Ann Parker. *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire*. Boston: Beacon Press 2008

Epilogue: Camptowns and COVID-19

It has been over 50 years since camptowns have sprung up beside US military bases, and in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic they all went dark for the first time. The towns typically lit up with flashy, neon signs and loud music have become ghost towns, empty and waiting. Kim Joyce, who is a counselor at Durebang, a women's organization that supports camptown women, discussed camptown life in the last decade and during COVID-19.⁵⁵ The women who work in camptowns are mainly migrant women, not Korean women. In the 1990's a majority of Russian women worked the camptowns and more recently Filipino women have migrated to camptowns. Though decades have passed, systems of exploitation that recruit and harm women are very similar. In some cases, women are drawn in by ads for acting, modeling, or dancing, to then be forced to work inside a camptown bar.

However, during COVID-19, everything stopped when soldiers were placed on lockdown. Clubs and bars were placed off limits to prevent the spread of COVID. Many businesses have closed, waiting for an end. The women who came to work in the clubs were also waiting for an end. Many who had to find an income took low wage positions in factories or on farms. However, some clubs operated despite the restrictions placed on them, and because soldiers were barred from entering, Korean customers were taking their place. However, since clubs are operating in secret, the women are more vulnerable. If a customer or pimp becomes violent there is no one to report to. The camptown women who are already in an extremely

⁵⁵ Roselly Torres. Free Film Streaming and Talk! The Women Outside and Camp Arirang: Anti Asian Misogyny and War. H-Asia. 07-27-2021.
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vulnerable position are even more at risk amidst the pandemic. Currently, there are no official support systems in place to support the women exploited by the US and Korean governments. However, community centers like My Sister's Place where Kim Joyce counsels former camptown women near Camp Stanley. Additionally, the community centers provide a variety of programs or classes for current and former military prostitutes. It is meant to be a safe space for women to rest, chat, or have a meal. Community centers like, My Sister's Place, play a role in taking legal action against the Korean government in order to gain an official support system for former camptown women that includes housing, secure rights, monetary compensation, and other amenities that would allow them to live out the rest of their lives comfortably.⁵⁶ On June 2014, "122 women sued the Korean government, claiming that they were forced to engage in sexual intercourse for money for members of the United States military who were stationed in Korea after the Korean War cease-fire in 1957."⁵⁷ In 2017, 22 women were awarded the equivalent of 4,240 US dollars for physical and psychological damage. However, more must be done to address and attempt to reconcile the suffering of former camptown women.

Foremost, an apology from the US and Korean governments would go a long way. Neither government has offered a formal apology for the role they played in creating and capitalizing off of military prostitution. "a U.S. apology for its role in the postwar *kijichon* economy would go a long way. Many Koreans still have a strong desire to reconcile with the United States for actions and policies that, in their eyes, grievously harmed their country over the

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ South Korea: Suit Against Government for Forced Prostitution after. 2014. Web Page. <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2014-07-09/south-korea-suit-against-government-for-forced-prostitution-after-1957/>.

decades of partnership.”⁵⁸ The U.S. military must take accountability for all of the crimes and abuses committed in the camptowns in order to begin repairing US and South Korean relations. Additionally, returning the land the US military bases are on is an additional way to rebuild communities. Community organizer Choi Hee-shin explains: “Returning the base is so important,”...[w] have nothing economically.”⁵⁹ There is a push to transform the former base into a university focused on peace studies or a national park to incentivise community members to return to the land of the former base. “For the local people, however, there’s a taboo around the club areas,” she said. “The city is trying to revitalize, but the people won’t come. They’re ashamed of the camp town and want to forget.”⁶⁰ As Choi articulates, there is an overwhelming amount of shame surrounding the history of camptowns. Shame and fear quelled the traumatic memories of camptowns for decades, nourishing the ghosts of camptowns. But perhaps, healing the communities affected by the US Empire begins by sharing the stories of camptowns in community spaces: like the community centers of Durebang or even churches. Storytelling invokes a deep empathy in readers or listeners, but most importantly it cements traumatic memories into the fabric of history.

⁵⁸ Tim, Shorrock, "Welcome to the Monkey House." *The New Republic* 2019.
<https://newrepublic.com/article/155707/united-states-military-prostitution-south-korea-monkey-house>.

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid

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