

Speech as Action:
The Restoration of Voice in
The Kitchen God's Wife

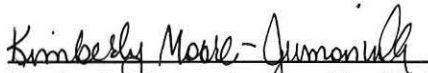
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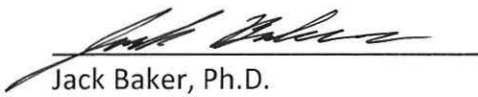
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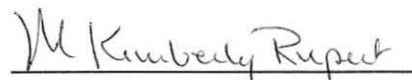
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ENG 490 Senior Honors Thesis

Speech as Action: The Restoration of Voice in *The Kitchen God's Wife*

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Like her internationally acclaimed novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan's second novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife* uses oral narration to address the intergenerational and intercultural struggles of Chinese-American mothers and daughters. Instead of viewing the goal of Winnie's narration as creating a union with her daughter, I would like to concentrate on the act of speaking itself as a means of reclaiming identity. It is through her speech that Winnie acts to reclaim her personhood that had been silenced by male and cultural oppression. The Speech Act Theory, championed by John L. Austin and further developed by John R. Searle, uses the concept of illocutionary acts to show how speech is active not passive. This theory recognizes the ability of language to do more than simply describe reality and recount events.

It was for too long the assumption of philosophers that the business of a 'statement' can only be to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some fact', which it must do either truly or falsely. (...) It has come to be commonly held that many utterances which look like statements are either not intended at all, or only intended in part, to record or impart straight forward information about the facts (Austin).

Austin offered a new insight that language is action and can, and does, result in action. Language does not only describe and bring understanding, but it can also have a performative function. The Speech Act Theory, specifically the concept of successful illocutionary speech acts, expands on the idea of speech as an action that has the ability to change reality.

Speech acts, not to be confused with acts of speech that are simply any combination of uttered words, are the smallest functional unit in human communication. According to Austin, each of these functional units of speech has three different layers of meaning. First, the utterance has a propositional meaning, or a literal meaning of what is said. Secondly, it has an illocutionary meaning, the social function or intended meaning of the utterance. Finally, an

utterance also has perlocutionary meaning, which is the effect of what is said or the action taken as a result of what is said (Sbisà). Hence, each illocutionary act has an intended corresponding perlocutionary action or effect on the hearer (Straus). Reading the novel through the lens of this theory helps illuminate why it is so important that Winnie reclaim her voice so that she is able to have an effect on the reality around her through successful illocutionary acts that have perlocutionary corresponding action. Through her speech acts, Winnie is not only able to describe her past and current reality, but also she is able to gain the authority and power to escape oppression.

The oppressive patriarchal society, represented in the character of Winnie's first husband Wen Fu, serves as the dominant voice that silences Winnie and renders her speech acts unsuccessful. Austin measures a successful speech act as one that is spoken with the correct authority at the right time and the right place. Speech acts can misfire for two different reasons: if a speaker lacks the authority to speak or if the hearer fails to respond appropriately.¹ For the purpose of this essay, silence is not equated with the absence of speech, but rather the lack of freedom to speak with any influence. Therefore, silencing is the act of making the speech of another void, irrelevant, or unheard. In her article "The Silencing of Women," Justine McGill makes the hypothesis "that in some cases, at least, the decision to stop speaking altogether comes after repeated experiences of having speech acts fail. As J. L. Austin points out, there are many ways in which a speech act can go wrong or turn out unhappily"(McGill). When Winnie is under the oppressive dominion of Wen Fu her speech acts often fail because she has no authority.

Wen Fu uses his language as an act of domination and the perlocutionary corresponding action is often physical violence. In her article "Woman's consciousness, Man's world" Sheila

¹ (Austin) This idea is carried further in (Fish)

Rowbotham states, “Language conveys a certain power. It is one of the instruments of dominion...[it] only expresses a reality experienced by the oppressors. It speaks only for their world, from their point of view”(Rowbotham). Jean Elshtain continues Rowbotham’s argument that “discourse is inevitably or necessarily domination, a form of ‘power over’ others”(Elshtain). Wen Fu is using his speech acts as a means of not only shaping his own reality but also manipulating those around him. However, This power does not have to coincide with domination and manipulation but it can also be used to encourage others to

If the analysis *The Kitchen God’s Wife* only focuses on the mutual understanding gained between Winnie and Pearl, Winnie’s unique identity and agency is still being silenced. Ethnic continuity is the passing down of an ethnic self or ethnic identity between generations and is seen as a bridge that heals the generational gap within hyphenated American families.² Some critics have gone so far as to say that once this understanding has been passed between the generations the characters become interchangeable (Kim). This sameness allows for a mutual understanding of the cultural difficulties experienced by first and second-generation immigrants (TuSmith). However, this type of analysis overlooks the role of personal identity and the unique experience of Winnie. Bella Adams’ essay, “Identity in Difference,” criticizes the idea of interchangeability within and between generations arguing that this perpetuates the “tiresome East-West binarisms of the colonial imagination.” It is not sameness but difference that should be favored, as differences allow the narrator to become his or her own person and helps “ensure that self and other identifications do not end with a harmful objectification”(Adams). While the prevailing view of oral narration revolves around the transcendent ethnic continuity, or sense of self, passed down through generations, (Xu) the Speech Act Theory allows us to view oral

² This idea is seen in Stephen Souris' article “Only Two Kinds of Daughters’: Inter-Monologue Dialogicity in The Joy Luck Club;” (Wang)Bonnie Braendlin's article, “Mother/Daughter Dialog(ic)s in, Around and About Amy Tan’s The Joy Luck Club.”

narration as a platform that enables Winnie to not only to pass down information, but also maintain her own personhood.

As Winnie sits before her daughter recounting her past over a cup of tea, she synthesizes the events telling not “what happened, but why it happened” (62). She uses her narrative as a means of “preserving, revising, erasing, and recovering past memories, involving both reproduction and repression, inclusion and exclusion”(Yuan). Terry Dehay uses the analogy of memory as the “re-membering” of the past that brings together the disparate members of past events into a new coherent group (Dehay). The process of narrating and commenting on the stories of her past allows Winnie to “re-member” and recreate her past into a cohesive and whole identity. Yuan Yuan describes this process of revising the past as a creative revision of the mother’s Chinese past to fit their present needs. Yuan asserts, “For immigrants, recollection is an important strategy used to negotiate a marginal position in an alien society.” In order to understand their bicultural identity, immigrants verbalize a narrative of their pasts as a means “of construction of new stories and new histories in search of new identities” (Yuan). According to Hayden White in *Metahistory*, all narratives are written around specific themes according to the narrator’s purpose, and Winnie’s purpose is to recount her journey from shadowy silence to personhood (White). Winnie has come a long way in the reclamation of her voice and her oral narration allows her to further continue the process of breaking out of silence. Winnie’s entire narration is not a speech act, as speech acts take the form of individual phrases, but instead it is a string of successful speech acts that seek to change reality for both Winnie and Pearl.

The first line of the novel, “Whenever my mother talks to me...” presents Winnie’s voice as a powerful force over Pearl who narrates the first chapter of the novel (Tan 1). Winnie’s first words, “Pearl-ah, have to go, no choice,” appear in the second line of the novel referring to the

upcoming family gathering (1). Pearl searches for excuses but Winnie interrupts her, “Aunty Helen already counted you in” and with that Pearl changes her plans to attend the gathering (3). Both of these speech acts have a declarative illocutionary function that pronounces a reality over Pearl that she cannot refuse. The placement of two speech acts whose illocutionary intentions are met with the correct perlocutionary response, Pearl bringing her family to the gathering, sets up Winnie as a character who has gained authority within her familial community. Pearl’s American husband believes she has been “manipulated into thinking [she] had no choice” but Pearl considers it her duty to listen to her mother (3). Regardless of Pearl’s motivations for going, Winnie is able to direct the course of Pearl’s actions. The presence of multiple overt performative assertions at the beginning of *The Kitchen God’s Wife* indicates that Winnie has established herself as a character of rightful power and authority.

Winnie’s introduction as a dominant character provides a standard of personhood that can be used as a contrast to Winnie’s past. As an older woman who has journeyed from oppression into recognition, Winnie is aware of her current position and able to comment upon her past of silence. Helen, Winnie’s friend who has posed as her sister since coming to America, is set as a foil to Winnie because she is not aware of her own silenced state. Helen condescendingly tells Winnie, “You cannot change the past” and Winnie comments, “She doesn’t remember. She and I have changed the past many times, for many reasons. And sometimes she changes it for me and does not even know what she has done” (48). Winnie is aware of the power of words to define reality because this power has been used against her for her whole life.

While Winnie has gained power in her speech since coming to America, she must tell the story of her transformation in order to make it complete. Her narrative begins, “First I told my daughter I no longer had pain in my heart...And then I told her. It is the same pain I have had for

many years. It comes from keeping everything inside” (70). Austin classifies a list of verbs he calls performatives, which include words such as “to tell, to say, to disclose,” that perform “the special purpose of making explicit (which is not the same as stating or describing) what precise action...is being performed by the issuing of the utterance”(Austin). Winnie’s initial utterance of “I told” indicates Winnie’s “deliberate act of making an assertion...By repeating her assertion...she not only asserts but also insists on her authority to do so”(Straus). The repetition of the word “pain” introduces pain as a major theme within Winnie’s life that she has had to endure. Even though Winnie “never wanted to believe” or accept her intimate experience with suffering, she has decided to relate the story of her pain to her daughter (71). In this way we see that Winnie is not simply enduring her fate “she also tells about it, and telling her story is performing a special kind of action which clearly attempts to affect her hearers”(Straus). Winnie is not only repeating her past to her daughter but she has the intended purpose of changing her daughter’s identity and perception of reality.

Winnie’s narrative is a story of reclamation of voice and identity and so it is important that she establishes herself as a child who had not yet come under the silencing of oppression. For the first few years of her life she was brought up under the powerful voice of her mother. Unlike her father’s other wives, Winnie’s mother is not afraid to use her voice to maintain her identity and prevent herself from submission to the voice of her husband. The day before her mother’s disappearance, Winnie witnesses a verbal row between her father and her mother. Her mother yelled at her father and later told Winnie she could “not stop herself from being honest and open.” Her identity is so intertwined in her voice that she had no regrets that her angry words had “fallen out” of her mouth even if they will have the dire consequences that lead to her disappearance (75). Winnie’s mother had complete understanding that her words had the power

to change her reality. Her dominating female presence acts directly against the patriarchal culture and leads to the necessity of disappearance. Like any other child, Winnie did not have the words to articulate her confusion the night before her mother disappeared, but she still understood the importance of words in ordering the world around her. Winnie recollected, “Of course, I did not know how to say I was confused, so instead I complained that I was hungry. I could do this with my mother, complain and demand things” (73). Under her mother’s supervision, Winnie naturally had a voice to state her desires and express her feelings. Her mother sought to cultivate this voice and encouraged her to express her needs and identity within a culture that sought to repress it.

While Winnie’s mother represents a character of successful illocutionary speech acts, she is also Winnie’s first introduction to silence. “She left before she could tell me why she was leaving. I think she wanted to explain, but at the last moment, she could not” (71). The morning of her mother’s disappearance Winnie demanded of a servant, ““my mother-where is she?’ ...The servant did not answer me” (81). Winnie stubbornly remained in her room, silent, for three days waiting for her mother’s return. On the fourth day Winnie demands to know what happened to her mother and she is told, “Don’t talk about this anymore,” and threatened with a slap in the face (81). The physical threat that accompanies this demand is a speech act that successfully has the effect of creating fear and silence within Winnie. This marks the beginning of the silence that is forced upon Winnie by others through dominating language and physical violence that is the perlocutionary accompanying action of the successful speech acts of others.

The two scenes revolving around the Chinese paintings are exemplary of Winnie’s descent into silence as she journeys from childhood to adulthood. When Winnie is still a child her father first asks her about the painting that is hanging in his office. She replies that it is a “bad painting”

because she could not “tell if the lady playing the lute was singing a happy or a sad song” or “if the woman carrying a heavy load was beginning her journey or ending it” (122). Kim Becnel believes that the painting portrays the status of women is mid-20th-century China (Becnel). As a child Winnie questions the ambiguous emotions of the women within the painting. She cannot read the neutral expressions on their faces and so she attempts to speak for them because their silence confuses, and perhaps scares, her. When Winnie is a young adult, her father again asks her what she thinks of the painting. During the time between these interactions Winnie lived under the oppressive and silencing presence of her aunt, uncle, and cousin Peanut. They did not see her as an individual but as a burden cast off by her father. Returning to her father after this experience Winnie does not try and speak for the women in the painting but instead comments on the composition and color. Becnel concludes that by not speaking for the women Winnie has become silent and is extending this silence onto the woman in the painting (Becnel). As Winnie experiences male oppression she becomes increasingly similar to the woman in the painting: silent, inexpressive, and without identity.

Soon after this encounter, Winnie marries Wen Fu, a pilot during the Sino-Japanese War. Wen Fu is the antagonist of the story consistently referred to as “that bad man.” After the first month of their marriage Winnie and Wen Fu move out of his parent’s house to live with the other pilots in training. Away from the supervision of others, Wen Fu decides it is time for Winnie “to become a proper wife,” meaning a wife that is silent and submissive (144). That night he rapes Winnie for the first time. Whispering in her ear he asks her to repeat obscene and inappropriate phrases. Winnie refuses to taint her dialogue and self-respect by pandering to his vulgar desires. She is attempting to hold on to her freedom of speech that gives her, however small, a means of power. Winnie’s refusal triggers a change in Wen Fu and a darker, demanding side of his

character is revealed. He shouts over and over again, “Say them!...Say them!” Still seeking to control her voice, Winnie refuses and under the strain she collapses to the floor. Wen Fu drags her out into the hallways, naked, “like a bag of rice” (145). This simile is the only imagery used in this entire passage. It signifies the moment Winnie completely loses her identity; she has been stripped of humanity until she is nothing more than an object to be dragged around.

What could I do? I could not shout. Someone would awaken, look out, and see me. So I was whispering to him through the door, pleading, ‘Open the door! Open!’ And he said nothing, did nothing, until several minutes had passed and I finally said, ‘I will say them.’

After that, it was the same every night (145).

Just as Winnie is stripped of all dignity, her voice is stripped of all power. Winnie is silenced because she is forced to speak words that are not her own. Wen Fu does not allow her the freedom to refuse to speak and so Winnie is forced into a place of submission.

During her first pregnancy Winnie fears that she will not be able to provide a voice for her child the way her own mother did. However, Winnie has a miscarriage in her ninth month of pregnancy. She remembers, “That night the baby did not move even once. I sang. I walked up and down the hallway. It did not answer” (210). The child, a stillborn, never even has a chance to speak or be silenced. Winnie names her “Monchoe, Sorrowfree, because she had never known even one sorrow” (211). This declarative act of naming is true, the child never knows any sorrow, but it has no corresponding perlocutionary action because it results in no change.

Similarly, Winnie’s second child also does not escape sorrow. Wen Fu does not come to the hospital until two days after the child is born, giving Winnie the chance to speak over the baby girl. When Wen Fu does make an appearance he utters drunken insults over the baby while handling her roughly. The child begins to cry at the sound of his voice and despite his shouts

refuses to be quieted until she is returned to her mother's arms. He shouts at the child to be silent and is infuriated that his voice has no power. Wen Fu turns violent in his anger destroying hospital equipment and threatening not only Winnie but the hospital staff as well. Winnie begins to lie to her child whispering, "That man who was shouting? Nobody we know. Not your father, certainly not. Your father is a gentle man. Your real father will come to you" (225). The only way Winnie is able to calm her child is by whispering sweet lies in an attempt to reshape her child's reality. She named her daughter "Yiku, 'pleasure over bitterness'...wishing [her] daughter a life of comfort winning out over hardship." Winnie is trying to use the act of naming to shape her child's reality but sadly this act of naming returns void because in her short life Yiku never experiences pleasure.

Out of her love for Yiku, Winnie begins to speak up for herself and reprimand Wen Fu. She grows in confidence and in a moment of passion she tells Wen Fu that she knows about his affair and "the only one [he] scare[s] is a baby" (229). Through this speech act she gains confidence and in the truth of the declarative statement Winnie is able to momentarily gain power over Wen Fu. Needing to reclaim his dominance, Wen Fu turns to Yiku, his daughter:

He walked over to the crib very fast. And I thought he was sorry that he had made her cry. I thought he was going to pick her up and say he was sorry. And then, before I could even think to stop him, he slapped her *-kwah!*- hit her hard on the face, so hard half her face turned red. 'Quiet!' he shouted.

Her eyes were pinched closed. Her mouth was open, but no sounds came out....Her breath finally came back! And she cried even louder, higher. *Kwah!* Wen Fu hit her again *-kwah!*- again and again. And by the time I could get back on my feet and

push my body in between, I saw Yiku had rolled up into a little ball...I was crying and begging Wen Fu, 'Forgive me! I was wrong! Forgive me!'

As Wen Fu abuses Yiku, Winnie falls back into silence in an attempt to protect her daughter by falsely admitting that she is wrong. Through his violence Wen Fu successfully silences both his daughter and his wife. After this incident:

She became a strange baby...She did not cry. She spoke no words, only the outside shapes of them, like the voice of a ghost.

Her voice sang up and down, high and pretty, sounding the way I often called to her, 'Yiku, look at me, look at me.' And then her voice would become harsh, grunting the same way Wen Fu shouted, 'Yiku, stupid thing. Go away!' Those were the only sounds she knew how to make (229).

By taking away Yiku's voice Wen Fu has taken away her interiority and as a result her very personhood. Over the next few years until her death, Yiku remains in an infant like state unable to grow and develop; nothing more than a ghost. Imagery of ghosts and death symbolize silence throughout the text representing the severe effects silence has upon the individual. In removing a person's space to speak one removes a person's space in reality. Winnie lives in the borderland between life and death, speech and silence. The only factor keeping her from turning into a silent ghost like Yiku is her fierce hope and resolve to try to speak. Her mother provided an environment that allowed Winnie to develop her own individual voice, and therefore identity, and Winnie clings to this sense of self, hoping to reclaim it.

When Winnie comes home from the hospital after the birth of her third child she finds her husband in bed with Min, a singer and an actor. Winnie admits, "I liked to hear her talk. I liked to watch the way her she rolled her eyes and waved her hands, very dramatic to see" (240). Even

though Min is blatantly having an affair with her husband, Winnie pursues conversations with Min because she is in desperate need of companionship. She listens intently to Min's exotic past and names Min, "Miss Golden Throat," which is both a reflection of reality and the creation of a new reality for Min. After Min left Winnie did not hear from her for many years until she happened to see an article introducing Min at a performance as "Miss Golden Throat." Min acted upon Winnie's illocutionary suggestion and used this name to create for herself a new identity. This successful speech act reminds Winnie that she is not completely silenced.

The introduction of the character of Jimmy Louie and his act of naming Winnie marks a transition towards Winnie's reclamation of her voice. While he is ethnically Chinese, he was born in America and has come over to China with the American army to serve as a translator. His command over both languages gives him a position of authority such that every speech act recorded in the novel is successful. Jimmy's first introduction is at an American dance that Winnie and Wen Fu attend. His language is flirtatious and easygoing as he gives American names to the Chinese women at the party. He gives Winnie her name; until this point she has been known by her Chinese name Weili, and this marks a new stage in Winnie's determination to create her own identity. Jimmy's speech act of naming Winnie is successful not because he is a dominating male figure rather it is the opposite. The perlocutionary corresponding action is left open for Winnie to create her own identity with her new Western name. Edward Huntley comments on the importance of this transformation, "By telling her story—speaking aloud the events of Weili's life, and putting into words Weili's thought and feelings—Winnie is able to effect the translation of Weili into Winnie"(Huntley). It is in the new identity of Winnie that she is able to not only create a voice and identity for herself but also gain the ability to exert change through the power of her words.

Jimmy's character, a foil to the monster of Wen Fu, is portrayed as Winnie's savior. He renames her, bestowing upon her a new life. On their second encounter they meet in a cafe and spend the afternoon telling each other about their lives. He allows Winnie to speak first, listening intently to her story, her identity. It is through Jimmy that Winnie is able to fall in love, escape the clutches of "that bad man" Wen Fu, get a divorce, and eventually make her way to America. Upon arrival in America Winnie experiences what Kathryn Hume calls the "shock of immigration;" it is not the clean slate she had let herself hope for (Hume). Winnie expected, and hoped, that this change of culture and the distance from Wen Fu would be the final step in the reclamation of her identity that began when Jimmy proclaimed her "Winnie," but America only proved to be another form of oppression and silence.

The day before she leaves for America, Wen Fu finds Winnie, forces his way into her apartment and rapes her. After the rape, Winnie grabs his gun and is finally able to have dominion over Wen Fu as she forces him to take off his pants and throws them out the window. This is reflective of the first rape described in the novel when Winnie is dragged naked outside their bedroom door. Coming full circle, Wen Fu now has to endure the shame of running out on the street to recover his pants. Winnie has finally gained not only a voice, but also a voice that has the ability to demand and receive action.

However, Winnie has to restart the process of reclaiming her voice when she comes to America. Hume states that the transplanted characters are "very proud that they ultimately discovered that they could think or speak for themselves. They live pressure-cooker lives at the invisible, subordinate level, but invisibility to the male power structures makes them no less real"(Hume). In China these women were able to stand up against the patriarchal society and were proud of their small achievements like Winnie's domination of Wen Fu after his final rape.

The metaphor of pressure-cooker lives represents the repressed state of the women in China that simmered beneath the surface and was occasionally released in explosions of speech and action. But when she came to America she did not experience the freedom she expected. She entered into another pot, one in which she is still silenced due to cultural and language differences. This continued silence is represented Pearl who was a result of Wen Fu's final rape. Winnie came to America to receive a new start but she carried with her a constant reminder of "that bad man."

Interestingly, within her narrative, there are only a few short paragraphs about Winnie's life in America. The time between her entrance into America and the setting of the story is only alluded to in the text. However, the few words that end Winnie's narrative are telling of her disappointment:

In America, I saw your father and I had both changed, and yet we had not. Our love was the same, but now he had his love for God. He could always speak English, I could not.

At night, he held me the same way he had in Shanghai, so grateful we would never be separated. Yet I would often cry out in my dreams, 'He's found me, he's caught me!'"

And your father would say, "Baby-ah, shh-shh, don't think about this anymore, you are in America now.

So I never told him. I never told anyone (350).

America and Jimmy turn out to be just another, gentler, form of silencing. Winnie is no longer under the physical violence of Wen Fu but she is still incapable of communicating with those around her due to the language barrier. She never tells Jimmy about Wen Fu's final rape or that Pearl is not his daughter. Jimmy takes on the role of speaking for Winnie in social situations,

because he wants to take on an opposite role of Wen Fu and be her savior. Caesar expounds upon this last point in her essay, “Patriarchy, Imperialism, and Knowledge in *The Kitchen God’s Wife*.” Caesar recognizes that at first it seems like a “somewhat clichéd popular novel, a modern pseudo-feminist retelling of the folklore story of the abused wife...What makes it modern is that the abused wife is angry at her ill treatment and seemingly ‘finds herself’ in that anger. The women, moreover, are the ‘good guys’ while the men seem quite unrelievedly evil, with the exception of the male rescuer.”(Caesar) The seemingly shallow plot and the Prince Charming trope demand a deeper look at the depth and complexity of characters. Caesar argues that identity within this novel is also “multi-layered and elusive.” What may seem shallow at first, upon has depth upon closer reflection. There is no easy fix for Winnie, no Prince Charming, until she is able to speak for herself and express this depth of identity. It is not until Jimmy has died and Winnie is living on her own that she is able to reclaim her voice, identity, and consistently utter speech acts that have a corresponding perlocutionary action.

Winnie ends her narrative with her greatest illocutionary speech act: her revelation to Pearl that she is Wen Fu’s daughter, the result of his final rape. With this statement Winnie completely changes Pearl’s identity, as was her intention. The narrative once again returns to Pearl’s point of view. She begins, “I just about fell off my chair. She had said it so matter-of-factly....And I thought, Then it’s true. Wen Fu was my father, that awful man, the one she hated. His blood is running through my mine” (353). Pearl and Winnie reflect over all the times Pearl’s behavior took on the temper of Wen Fu. As Winnie keeps talking Pearl realizes, “I didn’t want her to stop....Because the pain was still there. She was tearing it away –my protective shell, my anger, my deepest fears, my despair. She was putting all this into her own heart, so that I could finally see what was left. Hope” (357). At this moment Pearl too reveals her secret, that she has

multiple sclerosis. Winnie's words change Pearl and Pearl's words change Winnie. The change of narrators for this chapter allows for the simultaneous reactions of both characters. At first it may seem that Winnie is using her reclaimed voice to ape the male domination that she has experienced her whole life, but the key difference is that while Winnie has power in her speech to change the reality of others she also allows others to shape her reality. It is a mutual exchange that is not done out of malice but instead used to continue to create and reshape the distinct identity of both characters.

The novel ends with the story of the Kitchen God's Wife: Winnie begins the myth, "In China long time ago...there was a rich farmer named Zhang" who was prosperous but only as a result of his hardworking wife, Guo, who doubled all his wealth. However, Zhang was not satisfied and he took a young woman, Lady Li, as a mistress. She soon kicked Guo out of the house. Zhang and his new mistress squandered their riches until they ended up beggars on the street. Zhang, close to death, is rescued by a lady who turns out to be Guo and in his shame Zhang jumps into the fire and burns to death. In heaven the Jade Emperor listened to his story and made Zhang the kitchen god "for having the courage to admit [he] was wrong." The Jade Emperor listens to Zhang's story, although he only acted out of selfishness, and never even considers rewarding Guo (40-41). Guo is not mentioned at the end of the story leaving her forgotten and voiceless.

Winnie does not allow her to remain so. Winnie buys an unnamed statue, a mistake left at the back of a shop, and restores it. She creates and names the Kitchen God's wife. The Kitchen God's wife now has "no worries. Although maybe she used to worry. I heard she once had many hardships in her life." Winnie has created a representation and extension of herself to give her daughter. Giving her daughter this reclaimed statue she states, "She is telling you to speak. She

will listen.” Winnie has empowered herself through her speech and now empowers her daughter.

“See her name: Lady Sorrowfree, happiness winning over bitterness, no regrets in the world.”

The phrases “Lady Sorrowfree” and “happiness winning over bitterness” represent Winnie’s two children to whom she gave these names but they never rang true. The renaming of the Kitchen God’s wife not only restores Guo’s identity but symbolizes both Winnie’s and Pearl’s final restoration as well. Having told her story, Winnie has “no regrets in the world” (369).

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