

**Ghosts, Spies,  
and Grand-  
mothers**

**Modernities  
against  
Modernity**

## Ghosts, Spies, and Grandmothers: Modernities against Modernity

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SeMA Biennale *Mediacity Seoul* 2014 (organized by the Seoul Museum of Art, Sep. 2–Nov. 23, 2014) has published two catalogues. Book 1 contains basic information on the exhibition and focuses on participating artists and their works. Book 1 can be purchased at the Seoul Museum of Art. It can also be downloaded in electronic format at [www.mediacityseoul.kr](http://www.mediacityseoul.kr). This is the second book published by SeMA Biennale *Mediacity Seoul* 2014. Although Book 2 is related to Book 1, the second book is an independent publication consisting of articles, essays, and poems that greatly expand the theme of the biennale. Photographs of the exhibition are also printed so that the two books are complementary to the exhibition.

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# Ghosts, Spies, and Grand- mothers

# Modernities against Modernity

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*Mediacity Seoul 2014*  
: The Collaboration among Ghosts, Spies,  
Grandmothers, and Artists<sup>1</sup>

|  
Park Chan-kyong  
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The title of the 8th *Mediacity Seoul 2014* at the Seoul Museum of Art is “Ghosts, Spies, and Grandmothers.” Running from September 2 to November 23, SeMA’s main exhibition hall presents the work of forty-two artists. The Korean Film Archive is concurrently hosting screenings of forty-two films along with the two art installations by Rho Jae Oon and Ho Sin Tung.

The current edition of *Mediacity Seoul* places a considerable emphasis on the affinities between the exhibition theme and the artworks, unlike the previous editions that had prioritized the new media technology. Of course, it is rather challenging to name a catchall term that would represent the themes of many different individual works. Doing so runs the risk of severely simplifying some works, as well as reading other works in a contrived manner. Organizing theme-based exhibitions does involve such risks, but then again, the risks are not necessarily something to be afraid of. A theme is simply a curator’s proposal. Given the challenge in applying a theme to comprehensively encompass an exhibition, artists, curator, and the audience should all share such a challenge as a presupposition. A theme is neither a criterion to judge a work of art nor a ‘net’ to filter it, but closer to a stain that is found on it. It is more akin to certain patterns that suddenly emerge in the mind of an audience at certain point in time after having experienced the artworks.

The words of the exhibition title, “Ghosts, Spies, and Grandmothers,” work in a similar manner. Ghosts make direct appearances in the work of Kim Soo-nam,

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<sup>1</sup> The images of and the text about the artworks mentioned in this essay can be found in the first volume of the exhibition catalogue, SeMA Biennale *Mediacity Seoul 2014* volume 1, as well as on [www.mediacityseoul.kr](http://www.mediacityseoul.kr)

the photographs of Naito Masatoshi, and in the videos of Kim In-who. In the imagined theater of Ho Sin Tung, there are neither actors nor an audience, but only peculiar movements of the audience seats. In the apocalyptic images of Basim Magdy, the 'ghosts' remain in the background or constitute the mood of the work.

Regarding the exhibition from a distance, most of the exhibited works may appear to maintain certain kinds of relationships with *gwisin*,<sup>2</sup> or ghosts, in some aspects. This is even more the case if we consider ghosts in a wider sense of their implications, such as the return of tragic history. Jesse Jones and Tamura Yuichiro associate ghosts with the return of historical ideologies and peculiar events or their contemporaneous reconstructions. While this exhibition presents ghosts in terms of the culture of the traditional religions in Asia, it also invites its reading in terms of the memories of repetitive return of overwhelming pains and failures. The exhibition conjures up the failures of utopian aspirations and the project of modernity of the twentieth century, and the artists interpret such failures in terms of ambiguous values.

In the work of Jesse Jones and Lina Selander, socialism is remembered not only through the forlorn play of *The Internationale* or the emphasis on the calamity of Chernobyl, but also must be contrasted in relation to the current state of affairs in which radical attempts for new social communities are contained and revolutionary resistance has all but been lost. This resonates in Sean Snyder's work *Exhibition*. Re-editing the pedagogical film of a contemporary Mexican art exhibition held in a Ukrainian village, Snyder empties out the excessive message of the political fervor of Soviet propaganda, effectively nullifying it as a void gesture. However, the direct merging of art and the everyday life of the common people of the time offers a jolting contrast to many of today's contemporary art exhibitions' lack of communication, vitality, and value of enlightenment. The 'ghost-images' conjured by the artists discreetly reveal not only the failure of the project of modernization but also its constant companion of dreams and passion, as if they were a pair of hidden cards.

<sup>2</sup> *Gwisin* is a Korean term for dead persons' spirits that hover around living people. It is based on a commonly shared belief in the dichotomy of the body and spirit. However, unlike many different forms of spirits in world religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism, *Gwisin* is an independent but isolated entity that is not associated with any organized religion. *Gwisin* is typically depicted as legless, very light, and dressed in white garment. — translator's note.



Jesse Jones, *The Spectre and the Sphere*, 2008



Sean Snyder, *Exhibition*, 2008

Ghost, or *gwisin*, is to be considered in relation to traditional Asian religious culture.

Asia is the birthplace of Buddhism, Confucianism, shamanism, Taoism, and Hinduism, where these religious influences are still deeply felt in the everyday. While there may be discrepancy throughout the regions, the incorporation of traditional religious culture in Asian contemporary art has manifested mostly in terms of formalism, Orientalism, and nationalism. This explains the relative straggling of the development of artistic languages that establish correspondence between age-old anthropological manifestations—such as ritual, mythology, cosmology, and folklore—and various discursive issues that contemporary society faces today. The critique of Orientalism has affected ‘internalized Orientalism’ within Asia as well, leading to cynical attitudes despite its intended meanings. For instance, it was not without reason that the repeated commercial and institutional successes of cultural exoticism were met with concerned voices.

For these reasons *Mediacity Seoul 2014* attempted to resurrect the interests in local traditions that have been abandoned in contemporary Asian art. Such resurrection requires a certain audacity, and this exhibition reveals such daring itself as a cultural ambition. In other words, through the biennial, I intend to refer not only to ‘post-Orientalism’ but also to emancipation from the mirrored room of East and West, as it were. Demythologizing Orientalism or sociological critique of ‘tradition’ are important and urgently needed, but these can also end up as a barrier to numerous preparatory stages of studying ‘the traditional,’ and to certain puerility, mistakes, and limitations that are practically inevitable and even necessary in the process of moving beyond Orientalism. Rather than giving inspiration for various forms of de-colonial practice against Western-centric, imperial cultures, one can be mired in yet another outsider’s perspective, wherein one regards just about every tradition through the lens of Orientalism. Equally lamentable as the internalized Orientalism in Asian cultures is the ensuing cynical stance regarding the use of tradition—such as upholding, resurrecting, and re-making it—as well as retreating into yet another myth called ‘contemporary art.’ Surely, the issue is not the critique of Orientalism per se, but rather the misunderstanding and supplanting of its lessons. However, one can understand the words of the poet Kim Soo-young, “all tradition is a good thing no matter how filthy it is,” if one can accurately assess the degree and intensity of how severely the traditional, or the old, has been destroyed in Asia, especially in East Asia, that has oscillated between extreme ‘hot’ wars and the Cold War.

This well-known verse of Kim Soo-young’s poem implies that tradition has already become thoroughly contaminated and even dirty. Tradition has become an easy prey for the ideology of nation-state, and the word tradition itself signifies discrimination against the past by the present. In this regard, ‘traditional ghost’ is a subject that has been killed multiple times. But, to say that even a filthy tradition is a good thing means that one desperately needs it. In Korea, where one’s own traditional culture appears to be a kind of taxidermy or even a foreign culture, it becomes necessary ‘to turn the poison into a medicine,’ as the old saying goes.

We witness an artist such as Jawshing Arthur Liou who boldly represents his experience of Buddhism and reanimates the Buddhist worldview in his work. When siren eun young jung newly interprets *Chunhyangjeon*<sup>3</sup> through the lens of the gender politics and Haejun JO & KyeongSoo LEE awaken the *dokkaebi*<sup>4</sup> that are long forgotten in Korean culture, I feel that, following their leads, rich but forgotten heritages seem to be untangled and reemerge again. Many Asian artists participating in this exhibition share ambivalences and uncertainties in regard to traditional culture and religious themes. While they express sense of alienation brought about by the schism of the traditional and the contemporary, they also utilize paradoxical freedom and possibilities stemming from the condition in which traditional culture has been thoroughly destroyed. The works of SU Yu-Hsien and Rho Jae Oon especially fit the bill. Made of thousands of bells, Haegue Yang’s work is a confident step forward, appropriate for the scale of her imagination of ancient times. The films by Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL

3 *Chunhyangjeon*, or, “The Story of Chunhyang,” is arguably one of the most renowned Korean romance folk tales, and perhaps the most significant work of fiction from Joseon dynasty. Like most ancient tales, the exact time period and the author of the story remain unknown. The story is believed to have originated from between the seventeenth and nineteenth century Joseon dynasty. The main plot evolves around the romance between a man of aristocratic class and *gisaeng* (state-sanctioned entertainer of the time) Chunhyang, who is renowned for her chaste. The tale has evolved into a *Pansori* version, which is a mixture of music and literature in which a single narrator sings her story in accordance to the beat of a drummer. — translator’s note.

4 *Dokkaebi* is an imagined creature that often appears in traditional Korean tales. Although there are different accounts of their appearances, commonly it is dressed in traditional Korean outfit, *hanbok*. It is said to originate from spirits that penetrate into and dwell in inanimate organisms or old objects. *Dokkaebi* is thought to be involved in mischievous acts. While different from *Gwisin*, *Dokkaebi* also bestows mean tricks or wealth and blessings upon people. — translator’s note.



YAO Jui-chung, *Long Live*, 2011



Nina Fischer & Maroan el Sani, *Spelling Dystopia*, 2008-2009

and Jakrawal NILTHAMRONG's are splendid *samramansang*,<sup>5</sup> all things and phenomena in the universe, depicted in the manner of Asian 'gothic.' Having been subject to banishment by science and technology, ghosts relentlessly attempt to recuperate their own visages and voices in the media works of 'artists-as-medium,' that is, 'medium' in the sense of surrogates or spokespersons for the ghosts.

If we use the term 'ghost' in the sense of the spirits that have been excluded in official history, and in order to attentively listen to their words of unfulfilled wishes and angst, then the entirety of this exhibition may be called the Ghost Exhibition. Hence, there appear mountains, islands, and forests in many of the works. In Korean shamanism, ghosts supposedly occupy mountains and islands. The *Manmulsang*<sup>6</sup> of Diamond Mountain depicted in Min Joung-Ki's paintings is a mountain of animism; the mountain in Choi Min-hwa's painting is desolate and phantasmagorical one of graves where *Wongui*,<sup>7</sup> or the ghosts of unfulfilled wishes, reside. For Bae Young-whan, Inwang Mountain<sup>8</sup> is the site of struggle among religious devotees, political forces, and trekkers, all the while remaining a sacred place despite their occupation.

5 *Samramansang* is an all-encompassing term that refers to every possible thing and phenomenon in the universe. — translator's note.

6 *Manmulsang* literally translates as images of ten thousand things or images of everything under the sun. In this context *Manmulsang* is the central and most spectacular part of the Diamond Mountain, or Geumgang Mountain, located in North Korea. It is a valley of countless unusually shaped rocks and peaks that offer awe-inspiring views, and represents a microcosm of the universe. — translator's note.

7 *Wongui* refers to ghosts of people who died of unnatural causes or in abrupt ways. They are known to wander between the realm of the living and the dead. *Wongui* are believed to be able to be liberated from their angst and rest in peace by means of shamanistic rituals.

8 Inwang Mountain is a major mountain centrally located across Jongno-gu and Seodaemun-gu in Seoul. Hence, it is easily visible from across the city. Many of its large granite peaks are its distinct features. The mountain is the subject of the renowned painting, *Inwang jesaekdo*, which is a national treasure, by Jeong Seon of the Joseon dynasty. — translator's note.



We may easily assume that ghosts populate mountains and islands because these places are ‘exterior’ to civilization, outside of urban areas. However, the exact opposite is true; mountains and islands are the quintessential inside, the places that have suffered intense violence since the dawn of modern era in Asia. Such a historico-geographical landscape has been most clearly revealed in the Taiwanese writer Li Ang’s novel *The Visible Ghost*. Li portrays in great details the female ghosts’ acrimonious memories of violence during their former lives in Taiwan. The novel thoroughly discloses Taiwan’s sufferings inflicted by the colonial aggression of the Netherlands, China, and Japan.

Through their deaths, the female ghosts in the novel not only overcome fear, but also attain freedom to transcend time and space. Just as in movies, the experience of the ghosts becomes another version of the Benjaminian ‘angel of history’ that collects fragments of different times and spaces. Although female ghosts are not messiahs, at least, one by one, they reassemble the fragments of civilization destroyed in the process of the coming of the messiah.

In the way it is portrayed in the novel, Taiwan immediately recalls the history of the islands that were subject to colonialism and the atrocities of the Cold War, such as Jeju Island, Okinawa, and many of the Indonesian islands. While he was making his work on the female divers of Jeju Island, Mikhail Karikis has pursued his inquiry about the origin of the peculiar sound of *sumbitori*<sup>9</sup> made by the divers. According to a scholar he met, divers may have devised *sumbitori* as a way to overcome not only the fear of the sea but also the fear of the 4.3 massacre<sup>10</sup> that took place between the liberation from Japanese occupation and the Korean War.

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9 *Sumbitori* is both the age-old breathing technique practiced by female sea divers in the southern islands region of South Korea, as well as its peculiar, whistle-like sound when exhaling. The sea divers in Jeju Island pass on the technique from one generation to the next. Young girls begin to learn diving around the age of eight, and when they reach the age of about fifteen they become fully capable of diving in search of pearls and seafood, contributing to their family livelihood. The sea divers produce the whistle-like sound as they exhale immediately after emerging from the water. It is said that the sound helps them exhale completely from deep inside their chest and also inhale oxygen as a way to recharge for the next dive. Today the practice of sea diving, hence *sumbitori*, is nearing extinction. — translator’s note.

10 Jeju 4.3 refers to the massacre of April 3rd 1948 when the South Korean government, in light of the growing tension with North Korea, falsely accused Jeju islanders as communists and committed indiscriminate killings. — translator’s note.

While islands have always been excluded in our customary historico-geographical thoughts, at last they reclaim their rightful place through YAO Jui-chung’s Green Island, like Nina Fischer and Maroan el Sani’s Hashima Island. These islands reveal the final state of Asian dystopia that not even ghosts can inhabit. In the film screening section, the depiction of the massacre in the forest in Joshua Oppenheimer’s film *The Act of Killing* resonates with Apitchapong WEERASETHAKUL’s forest where ghosts reveal themselves and disappear. In the demilitarized zones and around the borders, one mostly finds high mountains, rivers, and forests where ghosts reside, old folks toil away, and spies conduct their secret activities.

‘Spies’ as a motif allows us to pay attention to the peculiar circumstances of East Asia’s passage through the era of violence, colonialism, and the Cold War in the twentieth century: namely, the wars, massacres, and victims of ideology, autocracy and surveillance. As the anthropologist Heonik Kwon stated, the Cold War is both a space and era full of countless local political and cultural convolutions that are not detectable in the loopholes of the hegemonic struggles and power balance between the US and the former Soviet Union. In the periods of colonialism and the Cold War, the subject of authority and the process of ideological formation had been intricately interwoven. The North Korean regime could not have been born without the Japanese occupation; the anti-Japanese guerilla struggles are considered its bedrock of national identity to this day.

Colonialism and the Cold War are deeply interconnected not only in the same era but also in spatial terms. The Japanese economy achieved prosperity via the Korean War; likewise, the South Korean economy has taken a great stride forward by participating in the Vietnam War. Neruda, and even Sun Yat-sen,<sup>11</sup> had been enthused by Japan’s victory over Russia; the spirit of pan-Asia resulting from Bandung Conference<sup>12</sup> virtually perished in the Cold War order. As seen in the work of CHE Onejoon, North Korean artists have constructed

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11 Sūn Wén, or Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), was a Chinese revolutionary, the first president and founding father of the Republic of China and medical practitioner. He was the co-founder of Kuomintang, a political party in the Republic of China. As a unique political figure in uniting post-imperial China, he is widely revered among Chinese people in both the mainland China and Taiwan. — translator’s note.



Dinh Q. Lê, *Barricade*, 2014



Eric Baudelaire, *The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi, and 27 Years without Images*, 2011



Pilar Mata Dupont, *The Embrace*, 2013

monuments of gargantuan scale throughout Africa, which are supposedly very difficult to remove.

The mutually influential relationship between regions transcending specific eras and nation-states is the core theme in the work of Dihn Q. Lê. Lê looks back at the relationship between the Algerian liberation movement and the anti-colonial struggle of Vietnam. He stacked French-Vietnamese colonial furniture high in between an Algerian rapper and the audience. Blocking the space in between the singer—substituted by a microphone—and the audience, the Asiatic French furniture—Barricade—critiques the political and cultural situation of today in which the international solidarity that has once existed between Vietnam and Algeria has now become an object of scorn. However, the barricade simultaneously assumes the dual function of being a physical barrier against the enemy as much as the role of media that amplifies the enemy’s music. According to the artist’s proposal, a place of rupture is also a medium of communication.

Considering the Cold War in the plural, the Cold Wars are not simply over due to the destruction of the Berlin Wall or the dominance of global capitalism. Rather, the Cold War exists in diverse and multifarious guises in the Korean peninsula and across Asia. As the Propeller Group depicts, the Cold War is increasingly removed from ideological conflicts and have transformed into a kind of ‘theater of the Cold War.’

Pilar Mata Dupont subverts the male-oriented master discourse of ‘national division and reunification’ by means of a sophisticated psychological drama of women. The crux of *The Embrace* is not so much a subversion of a sign by merely replacing a male couple by a female couple. Rather, it occurs at the moment in which the embrace, symbolizing reunification, is transformed and caught in an awkward and unsettling facial expression, devoid of affect. Here, the ‘theater of the Cold War’ does not rely on deep feelings such as revulsion or love; it suddenly becomes severed from its historical origins due to the light-hearted enjoyments and the indices of calculation

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12 Taking place from April 18 to 24, 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia, Bandung Conference was the first significant international conference of Asia and Africa, in which twenty-five countries gathered to discuss matters pertaining to their continents and the world. Most of the participating countries were newly independent, and they shared their resistance against the exclusionary policies of the world superpowers in determining the domestic affairs of the former. As such, their shared goal was to promote political independence, Afro-Asian economic and cultural cooperation, and to oppose colonialism or neocolonialism by any nation. — translator’s note.

of losses and gains. Although it was once a site of the Vietcong guerilla operations, the Cu Chi Tunnels, now a tourist attraction, above which the gun sound of Western tourists’ shootings are heard is precisely the index of such chasm.

Consider Yoneda Tomoko’s deliberate investigation of the Russian spy Richard Sorge,<sup>13</sup> Sangdon Kim’s photographs of the cemetery<sup>14</sup> of the camp town female workers who catered to the US military personnel, and James T. Hong’s investigation of Japanese chemical warfare; these are not merely some events of the past. Out of the increasingly blurred memory of the past, the artists utilize various kinds of ‘incantation-inscription’ and at other times offer cold facts and archival documents, ultimately reawakening the implications of postcolonial and post-Cold War in the present tense. Restoration in this regard means simultaneous utilization of both rewinding and fast-forwarding. While all types of restoration entail imagining the original while in truth belong to the real time in which it takes place, the restorations undertaken by these artists are rather closer to that of the past while imagining the future.

The theme of ‘spies’ also pertains to the radicalism and revolutionary aspirations of the twentieth century, that is, the unconditional passion, sacrifice, and risk-taking toward building a society that is free and equal for all. Eric Baudelaire has paid attention to the Japanese Red Army participating in the Palestinian liberation movement; Kato Yoshihiro of Zero Jigen (Zero Dimension) has synthesized the

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13 Richard Sorge (1895-1944) is arguably one of the world’s best-known spies whose secret activity during his years in Japan made a history-altering contribution to the defense of the Soviet Union from the invasion of Nazi Germany and the victory of the allies. During his career as a Soviet intelligence agent, he had assumed the positions of journalists of several newspapers, including correspondent journalist in Japan for *Frankfurter Zeitung*. During the escalated tension of the WWII, he was arrested and executed in Japan. — translator’s note.

14 Sangdon Kim has recorded the Sangpaedong cemetery in Dongducheon, a major site of the US military camps, located 47 km north of Seoul, and near the Demilitarized Zone. Hundreds of women who had been club workers in Dongducheon were buried in the cemetery, but without proper gravestones. In fact, many tombs simply bear numbers only, with no names. For further information on the artists’ work in Dongducheon, see curator Heejin Kim’s *Museum as Hub: A Walk to Remember A Walk to Envision*, which culminated in two exhibitions at Insa Art Space, Seoul, and New Museum, New York in 2008. — translator’s note.  
[http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/Occurrence/Show/occurrence\\_id/955](http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/Occurrence/Show/occurrence_id/955)  
<http://www.museumashub.org/neighborhood/insa-art-space>

Buddhist ‘ritual’ and avant-garde movement in the street; Joanna Lombard has reenacted the memories of radical community movements in Europe.

To ‘individuals’ mired in a competitive society that perpetuates totalizing commodification of even the internal psyche, these artworks allow us to gain a glimpse at the moment of the resurgence of community, or at least compel the contemporary audience to confront their own timidity. I would like to add that the legacy of such hardcore politico-artistic movements speak the uncomfortable truth, thereby challenging the pervasive presence of ‘soft avant-garde’ in contemporary art, especially contemporary Asian art. Insofar as Asian Orientalism mostly assumes the outward appearance of avant-garde, it may be a typical rearguard that merely claims the ‘forward movement.’ In the black images of Eric Baudelaire, I could literally discover the exact opposite values of Orientalism as though looking at negatives. Only through shifting the angle of the vision can one gain very brief glimpses of certain Japanese hard truth inscribed in the black silkscreens, perhaps of terrorism, or perhaps of revolutionary action.

Spies in films may be attractive, but actual spies can be scary. Spirits are to be upheld, but ghosts are to be kept at bay. At least within Confucian society, seniors are rightly to be respected. But in reality, grandmothers are effectively banished from the society of pervasive worship of youth. If somewhat exaggerated, they are simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. Spies embody secrets, ghosts are hear-says, and grandmothers possess pasts that cannot be fully told. At times they can be spotted, but mostly they are not easily visible. Or, society does not want to see them, or is forbidden to meet them. Grandmothers are transcribers of silence, owners of highly classified information. They carry on the existence of the borderline, of the liminal space, so that it is difficult to ascertain which side they belong to. Hence, they are ‘mythic’ figures that are to be interpreted and reassessed from diverse perspectives.

Grandmothers appear in many different ways in the exhibition and screenings. The film *Legend of Miryang 1*<sup>15</sup> features grandmothers who stake their own lives in the struggle to prevent the construction of transmission towers in their village. KIM In-who’s nineteen-eighties documentaries of shamanistic rituals show grandmothers’ communal plays. Mikhail Karikis documents female divers’ labor and their everyday life. The producer Sang-il Choi collaborates with Jiyeon Kim to feature the sounds of grandmothers residing in a remote mountain. If a grandmother can be considered an occasion to contemplate ‘women and time,’



Mahardika Yudha, *Sunrise Jive*, 2005



Sang-il Choi, Jiyeon Kim, *Grandmothers' Lounge: From the Other Side of Voices*, 2014. Commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2014



she is a witness who has endured the era of ghosts and spies, hence a reservoir full of memories of amazing stories. When grandmothers throw their own ‘excluded’ bodies against the official suppression, they become peculiar subjects of politico-aesthetics that make police rather awkward and unsure of how to respond. Giant grandmothers like the legendary *Magohalmi*,<sup>16</sup> or *Suhwangmo* (西王母)<sup>17</sup> in *Sanhaegyung*<sup>18</sup> and *Yo-ji-yeon-do*<sup>19</sup> (*Immortals’ Feast on Yoji Pond*) possess supernatural power, and if they will, they can swiftly move across islands and the land in a matter of a footstep. This is the realm from which Rho Jae Oon’s wands originate.

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15 *Legend of Miryang 1* is a 2013 documentary film directed by Park Bae-il, chronicling the eight-year struggle of grandmothers who staged demonstrations against the planned construction of sixty-four transmission towers that will send electricity from the southeastern part of the Korean peninsula to its urban centers. — translator’s note.

16 *Magohalmi* is a giant goddess of mountains or goddess of creation in Korean mythology. In large mountains in Korea, there are many legends of the genesis that are associated with *Magohalmi*. Although *Magohalmi* is now merely one of many goddesses today, she had once enjoyed the position of creation god when the status of women was higher than or equal to that of men. The dwindling of shamanism and the ascendancy of patriarchy explain the decline of her status. While the word ‘halmi’ usually signifies grandmother figure, some interpret that it refers to a ‘large mother,’ or a powerful fertility figure. Some relate tales of the demise of *Magohalmi* during her attempt to test her ability or in the process of creation of the universe. This has also been interpreted in relation to the rise of male god figure, or patriarchy. — translator’s note.

17 Also known as Xi Wangmu, or *Suhwangmo*, literally meaning “Queen Mother of the West,” Si Wang Mu is an ancient Chinese goddess whose origin traces back to oracle bone inscriptions of the fifteenth century BC. She is regarded as the goddess who imparts prosperity, longevity, and eternal life to humans. The West of her name refers to the Western part of China, rather than the West as commonly associated with today. — translator’s note.

18 *Sanhaegyung*, the Korean name for *Shan Hai Jing*, or formerly known as *Shan-hai-Ching*, is a Chinese classic text of mythic geography and myth. The English version of the text is the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*. It is believed to be a work of many scholars’ contributions from the Warring States to the early Han dynasty. The text consists of a total of eighteen volumes, and is divided into four categories: Classic of the Mountains, Classic of the Seas, Classic of the Great Wilderness, and Classic of Regions Within the Seas. It records some 550 mountains and 300 rivers, up to 277 different animals, and other geographical and cultural accounts. — translator’s note.

19 *Yo-ji-yeon-do*, or *Immortals’ Feast on Yoji Pond*, is a painting depicting a banquet for various gods and immortals, held by the goddess Si Wang Mu in the imagined Kunlun Mountain in ancient Chinese myth. — translator’s note.

In Korea, “old grandmother” retains some vague image of the early riser who prays for the wellbeing of her descendants to the spirits of the heaven and earth, with an offering of fresh and pure water. While the passivity and transcendentalism of prayer has been subject to major critiques by materialists, there are still many who pray in the deep mountains of Korea. Most of them are women, *ajumma*,<sup>20</sup> and grandmothers. The grandmother may be the most powerless being in relation to state authorities, and yet perseverance and empathy symbolized by the old grandmother may also be reconsidered in terms of proactive value that transcends the state authority on ethical grounds. Choi Sunghun + Park Sunmin locate the paradoxical power belying such inertness in the subtle, vulnerable trembles in plastic bags. In Otty Widasari’s video, the waterfall where the Muslim woman arrives by walking across a peaceful park is also a source of the power.

Among the selected films for screening at the Korean Film Archive, many portray the powerless as the sole subject who monopolize the ‘truth,’ as it were. Based on Yun Heung-gil’s classic novel *The Rainy Spell* (1973), Yu Hyun-mok’s film *The Rainy Season* is set in the context of the Korean War and deals with the relationship between ghosts, spies, and grandmothers. The village becomes split into two factions of left and right wings, grandsons are killed in action, and the grandmother’s prophecy is ignored. In the end, just as the grandmother has predicted, her grandson reincarnates into a snake and returns to the village. In the film, it is only the grandmother who retains the physical sensibility to detect a long duration of time and the ability to foretell the future. Although the grandmother may appear to be merely sitting in the room and sighing all day, the ability to detect a change of the climate and to sense for living beings resides only in her body and her soliloquies. Her lamentations are thus simplicity of love that makes other characters (and the audience) busy loathing and rather uncomfortable. Her inactivity is not merely a passive crouching posture, but rather embodies a position of someone who is determined to guard until the end the realm which no enmity can infiltrate.

Of course this exhibition cannot be reduced only to ghosts, spies, and grandmothers. Seen from another perspective, the exhibition provides an occasion

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20 The word *ajumma* is a Korean word literally meaning “aunt.” Generally, however, it is used to refer to any middle-aged or senior women. — translator’s note.

to look back at modernity itself in Asia and reconsider the rigid worldview based on nation-states as well as certain naïve expectations of liberalistic ‘mobility.’ Instead, the exhibition proposes an emphasis on regarding the world and Asia by bursting open the confining framework of the ‘ethnic-state.’ In Asia, there is an abundance of unexpected, unique relationships among different localities that move beyond Asia.

Similar to the oft-quoted method of ‘bricolage’ à la Lévi-Strauss, Asia embodies the very process of transformation through reconstitution in relation to the changes of times and perspectives. Asia is neither the opposite concept of the West nor an object that can be concisely defined. The renowned Chinese scholar Wang Hui, in reviving Takeuchi Yoshimi’s notion of ‘rewinding the West,’ argues that Asia should pursue the positive values of Western modernity such as democracy and equality. Wang refers to this in a paradoxical term, “modernity countering modernity.” When transcending the frame of modernity, Asia legitimately gains the magnificent complexities with excessive, “peculiar modernities.”

The paradox and the margins of modernity represented in the work of Mahardika Yudha, CHUNG Seoyoung, Truong Cong Tung, and especially that of Basim Magdy, reveal that the process of modernization that we experience does not always take place like it is supposed to, and that it is thwarted at various points. Through such never ending slippages we can discern a lead into imagining a new modernity that is respectful of laziness (Mahardika Yudha), that enables us to feel our way through the universe (Jawshing Arthur Liou, Haegue Yang, Basim Magdy), that reconciles with tradition (Bae Young-whan, SU Yu-Hsien, Kim Soo-nam), that recuperates eco-friendliness (Otty Widasari, Truong Cong Tung, Min Joung-Ki). Most important of all, such slippages will enable us to conceive of an idiosyncratic modernity. Situated at the one end of the orbit that Haegue Yang constructed on the floor, *Hon-cheon-jeon-do*,<sup>21</sup> or *The Complete Map of the Celestial Sphere* is a map of the universe painted according to the East Asian pictorial system but represents Western knowledge. I like to think that this map is truer to the appearance of the universe than pictures produced by means of ruler, compass, and computer. The orbit is also positioned toward a small painting by

Joo Jae-Hwan. Even though the inscription states that the moonlight is fading, the moon in Joo’s painting is still rendered bright. It appears that Yang’s glistening moon and the celestial orbit imply constellations born of such endless expansion and movement.

Fukushima, a remote corner of the universe, has experienced the great earthquake in 2011, and the sinking of the Sewol ferry this year has also resulted in countless young souls that are unable to rest in peace. The list of the sufferings is endless, and no one knows when it will come to a closure. When the Sewol tragedy took place in the Korean sea, many people claimed ‘we will never forget.’ But it is also imperative to remember that the basic human condition is that we are bound to be oblivious. “Ghosts, Spies, and Grandmothers” are precisely the kinds of beings that we need in this context. *Mediacity Seoul 2014* does not simply sing a song in praise of them. For one thing, the ‘media artists’ in this exhibition invite ghosts, spies, and grandmothers to listen to and publicly share the stories that only they know, whose details have been suppressed, distorted, and have not yet been given form. The exhibition is a site of publicly sharing the details of uncomfortable secrets through ‘media.’

A ‘media artist’ Lina Selander’s pursuit of the origin of the photography is related to radioactivity. Considering the depletion of meaning in Sean Snyder’s anti-spectacular, de-dramatized, hence ‘flattened’ television, artists still persistently resituate ‘media art’ so as to compete with mass media over values. The ‘real value’ of media is dramatically revealed in Nilbar Güreş’s portrayal of *Open Phone Booth*. The value of mobile phones that hardly ring on a mountaintop in a Kurdish village compels us to reconsider what ‘media’ truly means—those us who easily get impatient with the slightest drop of sound quality or with a brief dormancy of the receiver. In this context media means less ringing or connecting but more of a kind of waiting. Indeed, such deep thoughts about media ought to ring about in a media art biennial. But frankly, over her video work, I prefer Güreş’s *Open Phone Booth 2*, a work of painstaking labor of embroidery. The more you engage this work there emerge not only certain stages of truths but also certain things that do not want to become so clear. There are some things that must not become clear. Although I have tried to explain the artworks in my own way by contextualizing them, the truths will still remain in the incantation, codes, and dialects that the artists use.

(Translation by Young Min Moon)

21 *Hon-cheon-jeon-do*, or *the Complete Map of the Celestial Sphere*, is a revised version of a traditional oriental planisphere affected by and combined with Western astronomical knowledge imported to the Joseon dynasty around the 18th century in Korea. — translator’s note.

How to Interpret China and Its Modernity  
: Rethinking *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought*<sup>1</sup>

|  
Wang Hui  
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**Political Legitimacy and the “Continuity and Rupture” of History**

An old platitude has it that Chinese history is continuous while that of the West is discontinuous. Through understanding the transformation—that is, how a conquest dynasty changed itself into a Chinese dynasty—it can be seen that the so-called continuity of Chinese history is an illusion. China experienced ceaseless invasions and penetration of the center by the periphery, and ruptures both of politics and of ethnic relations took place repeatedly throughout Chinese history. In other words, this so-called continuity results from a process of continual intentional or unintentional historical fabrication. For example, the rulers of the dynasties established by ethnic minorities exploited Confucianism (including its various manifestations such as Neo-Confucianism, classical studies, and historiography) to make themselves Chinese. Thus, the matter of “ritual China” is not so much a ritual or moral issue but one of politics, or rather, a question of political legitimacy. The reason I use the notion of “self-transformation” here is to illustrate the substantial degree of agency in this process; the rulers of new dynasties (whether they were minorities or rebels) incorporated themselves

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1 *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought* (four volumes) (現代中國思想的興起, 2004-2009) is Wang Hui’s study on the history of thought. In the volumes of this huge book, Wang Hui analyzed Chinese thought from Neo-Confucianism in the Song dynasty to that of the early-twentieth century under the four themes: “Principles and Things,” “Empire and Nation-State,” “Gongli and Anti-Gongli,” and “The Community of Scientific Discourse.” The author tried to analyze Chinese history and thought in his own way, going beyond the Western frame of historical interpretation. At the same time, he throws a question “How should we interpret China and its modernity?” and answers to it himself. This text reveals such purpose and intention in his writing the book. Wang Hui won the Luca Pacioli Award in the late 2013 with this book. The Luca Pacioli Award, named after the Italian mathematician and Renaissance man Fra Luca de Pacioli, has been awarded every year since 2011 to an outstanding personality who produced creative knowledge with interdisciplinary approach. — translator’s note.

within dynastic genealogy or orthodoxy (*daotong*)<sup>2</sup> by justifying their own legitimacy through orthodox Confucianism. Such “self-transformation” was, however, only a precondition, as this legitimacy was ultimately established only through a whole series of relationships of mutual recognition, which is to say that “self-transformation” could only be confirmed via a particular “politics of recognition.”<sup>3</sup> To take the Qing dynasty as an example, many Han Chinese literati (as well as some of the kingdoms surrounding China) only came to accept the political legitimacy of the Qing by the Qianlong period (1736-1796). This is not to say that there was no progress toward a regime that integrated Manchus with Han Chinese during the Kangxi (1662-1722) and Yongzheng (1722-1736) eras, nor does it imply that conflicts between Manchus and Han completely disappeared after the Qianlong period. It does indicate, however, that in the broader sense, the position of the Qing as one link in the genealogy of Chinese dynasties was not affirmed until that time, a key historical transformation that has been uniformly ignored in past studies of the Qing. The reason I insist on a recurring redefinition of the category of “China” is that the understanding of China by its dynastic rulers, the literati, and the common people alike changed along with these redefinitions.

It is precisely at this point that it becomes necessary for us to reopen a historical perspective and to explore historical relationships outside the narrative of nationalism. Beyond a historical understanding of ethnic and geographical relationships, when seeking to explain the realm of pre-twentieth-century history, I suggest we need to pay attention to two questions: first, the “politics

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2 *Daotong*: when various Buddhist schools developed in China, each of them claimed that the teachings/doctrines of its founder were uninterruptedly passed from one generation to the next. This was called *daotong*. In his fight against Buddhism, Han Yu of the Tang dynasty proposed a Confucian *daotong*. He argued that the most important *Confucian* teaching/doctrine (*dao*) is benevolence (*ren*), which was passed from Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu, and the Duke of Zhou to Confucius and Mencius. This *daotong* ended with Mencius. But, Han Yu claimed that he himself was responsible for continuing this *daotong*. Song Neo-Confucians also painted themselves into this picture of the evolution of Confucianism — Chinese translator’s note.

3 “Politics of recognition” is a concept created by a Canadian political philosopher Charles Taylor, who introduced it in his book *Multiculturalism* (1992). This concept is based on the idea that human identity is formed through a process of mutual recognition that is conducted dialogically between the subject and the object — translator’s note.

of recognition” mentioned above, that is, the historical formation of political legitimacy; and second, political culture, on which “self-transformation” relied. For example, what was the nature of the political culture upon which the Qing validated its legitimacy as a Chinese dynasty? How was such a political culture able to incorporate different ethnic groups, populations from different regions, and different religions into a flexible and pluralistic political structure? Clearly, understanding of this requires a type of knowledge completely at odds with “nationalist knowledge” that depends upon such categories as ethnicity, language, and religion. This type of knowledge has its own special concepts and forms, something that can be illustrated by the example of Classical Studies.

Scholars of Classical Studies begin their study of the New Text School<sup>4</sup> with the Changzhou School<sup>5</sup> of the late Qianlong period. After the Eastern Han (c. 220 AD) New Text Confucianism declined, and aside from a few scholars like Zhao Fang of the late Yuan and early Ming period, it seemed to have disappeared completely until the rise of the Changzhou school. In their discussion of Qing Classical Studies, however, scholars of intellectual and academic history invariably fail to consider the efforts made by the Jurchen (*Jin*), the Mongols, and the Manchus upon entering China to use Gongyang learning—in particular the themes of “grand unification (*da yitong*),”<sup>6</sup> *Tong santong*<sup>7</sup> (linking with the Three Dynasties), and

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4 The New Text School was formed through studies of Confucian scriptures from the later Han dynasty. The school’s academic roots lie in scriptures written in the clerical script style of the Han dynasty. The texts were based on content that had been orally transmitted between scholars and students after Qin Shi Huang burnt Confucian scriptures. In opposition to the New Text School, the Old Text School’s academic roots lie in texts written in characters used during the Spring and Autumn Period — translator’s note.

5 The Changzhou School emerged during the Qing dynasty and studied the *Commentary of Gongyang*. Leading scholars such as Cunyu Zhuang (莊存與, 1719-1788), Zhuang Youke (莊有可, 1744-1822), and Fenglu Liu (劉逢祿, 1776-1829) were all from the district of Changzhou, so the school was named after it — translator’s note.

6 “Grand unification (*da yitong*)” is a method to rule people in an integrated way, which appears in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The Qing period scholar Chen Li (陳立, 1809-1869) interprets grand unification in this way. “There are not two suns in the sky, nor two kings in a territory, nor two masters in a family, nor two superiors of equal honour; and the people are shown how the distinction between ruler and subject should be maintained (“Record of the Dykes,” *Book of Rites*)” — translator’s note.



“distinguishing the inside (i.e, what is Chinese) from the outside” (*bie neiwai*)<sup>8</sup>—to construct orthodoxy for new dynasties.

These works or proposals were written by Jurchen, Mongols, Manchus, and Han Chinese serving the regimes of the three former rulers and were not research pieces devoted specifically to New Text Classicism, but rather political essays or memorials submitted to the throne. This shows, however, that many of the New Text themes had already been embedded in dynastic politics and the process of political legitimization. For example, when the Jin dynasty fought against the Song, Jin literati and officials used the study of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and *Gongyang* learning in their attempts to legitimize their conquest of China. During the course of the Mongol conquest of the Song, the Mongol/Yuan empire

7 *Tong santong*: *Santong* literally means the orthodoxies of the three dynasties of Xia, Shang, and Zhou ruled by sage kings—that is, the black orthodoxy of Xia, the white orthodoxy of Shang, and the red orthodoxy of Zhou. The teachings/doctrines of the *Gongyang* School argue that these three orthodoxies are actually identified with each other. Thus, the literal meaning of *tong santong* is linking with these orthodoxies. However, it implies that any particular royal family cannot maintain its domination forever, and thus justifies the ceaseless replacement of dynasties with each other. It also calls on each successive ruling family to be kind to the previous one, since it too will be replaced one day — translator’s note.

8 *bie neiwai* appears in the *Commentary of Gongyang* and it is the logic of distinguishing the inside from the outside according to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. There are two ways of distinction. One is distinguishing Lu State from many other states of the Huaxia people and the other way is distinguishing many states from barbarians based on the concepts of the inside and the outside. A Confucian scholar of the Eastern Han period, He Xiu, discussed the two cases in relation to the evolution of the world, and he considered the latter a relatively developed period with its rulership becoming more stable — translator’s note.

9 *The Commentary of Gongyang* is one branch of interpreting the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. There are three main commentaries on the Annals: *the Commentary of Zuo*, *the Commentary of Guliang*, and *the Commentary of Gongyang*. *The Commentary of Gongyang* is known to have been (first orally) made by *Gongyang Gao* (公羊高) of the State of Qi during the Warring States period of Chinese history (475-221 BC). He Xiu insisted on the theory of the three worlds (*san shilun*: the age of chaos, the age of rising peace, and the age of heavenly peace)—which means the evolution of the world—using the *Commentary of Gongyang*. The theory of the three worlds was later inherited by Kang Youwei in the later Qing dynasty. During the Qing dynasty, the New Text scholars paid attention to the *Gongyang* way of learning. They interpreted the *Spring and Autumn Annals* by focusing on the profound meanings of its phrases and discussed politics based on the *Commentary of Gongyang* — Chinese translator’s note

not only considered establishing itself as a Chinese dynasty, with officials at court debating whether they should be the successor of the Liao, the Jin, or the Song, but around the period when the Taihe laws lost their force, Confucians discussed how to use the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to establish a legal foundation for the Yuan. After the Manchu conquest, the Qing government restored the civil service examinations, administered them in Chinese, made a commitment to Confucianism (especially Zhu Xi’s teachings) and found inspiration in the *Gongyang*<sup>9</sup> learning in constructing its own political legitimacy. If there were no political culture or theory of legitimacy centered on Confucianism, it would be impossible to discuss continuity among the dynasties. Historical continuity, then, was a product of self-conscious construction.

The above discussion not only illuminates the necessity of understanding Confucianism from the angle of legitimizing knowledge, but also the need to investigate the political practices and the self-examination of pre-twentieth century Chinese dynasties in dealing with ethnic relations. “Empire” is, of course, a mode of rule, an embodiment of power relations. When, however, a new, nationalist knowledge devalues the traditional knowledge described above as being outdated, it is clearly important to re-examine this once legitimate knowledge and its implementation, and to look again at the experience of multi-ethnic coexistence of those times. This is of great value in understanding nationalist knowledge, its limitations, and, in particular, its tendency toward homogeneity.

### The Construction and Questioning of Nationalist Knowledge

The advent of the dominance of the East/West and China/West binaries is a historical creation, so viewing these binaries as methodologically absolute will bring along a number of obstructions in its wake. For instance, in legal studies, there are many who posit a dichotomy between the Chinese ritual system and the Western legal system, something not entirely unreasonable. Nonetheless, it oversimplifies both China (Does not China have a legal tradition?) and the West (Does not the West have rites and moral education?). There are also many scholars who discuss the methodological problem of particularism and universalism. In my opinion, we should of course take into account the particularity of a given historical period or society as the object of our research and we especially need to critique Western universalism. Philosophically speaking, however, neither concept is viable, because, as far as we know, all narratives of “particularism” are universal particularism, while all the narratives of “universalism” are particular

universalism. These two narratives appear to be diametrically opposed, but are actually interdependent. To a certain extent, what we must work for is a “singular,” or singularistic universalism. Within this framework of singular universalism, the pursuit of singularity is not merely a return to particularism, but rather to reveal the universal implications of the singularity, and to ask how and under what conditions such singularity can be translated into universality.

At this point, allow me to refer to the third and fourth volumes of *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought* to discuss the inherent relationship between modern knowledge and the problem of political legitimacy in the twentieth century. In the first two volumes, I discussed the relationship between the Heavenly Principle worldview and a centralized administration as that between Classical Studies and dynastic legitimacy. So, why follow that up with a discussion on the issue of knowledge? It is just as numerous intellectual historians have noted; no matter how much they might otherwise disagree on questions concerning the origins and beginning dates of modernity, historians of Europe all define the question “modernity” in terms of science and new methodological concepts. As Isaiah Berlin wrote:

The direct application of the results of this investigation of the varieties and scope of human knowledge to such traditional disciplines as politics, ethics, metaphysics, theology, and so on, with a view to ending their perplexities once and for all, is the program which philosophers of the eighteenth century attempted to carry through. The principles which they attempted to apply were the new scientific canons of the seventeenth century; there was to be no *a priori* deduction from “natural” principles...

It was precisely within the transformed epistemology that “space, time, mass, force, momentum, rest... are to take the place of final causes, substantial forms, divine purposes and other metaphysical notions. Indeed the apparatus of medieval ontology and theology were to be altogether abandoned...”<sup>10</sup> This new idea had a decisive impact on all fields of knowledge; it not only permeated the work of philosophers who held the natural sciences in the highest esteem such as Locke and Hume, but it was just as clear to those deeply skeptical

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *The Age of Enlightenment: The Eighteenth Century Philosophers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), pp. 16-18.

of the metaphysical assumptions of that science like Berkeley. It was also highly influential on the principal manifestos of the American and French revolutions, and, in fact, left its mark on virtually every aspect of the modern world. As a result, the social historical significance of science and its methodology could not be restricted strictly to the scientific method per se, but rather as a scientific mentality that extended itself to the transformation of *weltanschauung*. Through analysis of scientific concepts and the worldview of “general truth” (*gongli*), I sought to disclose the genealogy of the formation of modern knowledge.

A common thread running through *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought* is the reciprocal relationship between knowledge and institutions exemplified by such things as the relationship between centralized administration and the notion of Heavenly Principle and that between general truth and modern nationalism and its institutions. In discussing Kang Youwei, for example, I stressed his re-creation of a Confucian universalism premised on a historical consciousness of the loosening of the hitherto self-evident relationship between that universalism and the notion of China. Under this premise, before attempting to demonstrate the universality of Confucianism, it had first to be acknowledged that China was but one part of the world, and that there was a substantial region outside of China, an expanse not just in terms of geographical space but also of culture, politics and education. What, then, can we tell from this interaction between Confucian universalism and the image of China among numerous other nation-states? I believe it explains the dependence of nationalism on a certain universal worldview and a genealogy of knowledge. In other words, the birth of this new type of Confucian universalism took place at the same time as the birth of China as a sovereign state in a new world system. This “Confucian universalism” is, in fact, nothing other than a circuitous modern manifestation of the idea of “general truth.”

The relationship between universalism and the modern nation-state, or nationalism, involves the same logic. Since the late Qing, the epistemic structure of this universalism has been preserved, while the Confucian garb in which Kang Youwei invested it has been completely stripped away. The legitimacy of the modern nation-state is based on knowledge of this universalism and its logic for taxonomy, while the institutions of the modern nation-state rely on the institutions of this universalism and the division of labor among them. Regardless of whether it the concept of sovereignty, or the justifications made by various political power-sources for their own legitimacy, or the historical idea of evolution and progress, or the rationality of institutions and theories supported by this historical concept, none of these can be independent from this universal

knowledge. The establishment of modern nation-states is correlated with an anti-historical epistemological framework, and although nationalist knowledge often appeals to “history,” “tradition,” “origins”—that is, to cultural particularism—its basis is this new epistemology and intellectual genealogy. Therefore, to discuss intellectual system and discourse today is, in effect, to talk about a new type of political legitimacy. A distinctive feature of nationalism is the ability to trace its own beginnings, whether that be ancestor veneration or cultural origins, but these more “ontological,” “original,” or “particular” forms of knowledge are generated by the new epistemology and its intellectual framework. So, this new epistemology was not a product of “ontology” or “origins” per se, but rather the “ontology” or “origins” required by the epistemological structure of the nation-state.

It is not enough, however, simply to point out the constructed nature of nationalist knowledge or to engage in its deconstruction to be able once and for all to effect a permanent solution to the problems it poses; this is wishful thinking. Even as nationalism is producing its own “ontology” or “origins,” it is also appealing to mass mobilization; it is here that those who “take the initiative” (*zijue zhe*) strive to unite their thinking about the nation’s fate under a given “propensity of the times” (*shishi*) with the values to which they have dedicated themselves. For example, the Chinese revolution, as a sweeping social movement, a national liberation movement of rare scale and depth, took in a number of historical elements that cannot be encompassed within the category of nationalism; nationalism cannot cover everything about twentieth-century China. Thus, a critique and negation of nationalist knowledge cannot be equated with a simple refusal to acknowledge an extremely rich and complicated historical process. If we acknowledge that modern China is built on the foundation of Qing dynasty history, can the modern China produced by the revolution be adequately described via nationalist knowledge? And, by the same logic, in what sense can the Chinese revolution be depicted as a “national revolution?” *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought* does not study the twentieth century Chinese revolution in any depth, but the inquiry outlined above should provide a few avenues for reconsidering modern China.

In other parts of the book I bring up the matter of “anti-modernity modernity.” The third volume, *General Truth and Anti-General Truth (Gongli yu fan gongli)*, analyzes the thought of Yan Fu, Liang Qichao, and Zhang Taiyan, particularly the different ways they go about questioning modernity; these doubts were not total, but rather inhered within their very pursuit of modernity. To be sure, there are great differences in the depth and the ways of thinking of these individual

thinkers. For example, Yan Fu approached Western positivism through the teachings of Zhu Xi, translated and justified evolutionism through study of the *Book of Changes* and historiography, and touched upon the problem of freedom in Western thought through the theories of Laozi. His translations and interpretations of Western thought, however, in themselves constitute dialogue with, adjustment to, and tension with Western thought. Liang Qichao became familiar with Western political and religious knowledge through New Text Confucianism and the teachings of Wang Yangming, translated and introduced modern European theory of science, German theories of the state, the philosophy of Kant, James’s pragmatism and his theory of religion. But his thinking also is imbued with critical reflection on capitalism, a utilitarian system of education, and the sense of a crisis of values. Zhang Taiyan was the most radical of the three, providing a systematic and intense critique of modernity from the standpoint of the consciousness-only school (*weishi xue*) of Buddhism and Zhuangzi’s theory of seeing all things as equal (*qiwu lun*). Beyond that, in the final volume’s discussion of the community of scientific discourse, I analyze the internal complexity of the scientific community, and those individuals and groups who self-consciously resisted the hegemony of scientism. All these discussions show that Chinese thinking included an interrogation within its pursuit of modernity, a phenomenon that can be interpreted as the self-doubting or self-negation of Chinese modernity.

Within the framework of “anti-modern modernity,” however, it was not just the scientific community, Hu Shi, and the “May Fourth” new culture movement that represent scientism, but humanists like Liang Qichao, Liang Shuming, and Zhang Junmai who opposed scientism, must also be incorporated into its genealogy. Is there any solution here? I see the modern humanities as being a supplement to scientism that emerged out of resistance to it, and in this sense this humanism cannot provide a way out of the “crisis of modernity.” At this point I need to explain my approach to this problem; I do not, in any simple way, simply take the thinking of these men as a solution, but lay out how their thinking developed, that is, I try to show how possible solutions to modernity were incorporated into the process of pursuing modernity as a whole. I treat Yan Fu, Liang Qichao, and Zhang Taiyan the same way. I set out different possibilities and different avenues for thinking through this problem as found in their complicated intellectual entanglements, as well as in their individual responses to “the propensities of the times.” In fact, intellectual diversity in itself constituted critical reflection on modernity and thinking toward a “solution,” which is why I often describe Chinese modernity as “anti-modern modernity.” We must not

fail to take into account, however, that a basic trend of modern history has been to dispel this diversity by incorporating it into modernity itself, something that renders a “solution to modernity” a very simple problem that requires no self-struggle. My point here is that the way out of modernity is not simple, but that it requires a multitude of critical reflections, so as to create one or a series of possible directions—this is what I wish to do.

I began writing *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought* in the bleak and depressing atmosphere of the aftermath of 1989, a time very different from the China of today. The book divides into four major subdivisions: “Principle and Things” (*Li yu wu*), “Empire and State” (*Diguo yu guojia*), “General Truth and Anti-General Truth” (*Gongli yu fan gongli*), and “The Discursive Community of Science” (*Kexue huayu gongtongti*), and seeks to pursue the following questions: How did the Song-Ming Heavenly Principle worldview take shape, and what was its historical dynamic? What, ultimately, is the relationship between the establishment of the Qing empire and the founding of the modern Chinese state? What intellectual resources can late Qing thought provide for understanding our complicated attitude toward modernity? How did the regime of modern Chinese knowledge come into being? What is the relationship between the modern “general truth” worldview and that of Heavenly Principle? Study of these questions provides us with a historical understanding of what is “China,” what is “Chinese modernity,” and the modern significance of Chinese thought. The above questions are closely related to the following double-edged inquiry: what is Chinese identity? This question is at once a meditation on the tendency toward social division inherent in modernity and an exploration of the historical dialectic between diversity and identity; it seeks to understand modernity’s social relations and their tendency to expand. It is also a meditation on both the tendency toward the concentration of power under modernity and on the elements of traditional Chinese thought that seek to overcome this trend. As most scholars have discovered, once one has begun the process of study, the plentitude of history and its internal logic lead one forward, with the consequence that the best method becomes simply to develop the widest possible perspective. To, thereby, respect that perspective’s internal logic and to sort out history’s tangled tracks will provide us with a set of related and enlightening insights. At the conclusion of this introduction, however, I would like to add that the motivation for the inquiries described above is rooted in a particular “propensity of the times,” and both inquiry and study are attempts at cutting across the ruptures of history.

From the lecture in the *Mediacity Seoul* 2014 pre-biennale symposium held in the Seoul Museum of Art in 2013

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Otty Widasari, *Jabal Hadroh, Jabal Al Jannah (Green Mountain, Heaven Mountain)*

## Ghosts, Female Ghosts, and Being Possessed

|  
Li Ang  
|

1

I always believed that there are ghosts in this world, in the entire world, on the entire globe, in every culture and every country.

There are ghosts and ghost stories.

It was only when my novel *The Visible Ghost* was published in Germany that I was told otherwise.

Nevertheless, I still do not believe what I heard in Germany. Whether in Germany, or what other countries or places, without any exception, how could there be any culture without ghosts! Perhaps what they referred to is different.

Coming back to my frustration with “no ghost,” regarding my publication of *The Visible Ghost* in Germany, my translator was a middle-aged German woman, Ms. Hasse. She loved my novel after she read it and suggested that she would translate it into German and publish it. Of course, I agreed with it right away.

The readers must be surprised that if Germans essentially do not believe in ghosts, how could Ms. Hasse be interested in my novel about ghosts?

That is right. Ms. Hasse is not any ordinary German. She’s married to a Taiwanese man when she was young, and through her marriage, she learned about Taiwanese and Chinese culture. She is, in fact, German with cross-cultural background and, for her, ghosts are not entirely unfamiliar.

Having spent a lot of time on the novel, she finally translated and we began to look for a publisher. Immediately, however, we ran into a problem; as much as most editors liked the novel, they were afraid that no one would buy it because Germans do not believe in ghosts and spirits.

I drew a basic conclusion that most Germans, who are not intellectuals, or do not have any cross-cultural experiences, do not believe in ghosts, and thus, they would not buy a novel about ghosts.

Why? I asked.

The answer was simple.

Germans are rational, and thus, they do not believe in ghosts.

But I am reluctant to accept such a simple answer.

This is not the case for all Western countries. In Europe, there are ghosts in the UK, for instance. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the ghost of the King poured out his grievances. There are still ghosts and spirits in some old houses in the UK and ghost stories are popular until today.

Fine! Even I agree with the idea that Germans are rational, why can't ghosts exist within their rational thinking? Aren't there any ghost stories in their culture?

I thought about this carefully. Among the acclaimed German fairy tales, the Grimm's fairy tales, for example, depicts witches and goblins.

There is no mention of ghosts. Dracula is known across the Western world, but it is considered a "monster" rather than a ghost.

Then, what is ghost? Ghost is what people become after they die.

In other words, the rational Germans do not believe that they would become anything once they die. According to their religious beliefs, the spirit of a person would go to either heaven or hell depending on their good or bad deeds once he or she dies.

However, that spirit, after death, is not a ghost.

I have traveled for many years in the Islamic region of the Middle East, where "ghost" also does not exist as it is in the oriental and Buddhist cultures in their beliefs.

Then, what are ghosts?

Or, one should ask,

"In the cultures where they exist, what are ghosts?"

Let's talk about why I think there are ghosts in the world.

First, since my initial understanding of the world, I "knew" there are ghosts.

Ghosts are around us. In my hometown, Lugang, an old town with three to four hundred years of history, ever since I was little, I believed that there is a ghost lurking around every corner at every winding alley.

There are ghosts because there are ghost stories to prove it. Even though I have never seen them, there are people who have seen them, or said to have seen them. It is a principle drawn from experiences although it is not my own experiences, but those of others (other's experiences are equally useful, as you would know that being cut by a knife is painful by looking at someone else's experience).

I fully believe it. There is no other reason. Since the second largest city in Taiwan became a small town, many things disappeared in Lugang, but the ghosts still exist.

The ghosts come from the ocean: those who died in the shipwreck of trading boats to the far seas, soldiers who dies in the war on the sea, people who were murdered by pirates, people who died in various ways... and those who committed suicide in the sea, especially more than half of them were women.

They all became ghosts and the subject of popular ghost stories.

Ghost is the "thing" left behind after someone dies. This is what I believe.

There are good ghosts and bad ghosts; the good ones, for instance, help people to find gold; the bad ones would harm living beings in "exchange" for his/her own replacement.

As I grew older, I also discovered that ghosts would also become spirits; of course, only the good ones would. For instance, "the water ghost becomes the Town God," or a lesser "God," for example, the "Su County God" who looks after the area for its safety.

Thereafter, I realized that Taiwan is an immigrant society, and "God" could also be migrated from Mainland China. For example, those who died in the Nansei-Shoto Trench and made his power felt like to protect its people, thus it has been venerated as the local "God."

There may not be any distinction between ghosts and spirits; a ghost may become a spirit, but not vice versa. The order goes from bottom to top and from bad to good, and their position and hierarchy are clear, which makes the Confucius sense of order quite apparent. In a famous Confucius' quote "how would one know about death without knowing life," the existence of ghosts is not objected, yet only it is mentioned.

In the Chinese culture, Confucianism precedes Buddhism. However, the concept of "reincarnation" must be an origin critical to the formation of ghosts in oriental cultures. Once a person dies, he will become a ghost before reincarnation. Ghosts may also transcend and reincarnate, they may also die, and completely disappear, or become something more evil. They then would not have much to do with people, and then, not be talked about.

## 3

I realized quite early on that most ghost stories are about females. One must mention that the disadvantaged are often the best candidates to become ghosts.

Until today, women are still disadvantaged, so they become ghosts rather easily. The disadvantaged or women are unwilling to reincarnate because they want to take revenge for the wrongs and injustice that they suffered while they were alive.

"I will come back and haunt you, even I have to become a ghost" is what women would say when she dies with hatred.

They would dress up in red from head to toe, including their underwear and shoelaces. Does wearing red help to take revenge? That is the common belief. At least, wearing red makes a statement of being ferocious ghosts.

The deaths of women are often unique; they are often tortured, forced or harmed to death, and their murderers are violent, using knives or guns. However, women's suicides, in Chinese culture, do not leave traumatic injuries because most commit suicide by hanging or drowning. In comparison, it is not that easy to be poisoned because it is difficult to obtain poisons.

Unlike men, women do not commit *seppuku* or cut their throats; women's suicide, on the other hand, is gentler without using anything

but a long piece of fabric, or simply, by drowning.

Hanging ghosts and drowning ghosts are the most vicious ghosts in the stories I have heard of in my childhood. Only with various religious rituals, would they be chased away, or transcend not to harm people.

The deceased female ghost would often appear in a cliché-like image, with long hair to her waist, blood oozing out of her mouth or eyes, her face white washed or bruised. Wearing a white long gown that covers her hands and feet. They do not walk, while their feet being three feet above ground; they float around rapidly, and are invincible.

The female ghost can achieve what women normally cannot, especially in taking revenge on someone. My novel, *The Visible Ghost*, depicts five female ghosts based on this principle.

Wait, taking revenge for them is not my goal. What happens to them once they take revenge?

They would find freedom, the freedom of a female ghost, the freedom of women.

We all know that Taiwan is not only an immigration society, but was also once a colony. During the fifty years of Japanese occupation, strangely, there were no memories of Japanese ghosts. Is it a matter of climate? That the "snow woman" from Japan's land of ice and snow cannot survive in the sub-tropical climate? Ghosts wearing kimono is also insignificant.

There are indeed large disparities among ghosts of different cultures and regions!

It is even more so in racial differences. Taiwan's native "Austronesian" commonly shares the idea of the "spirit." As to the "ghost," although it exists in their culture, their idea differs from that of the Chinese culture. My personal understanding is that this "spirit" exists in the myriad of things, in everything, in flowers, plants, stones and sand, and in the deceased forefathers—they are "ancestral spirits," there is no ghost.

Using small analogies for bigger principles is a way of dealing with the grand

narrative and the depth of history. I have always believed that it is the best approach for women's writing.

With this kind of imagination for ghosts, the stories of my book *The Visible Ghost* are set in a town called "Lu Town" (a metaphor for my hometown Lugang) where I created five female ghosts lurking in the east, west, north, south and the middle of this town.

If we were to magnify its geographical characteristics, they can be also understood as five female ghosts in the east, west, north, south and the middle of Taiwan.

I assigned the female ghost in the middle to the narrative of a period of Taiwanese history. Being in the middle means a symbol of power or being at the center of the capital, and the female ghost in the middle comes from an aristocratic family who had educational opportunities. However, under the oppression of strict Confucian rituals, she drowned herself due to baseless charges.

Once she becomes a female ghost, she washes off her false charges. She writes about the history of Taiwan for women from a more innovative angle, on a street called "Never see the sky."

Taiwan is an island located on the east of the Pacific Ocean, separated by the Taiwanese straits from Mainland China. The closest distance between the two is less than 100 kilometers.

The natives are Austronesians who grew in size and migrated to the middle and south of the peninsula. Their traces can be found as far as in Australia. This contented nation had a long history in Taiwan, yet was eventually defeated by the migrants from Mainland China.

Some were criminals on the run, some were those who suffered from natural calamities or pirates wandering about the coasts of China, while there were many people who dreamed of occupying a new world. These new immigrants quickly occupied the natives' land and their properties, forcing the Austronesians to move into the mountains.

The Spaniards came first. Then, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Dutch saw the island as they were sailing by, and its beauty captured them: "Formosa, the beautiful island."

Other than the short Dutch occupation, the British and the French have since then come to this land. By the end of the Ming and the early Qing dynasty, Zheng Chenggong took over the island from the Dutch, and it was ruled by the Qing government, where they set up government mansion and bureaucrats put in place to rule it. By the end of the Qing, Western powers moved in armed. In the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, the Qing government ceded Taiwan to Japan, and stated "Taiwan, where the birds do not sing, the flowers do not blossom, its men are emotionless and women are disloyal."

This statement deeply wounded the feelings of the Taiwanese.

Japan occupied the island for fifty years, and then, the Republican government came to Taiwan. During the February 28th Incident in 1937, many Taiwanese elites were murdered and stringent Martial Law was put in place.

Martial Law was lifted only in 1987. Taiwan might not have experienced bloodshed and revolution, yet has explored every step in becoming the most democratic society in the Chinese communities in the world.

The symbolism of the female ghost in the east is inspired by the central mountain ranges, representing the natives that were forced to move into the mountains.

Her helplessness let her become a female ghost who was a prostitute in her former life. She was shamed to death with the cruelest punishment. Hundreds of years later, she shook off the scars on her body and her super power controls the famous numbers in the lottery, whom people venerate in the nether world.

The female ghost from the north is not from the island. Since she had a relentless hatred in Mainland China, she came to Taiwan to cause trouble. In the novel, she was chased away by the locals and asked to leave by the sea.

The female ghost in the west comes from the west coast of Taiwan. Due to the local custom, she got married to a Mainland Chinese man. But the man fled with all her properties to China. The female ghost had to find all means and overcame many difficulties, and rode a sailing boat across the Taiwanese strait to kill that unfaithful man.

After the female ghost from the west returned to Taiwan, she lived by the sea and invented a new lifestyle. Having let go of her hatred, she began to travel the world

on a sailing boat, or riding the heavenly lamp to roam about the sky.

Her biggest dream is to board an airplane to travel the world.

The female ghosts from the south are like laidback tropical islander. After she took her revenge on the man who had killed her, she continues to lurk in southern Taiwan as a ghost.

Writing about the geographical characteristics and the history and culture of Taiwan through female ghosts is my narrative, using small analogies to big ideas in my novel *The Visible Ghost*.

As much as I wish to examine the microcosm, I would also like to reveal the truth.

## 4

Whether “ghost” or “spirit” has a unique relationship with “people,” it is being “possessed.”

My novel *Possessed*, completed and published in 2011, portrays the occupation of Taiwan: from the “Austronesian” to Han migration to the island, the arrival of the Dutch, the British and the French, and the ruling of the Qing dynasty government, the Japanese occupation, and finally, the Republic of China era.

For which, I have the following explanation, narrated by the male protagonist of the novel:

“Have you considered that we might be possessed to a certain degree, only that we are unaware of it!”

“As a writer, you can write about subjects beyond the present. Don’t you think you are also possessed in a way?”

“We, to a certain extend, have experienced many lives, and are also a form of being possessed?”

“Ah! Speaking of being possessed, we are not the only one!” He continues, “In the last centuries, the Taiwanese island has been occupied by the Dutch, the British, the French, the Qing Empire, Japan and the Republic of China. Every occupation is like a possession, leaving the island with traces and scars of being possessed…”

“It is as if the island of Taiwan has been possessed time and time again.”

“Taiwan, fundamentally, is an island that has been possessed time and time again.”

Taiwan, an island that has been possessed time and time again.

Then, what is it being possessed by? By demons, evil spirits... or by ghosts?

Or, above all, the most evil ones: the Human Beings.

(Translation by Fiona He [He Xiao])

## The Intimate Strangers

|  
Heonik Kwon  
|

In a small hamlet south of Danang, central Vietnam, a sizeable plot of land remains unoccupied today in the middle of a crowded neighbourhood. A handsome guava tree is standing at the edge of the apparently empty land, and, looking more closely, one can see, near the tree, a wooden stick inserted into the ground on the top of which is prepared a porcelain teacup filled with sand. Local residents use this teacup to lay incense sticks, and the existence of this humble shrine—what people of this region call *thang tho*, a shelf for prayers—makes the impression that the land is unoccupied illusory and unjustified. Some people, especially those outside the community, fall for this illusion, believing that this land is nobody's property. Among them is a man from a nearby county administrative center who thought he could appropriate the land to build a brewery. Indeed, the county office's maps show no indication of who the owner is of the previously residential plot. On the contrary, the old handwritten map of the hamlet kept by a villager, the former village chief during the time of the Vietnam War (1961-1975), clearly marks the land as belonging to Ba Noi of Du Man (Mr. Du Man's paternal grandmother). Most residents of this hamlet also identify the land as this woman's house. This is despite the fact that the woman, whom the locals usually refer to as Ba Ba Linh (powerful grandmother), passed away many years ago in 1946, and her house was burned down at the same time.

At the time of her death, rural Vietnam was in a condition of *xoi dau*. *Xoi dau* is a Vietnamese ceremonial food made of rice flour and black beans. Used as a historical metaphor, it refers to the precarious condition of life that people endured during the final years of French colonialism in Indochina in 1945-1954 and in the ensuing chaos of the Vietnam War until 1975. During the day, a group of armed men came and claimed sovereign authority over the village. During the night, a different group of combatants arrived to assert their own sovereign power over the community. Life shifted between two different political worlds as often as the night time changed to the daytime, to the extent that, after a while, this anomalous world seemed almost a fact of life. When you eat *xoi dau*, you cannot separate the white part of the dish from the black. Likewise, survival in a village seized by the forces of total war meant having to accept both segments

of the polarized political world. It was one day in the dry season of 1946 that a group of French soldiers locked Du Man's grandmother in her house and set fire to her thatched roof. Twenty years later, at the height of the Vietnam War, villagers began to witness her apparition, often under the guava tree. One of her old neighbours prepared a shelf for prayers after experiencing repeated apparitions, and then the rumour began to circulate in the area that the old grandmother's spirit was receptive to prayers.

The world was again a *xoi dau* in the second half of the 1960s. In daytime, the villagers had to greet the South Vietnamese, American, and sometimes South Korean soldiers. At night, they were obliged to welcome the local Vietnamese resistance forces and, at times, cadres sent from the communist North Vietnam. In this precarious situation, women from nearby hamlets came to Ba Ba Linh's shrine to pray for their families' safety. During the day, some Saigon soldiers made prayers at her humble shrine for their safety and on behalf of their families living in the distant south. At night, some communist partisans did the same after hearing the story of Ba Ba Linh from the locals, before hurriedly joining their group to move on to the next hamlet. Throughout the crisis of the war, Ba Ba Linh's humble shrine continued to attract a steady flow of hopeful visitors from near and far and from both sides of the politically divided world.

Ba Ba Linh's presence is marked in the village's old map, and she is, in origin, a member of the village community. She is one of the community's multitude of "invisible neighbours"—how people in this region refer to entities like her. Many of them, unlike her, are strangers to the community in origin. These strangers include the spirit of a fallen soldier during the war of independence against France, and that of a fallen soldier, in a small wooded area, during the ensuing revolutionary war against America. The community's invisible neighbours include the ghosts of a mother and her two small children (victims of a village pacification activity during the Vietnam War), and the spirit of a man who the locals believe was buried alive and upside down by a communist hit squad during the war (the ghost of this man moves about with his head down and claims that the punishment was totally unjustified). There is also a ghost of an American officer which frequents a banyan tree, and other foreign ghosts such as the spirit of an Algerian conscript to France's colonial war against Vietnam.

All these invisible neighbours are legitimate occupants of the village environment despite the fact that they are literally invisible (to most people and for most of time). This is the case regardless if they are local or foreign. Seen together,

these extraordinary beings constitute a fairly cosmopolitan society in terms of national or political origins, and, in turn, are accountable to the way in which the community has undergone upheavals of modern history on a scale that goes beyond the local and national horizons. The plurality of village ghosts, in other words, speaks of the true extent of the village's modern historical experience on a transnational and global scale.

The condition of plurality becomes evident if we consider these ghosts in relation to the community's other more important spiritual entities. Like other communities in East Asia that experienced the eras of colonialism and the Cold War in highly tumultuous and violent ways, Vietnam is strong in the veneration of patriotic fallen soldiers, as well as in the traditional worship of family and community ancestors. These two groups of venerated spirits—heroes and ancestors—are very visible in the communal life. Traces of heroes are materialized in war cemeteries and war memorials, whereas those of ancestors are visible in domestic and communal shrines as well as in periodic collective rites held in these places of worship. These two categories are visible in another sense, too. Ancestors represent the morality of traditional communal solidarity, both family and community. War heroes are supposed to embody the spirit of national unity and the integrity of the nation's modern sovereign identity. Compared to these publicly visible spirits in both physical and moral terms, which are insiders to the traditional community or to the modern nation-state, the village's invisible neighbours are much less materialized and have no interiority they can call a home. Ba Ba Linh is part of the village's everyday environment, yet she is not part of any formal moral interiority, whether of a traditional community or of a modern political community. Beings like her are strangers to the community, although they may be intimate participants in everyday events unfolding within the community. Their existences do not appear in documented history, either in a genealogical history of a family or a monumental history of the nation-state. At times, however, a history told by these invisible beings may be more truthful to the community's past experience than what we learn from a genealogical or monumental history. This is especially the case when the history is a tumultuous one involving the radical displacement of lives, the consequences of which cannot be contained within ordered narratives of discreet communal solidarity.

The literary tradition of East Asia attempts, with marvellous results, to bring these invisible, marginal beings to a center stage of the narrative. The revered Vietnamese poet of the late 18th century, Nguyen Du, author of *The Tale of Kieu*, is part of this great tradition, as is Kim Si Sup, the literary genius of old Korea



in the 16th century. Well-versed in classical Confucian texts, these two scholars were estranged from the dynastic Confucian political order of their time and commonly expressed their senses of estrangement (and visions for an alternative social and moral order) through engagement with popular religious sensibilities and customs, departing from orthodox neo-Confucian ethics. In their literary renderings, the living and the displaced spirits of the dead construct a distinct and miraculous relationship of mutual sympathy, no longer bound by the prevailing Confucian moral order within which these spirits, unlike ancestral spirits, are relegated to the unrecognized marginality. Key to their works is the shifting moral identity of the dead, in relation to the living, as the latter's life condition changes from one that is based on place-bound security (what we call home) to a condition of displacement from home. This change results in a radical alteration in moral relationship between the spirits and the living, as it involves the transformation of the living to the living image of ghosts, or the displaced spirits of the dead, on the other side of the ontological threshold. The conditions of the living and those of the dead come to mirror each other, and, at that instance, ghosts are no longer dreaded strangers to a place but become like-minded companions to the living counterparts in their shared arduous journeys in their displacement away from home. This is an intimate solidary relationship among strangers based on reciprocal sympathy, one that is distinct from moral solidarity based on common genealogical ties or common national belonging. It is no less real than the latter two in the great stream of the region's shared cultural and intellectual history.

The truly marvellous property of ghosts is, therefore, not their extraordinariness, which can impress upon the living with awe and uncanny feelings. It is instead their capacity of creating relationship of intimate sociability with the living, which is, while being thoroughly ordinary, manifested fully in history only at times of crisis when the condition of displacement is shared by historical beings. This was true of Ba Ba Linh. Having been a victim of historical world violence at the end of the brutal colonial age, the grandmother rose to become a powerful companion, at another age of historical world crisis, to numerous living souls who were displaced from their homes by a vicious war of the Cold War era. The marvellous aspect of this history is not whether or not the grandmother actually had the power to respond to the prayers she was receiving. Rather, it is the fact that any humble historical actor can become, by responding to the ethics of empathy, a powerful trans-historical figure and, thus, keep and emanate this important ethical insight across time. It goes without saying that it is our vocational responsibility for those of us who gathered here to record and document the thoroughly ordinary, yet potentially miracle-making, historical encounters—the vocation that such

towering intellectual figures as Kim Si Sup and Nguyen Du once performed to great acclaim. In this way, we may keep the tradition intact for the future, the tradition of writing history from a perspective other than that which is anchored in community ancestors or national heroes. This perspective is more local than that founded on ancestors, and it is transnational and unbound by national and political boundaries, unlike that which is grounded on heroes.

My only hope is that these vocational efforts will flourish in the future in arts only, rather than in genres such as anthropology and history that require a look at empirical realities. This is because the realities of *xoi dau*—the violent and painful reality that created personas such as Ba Ba Linh in the first place and which has permeated the region of East Asia for the long imperial and post-imperial age—must never come alive again in the region.

The Memory of Nabua  
: A Note on the Primitive Project

Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL



Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL, *Primitive*, 2009

There is a temple not far from my home named Sang Arun, meaning the Light of Dawn. As I write this text in Munich, I can imagine the trees, the wind, and the heat over there. Outside my hotel window, the snow is blowing hard in the frigid night. The image of this far away temple appears as I try to summarize the *Primitive* project. This temple was the place where a monk—who lived in an air conditioned room—told me about ghosts.

*Ghosts will appear under certain conditions, when it is not quite dark and not quite light (at the break of dawn and twilight).*

*At first the dead don't realize that they are dead. When they pinch themselves, it still hurts. They think they still have their own bodies. But it's just an illusion: all in the mind. They walk around talking normally to people but no one takes any notice, no one can see or hear them.*

One night, the monk saw a floating light descending from the temple roof. It played around with a group of astonished young monks. Then it floated into the trees, circling around them and moving back to linger on the rooftop. Then it was transformed into a ball of glass. The monk later embedded this ball in the rooftop of a new monastery.

This same monk—who has unlimited supply of incredible stories—gave me a little book called *A Man Who Can Recall His Past Lives*. In it, he wrote about Boonmee, who came to meditate at the temple and could recall his multiple lives. He was an elephant hunter, a buffalo, a cow, and a wandering ghost. What interested me was that he was always reborn and wandered in the same region, the north-east, where I grew up. I envied his ability to remember back over centuries. He could see and replay his past. He didn't need cinema. In fact, we don't need cinema, if we can train our minds to 'see' like he did. Sadly, most of us are too crude, we are primitive beings.

At the same time, I was also inspired by another book: Terry Glavin's *Waiting for the Macaws*. In 2007, I was in Los Angeles and met Peter Sellars—another sort of monk—who happened to be the artistic director for the New Crowned Hope festival that produced *Syndromes and a Century*. As we parted, he handed me this book and said I might like it. I finished it on the plane home and concluded that I really liked it. This amazing book is an investigation into the disappearance of, among others, species, languages, and beliefs. There is a connection between Boonmee's story and this book about extinction—the urgent need to try to remember, to try to catalogue something that is disappearing.

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These two inspirations somehow triggered my interest in the northeast of Thailand. For fifteen years I had lived in a town called Khon Kaen at the center of the region, but I had never explored it as a whole. I doubt that many of the north-easterners do. This dry and arid land, despite its rich history, is quite off the map as a destination. I remember visiting various historical places with Khmer influences. But that's the limit of my exposure. Many of the people here seem to abandon these ruins and migrate to Bangkok to work as cheap labour. Once there, they are looked down upon because of their darker skin and a dialect that resembles those of our Laotian neighbors, presumed to be an unsophisticated bunch.

I was curious to see what was left in this land that harboured Boonmee's spirit. I travelled with my usual assistants and Jenjira, my actress. Coincidentally, all of us are northeasterners who no longer live there. It was a chance, an excuse to revisit certain places. We had no set plan, except to try and find Boonmee's offspring and visit Jenjira's family. Because Boonmee's era was long ago, information about him was vague. We drove blindly from town to town and asked old people and village chiefs about his relatives. We discovered that people who share Boonmee's last name were to be found in different places in the northeast. During the search, we stumbled on some reincarnation cases. There was one that involved a young woman who could recall her previous life as a boy in another village. She visited the dead boy's family and could recount private stories of the family in detail, to the amazement of the parents. Soon there was a rivalry between the parents of her past life and those of the present life, each wanting to be loved by (and to shower love upon) their kid. This incident reveals the complication of remembering too much. If all of us could remember our past lives, perhaps we would constantly travel to meet and greet our numerous past friends and parents all over the place,

humans and animals. Some people might seek revenge upon those who killed and hurt them in the past. Or perhaps, on the contrary, there would be a better understanding of human nature, a better understanding of why we love and why we kill.

As we headed closer to the Mekong river near the Thai-Laos border we found ourselves in a flooded area. The roads and the houses were inundated. On the wall in Jenjira's house there was a trace of the water that had just receded. Her father had just moved down from the second floor, where he had been trapped for a week. I interviewed him and was transported back to the time when this area was mostly jungle. He talked about the 60s when he was a government official curbing communism. It was the first time on our journey that the word had been spoken. Jenjira's father would drive a Land Rover with his mates and show 16mm propaganda films to the villagers. To counter communism they tried their best to befriend the locals, and in the process, enlightened them on the virtue of Thailand's three pillars: Nation, Religion, and Monarchy. His story reminded me of my parents. During that time the government sent out troops of doctors to care for those who lived in remote areas. The agenda was the same—to let the villagers feel that the 'center' cares. My parents told me about their excitement at being in a helicopter. In a way, they felt good about themselves doing good deeds. My mother had a lovely time shopping for beautiful silk that the villagers brought for sale. Communism benefited all.

In the car, Jenjira told me about the time when she was in high school. One day the soldiers paid an unexpected visit to her house. They raided the shelves and the cabinets looking for anything red. It was a forbidden colour that would land you in trouble. Even a sketchbook with a red cover would be confiscated and destroyed. After the soldiers left, her father took her into a corner and said that he had found her red books and burned them. Jenjira apologized and said that they were passed along to her by her peers at school, and that she hadn't read them.

A few weeks ago, Jenjira called me in great excitement. "I've found the books! I have found the books!" It turned out that, after all these years, her father had kept her collection of Mao and Marx. She told me she was now alone with these books, tending the house, while her father was in hospital for a few days, waiting, along with other villagers, for his turn to have heart surgery. The doctor at this city hospital is so busy that it could take weeks for his turn to come. There used to be brighter days, when the 'center' at least pretended to care.

We drove along the Mekong River where parts of the towns were devastated by flooding. The news of Bangkok politics were at full volume, overshadowing the reports of the insignificant submerged towns. We continued to stop along the way, partially looking for signs of Uncle Boonmee. I kept wondering why he chose to remain in this awful land. No, the landscape is pleasant, but the way its people are treated is brutally awful.

\*

Among several villages we visited, not far from the Mekong River, was one called Nabua. This sleepy village in the province of Nakhon Panom was one of the places the Thai army occupied from the 60s to the early 80s in order to curb the communist insurgents. There was no link to Boonmee here except that the village is also full of repressed memories.

It was a place that, when I had moved on to other villages, I could not get out of my mind. It was the same effect the two books had had on me. A few weeks later, I found myself back in Nabua. I decided to work there, investigating its history and documenting its landscape. It is a place where memories and ideologies are extinct. It has become the heart of the *Primitive Project*, Part One.

In the 60s the soldiers erected a base in Nabua to administer the villagers' daily activities. The locals were psychologically and physically abused on the grounds of withholding information. Women were raped. Some were murdered in their homes. Consequently, the villagers, mostly farmers, fled into the jungle. Most of them didn't understand the word 'Communism' though they were accused of being communists. On the morning of August 7, 1965, Nabua earned its nationwide reputation, when the first gun battle between the farmer communists and the totalitarian government broke out in the rice fields. As a result, Nabua was heavily occupied and controlled by the military. The torture intensified. Fear proliferated. More people escaped into the jungle. The night sky was illuminated with military flares. The village was left with mostly women and children.

Ironically, Nabua is situated in Renu Nakhon district, where there is an ancient legend about a 'widow ghost' who abducts any man who enters her empire. She takes them to join her other husbands in an invisible land. Thus in the legend, Renu Nakhon is devoid of men. The district's nickname is 'widow town.'

The army's presence and the abuses continued in the village for two decades. After the temperature of the US and Soviet Union's cold war had dropped, the

government employed a peaceful method of reconciliation with the 'deflected.' Cash and land were offered in exchange for weapons. The Communist Party of Thailand withered away and became history. Until today, the government has downplayed the violence that took place in various villages around the country. The public forgets. The dead are forgotten. The young generation doesn't recognize the existence of Nabua.

The story of Nabua undeniably has echoes of the current political turmoil in Thailand. Institutions involved in those events of the past, along with new ones, are the key players in the ongoing chaos. Just as in the past, they manipulate the public psyche, instilling it with faith and fear.

\*

I was in Nabua around September, 2008. Two teens accompanied us and showed us around. We went into the fields where the first gunfight broke out that fateful August, 43 years ago. One of the dead was comrade Satian Jittamaat. (I later recognized that many of the teens in my videos have this same last name, Jittamaat). His sister told us that the soldiers had been looking for him. They raided her house and had her drink water from a large bucket in which were submerged guns, bullets, and grenades. It was 'oath water' to ensure that the villagers didn't lie to the officials. Otherwise, they threatened, you will die at the hands of these arms. When the dogs barked at night, the soldiers rushed to your house to see if there was a communist visiting. She was so terrified of the soldiers that she had all her dogs killed. She recounted that her brother had fled into the jungle a few months before he got killed, like a dog. When his group were surrounded by soldiers, they fled. But when comrade Satian came back to get his radio, he was shot in the leg and later killed.

Everywhere we went there were stories. Helicopter shot down here, friends shot there, beheadings happened here. Gradually, just standing in this quiet land became an intense experience for me. Perhaps too intense, for I doubted I was in the right place.

With a feeling of uneasiness I kept revisiting Nabua. Then I noticed that there were more teens appearing. Most of them were doing nothing because harvest time hadn't arrived. So we had plenty of time to chat. Many of them dreamt of going to work as labourers in Bangkok, Phuket, or Korea. All of them were heavy drinkers. They were obviously interested in the process of filmmaking. I was



fascinated by their fashionable haircuts and clothes. It was the look of Thai and Korean pop singers. So I dreamt of producing a Nabua rock band. They dreamt of being actors.

For me, the presence of the teens had made Nabua's air breathable. Soon *Primitive* became a portrait of the teenage male descendants of the farmer communists, freed from the widow ghost's empire.

In all, I had spent five months there with two months of shooting the teens' activities. The initial idea of the artworks had branched out and mutated into various forms. They are the manifestation of someone who has created various fictional scenarios in order to implant memory into a place. As if possessed, I had created video vignettes with no goal. As harvest time arrived, the teens were working their rice fields, and I was cultivating my movies.

And we built a spaceship. I always dreamed of making a movie with a spaceship. When could there be a better time to do so than now in Thailand? And somehow Nabua is a perfect place for this vehicle to land and to introduce the idea of a journey. The spaceship's form was sketched out by one of the teens and its metal skeletons were welded together by their elders, their fathers. Soon some of the teens used the spaceship as a place to get drunk at night. They decorated the interior of the ship with little coloured lights. While it has become their second bedroom, the elders want to use it to store rice. I use it as a movie prop.

Then there are two music videos. One is the result of bringing a pop singer friend to Nabua. The video cameras were handed out to the teens to film their friends running. Together we celebrated the act of running and throwing things—in tune with the political upheaval and events nationwide. The other music video I made for a song composed by one of the teens called Petch. One evening he sang a not-yet-entitled tune about Nabua to me. He strummed on his guitar and sang, “grab your gun and fight.” It is a song written to commemorate the first gun battle. With his song, I combined an image of Petch's friend, Kumgieng, whose grandfather was killed by the soldiers in the field not far from his home. I had become a player in the young man's propaganda machine.

*In the land of the north-eastern plateau...  
All roads lead to Isan.  
There's a legendary village  
that our children have learned about.*

*Nabua is a small patch of land.  
 Here we grow rice and farm peacefully.  
 Honest, dedicated, and patient.  
 Until we have become legend.  
 7 August...  
 It's time to hear about our heroes and their bravery.  
 So that our kids in the future...  
 can learn from them.  
 Fight for your freedom.  
 Take out your guns and your knives to fight.  
 Seize your gun and stand firm.  
 We will fight for justice.*

While I was busily growing my movies, I received information that one of Uncle Boonmee's sons lived not far from Nabua. This news convinced me that Uncle Boonmee's presence will be around the north-east for the years to come. I visited this gentle old man and he talked about his father whose name was sometimes Boonmee, and sometimes Boonma. His account matched the story told by another man who we previously thought was Boonmee's nephew. Most important of all, he showed us his father's portrait. I looked at the man in the black and white photo and thought, "you are real."

*Uncle... I have been here for a while. I would like to see a movie about your life. So I proposed a project about reincarnation. In my script there is a longan farm surrounded by mountains. But here there are endless plains and rice fields. Last week I met a man who I thought was your son. But perhaps he was your nephew because he said his father was a policeman who owned hundreds of cows. Judging from the book I have, I don't think you owned a lot of cows, and you were a teacher, weren't you? The man was old and couldn't remember his father's name very well. It might be Boonmee or Boonma. It was a long time ago, he said. Here in Nabua there are several houses that I think are suitable for this short film for which I got funding from England. I don't know what your house looked like. I cannot use the one in my script because it is so different from the ones here. Maybe some parts of these houses resemble yours.*

What was your view like? Was it like this?

*Soldiers once occupied this place. They killed and tortured the villagers until everyone fled into the jungle.*

Somehow I felt that my letter to Uncle Boonmee was futile. He must have known this place, along with other places in the northeast. In my mind, Uncle Boonmee is the northeast. The letter was just for me, to justify my being here, filming.

In retrospect, I value the experience and think of it as a performance. Hours of interviews were kept in a box, never opened. The selected few videos are just remnants of a brief encounter. Nabua is only light and memory. There are natural illuminations from the sun and from fire. The lights seep through the doors and windows and burn the rice fields. There are artificial ones like fluorescent tubes and LED lights like dots of recollections. And there are simulated bolts of lightning that destroy the peaceful landscape and unearth the spirits. As in the book *A Man Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, *Primitive* is about reincarnation and transformation. I myself had been transformed as well. *Primitive* is a departure from my previous work in that it is no longer based upon a memory of my lovers, my family. It is a memory of those who live far away. It is also a memory of those who are no longer alive, channeling their gestures through their offspring. I feel that, despite its casual surface, it is the most political work I have allowed myself to do.

In recent years, Thailand has been slowly melting down into political chaos. In my hidden desire I anticipate her collapse. Isn't it only natural that, once in a while, we destroy ourselves to be able to mutate and be reborn?

*They call me a guy who can recall his past lives.  
 I remember the light when I was young.  
 Not one light, but many, in different colours.  
 I thought they were some kind of airborne animals.  
 They were transparent dots.  
 I would chase them and follow them into the jungle.  
 I would follow the lights and look at them,  
 let them transfer images into my mind.  
 The adults thought I was crazy or was possessed by a ghost.  
 But they didn't bother...  
 to take me to a hospital, or to a shaman.*

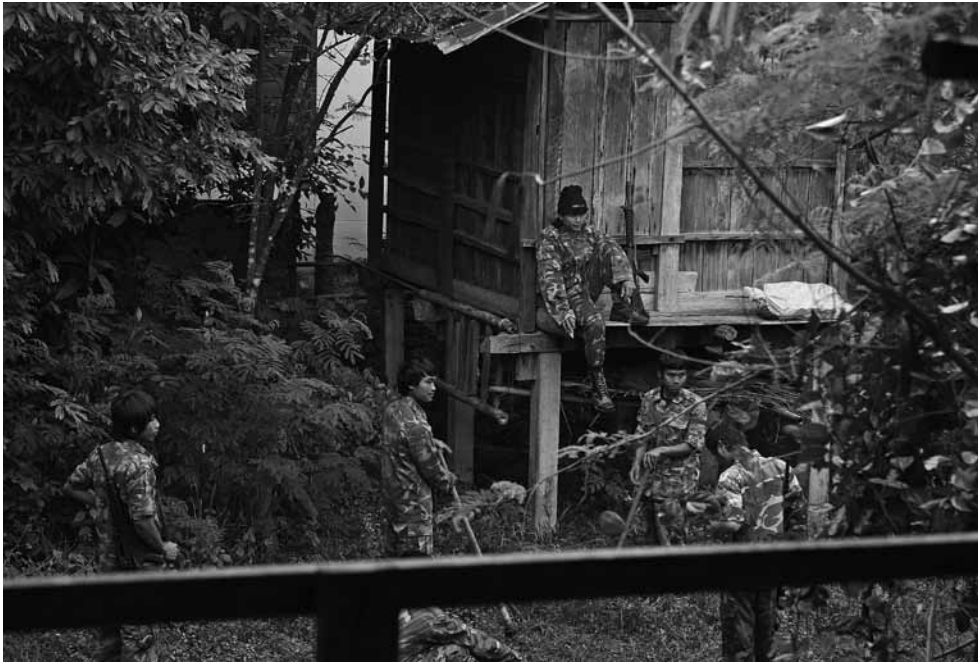
*Later I remember when I was in the jungle  
 and saw no light.  
 I would look directly at the sun*

*and close my eyes.  
I saw the white orb in the darkness.  
Only that act could bring comfort  
because I always fear  
that one day  
when I open my eyes  
I will see nothing.*

*February 18, 2009*

English text © Österreichisches Filmmuseum









Choi Gene-uk, *North Korea A (Part)*

*In Praise of Doubt*

|  
Bertolt Brecht  
|

Praised be doubt! I advise you to greet  
Cheerfully and with respect the man  
Who tests your word like a bad penny.  
I'd like you to be wise and not to give  
Your word with too much assurance.

Read history and see  
The headlong flight of invincible armies.  
Wherever you look  
Impregnable strongholds collapse and  
Even if the Armada was innumerable as it left port  
The returning ships  
Could be numbered.

Thus one day a man stood on the unattainable summit  
And a ship reached the end of  
The endless sea.

O Beautiful the shaking of heads  
Over the indisputable truth!  
O brave the doctor's cure  
Of the incurable patient!

But the most beautiful of all doubts  
Is when the downtrodden and despondent raise their heads and  
Stop believing in the strength  
Of their oppressors.

Oh, how laboriously the new truth was fought for!  
What sacrifices it cost!  
How difficult it was to see

That things were thus and not thus!  
 With a sigh of relief one day a man entered it in the record of knowledge.  
 For a long time perhaps it stands there, and many generations  
 Live with it and regard it as eternal wisdom  
 And the learned scorn all who are ignorant of it.  
 And then it may happen that a suspicion arises, for new experience  
 Makes the established truth open to question. Doubt spreads  
 And then one day a man thoughtfully strikes it out  
 From the record of knowledge.

Deafened by commands, examined  
 For his fitness to fight by bearded doctors, inspected  
 By resplendent creatures with golden insignia, admonished  
 By solemn clerics who throw at him a book written by God himself  
 Instructed  
 By impatient schoolmasters, stands the poor man and is told  
 That the world is the best of worlds and that the hole  
 In the roof of his hovel was planned by God in person.  
 Truly he finds it hard  
 To doubt this world.  
 Covered in sweat, the man bends himself building the house  
 he will never live in. But is also sweltering the man  
 who builds his own home

There are the thoughtless who never doubt  
 Their digestion is splendid, their judgment is infallible.  
 They don't believe in the facts, they believe only in themselves.  
 When it comes to the point  
 The facts must go by the board  
 Their patience with themselves  
 Is boundless. To arguments  
 They listen with the ear of a police spy.

The thoughtless who never doubt  
 Meet the thoughtful who never act.  
 They doubt, not in order to come to a decision but  
 To avoid a decision. Their heads  
 They use only for shaking. With anxious faces

They warn the crews of sinking ships that water is dangerous.  
 Beneath the murderer's axe  
 They ask themselves if he isn't human too.  
 Murmuring something  
 About the situation not yet being clarified, they go to bed.  
 Their only action is to vacillate.  
 Their favorite phrase is: not yet ripe for discussion.

Therefore, if you praise doubt  
 Do not praise  
 The doubt which is a form of despair.  
 What use is the ability to doubt to a man  
 Who can't make up his mind?  
 He who is content with too few reasons  
 May act wrongly  
 But he who needs too many  
 Remains inactive under danger.

You are a leader of men, do not forget  
 That you are that because you doubted other leaders.  
 So allow the leader  
 Their right to doubt.

(Translation by Taylor Stoehr [2009])  
 English text © Pressed Wafer

## Spy: Yet Another 'Gray Zone Personality'

|  
Vladimir Tikhonov  
|

Under the military regime in South Korea, nothing was scarier than the word 'spy.' A resident spy known to be preparing for overthrowing the system and the unification under communism while infiltrating all levels of society, a spy sent to the South known to initiate the leaking of confidential information, assassinations of important people, and the destruction of infrastructure as soon as there is any carelessness... As 'the hostile Other among us,' the spies had to visually project the 'demonic quality' of the North, which was the primary basis for sustaining the far-right anti-communist regime. When such necessary 'demons' were not found, spies could even be manufactured by the government. If something that the authority needs does not exist in reality... Those in power fabricate the manufactured reality. Considering that the public fear of 'the spy from America' is not insignificant in North Korea as well, it would not be an exaggeration to tell that the whole Korean peninsula has been living in an Orwellian mode with the hostile coexistence of two different regimes. The imagined world in Orwell's *1984* is the very truth that we are living through.

One thing that concerns us is that the national security institutions in South Korea sometimes fall short in their capability, lacking the ability shown by the Ministry of Plenty, the Ministry of Truth, and the Ministry of Love in Orwell's world. From time to time, such deficiency created publicly-known 'holes' in the walls of virtual reality, which was fabricated by the government. In other words, espionage cases turned out to be blatant fabrication in front of the whole world. A number of books would be needed if one were to highlight all the 'spy fabrication' cases that have happened through more than half a century of South Korean history. It is because the history of such fabrication began with the foundation of the Republic of Korea and has continued since. The best-known case of fabrication is the 1949 incident of 'North Korean informants in the parliament.' The thirteen moderate left and right wing parliament members, who simply demanded the withdrawal of foreign armies and peaceful unification, were suddenly suspended from being the good people with delegated power and turned into 'spies' ('informants of the South Korean Labor Party'). People like Kim Yak-su (1890-1964), a parliament member who was an important figure in the independence movement against

Japan, became ‘spies.’ Then people like Sunwoo Chongwon (1918-2014), who passed the higher civil servant examination under Japanese colonial rule, played the role of spy-catching prosecutors. For the general public, it was not unnatural to doubt whether the Japanese colonial rule was still continuing. Eventually, the ‘spies’ who were not spies could not remain in Korea. Many of them moved to the North during the Korean War, and little is remembered in the South. As Orwell once told, they evaporated as ‘non-persons.’ If the parliament members’ case was the initial incident of fabrication, the recent case of Yoo Woo-sung shows how it became much more difficult to manipulate the truth in this post-Cold War period of the information age. The government tried to make Mr. Yoo an overseas Chinese who defected from North Korea into a ‘spy.’ It might have been easy to manipulate official documents from China in the past when there was no close relationship between South Korea and China. However, in this case, it became an international diplomatic embarrassment. For sure, this embarrassment was not the first. In 1987, Suzy Kim (Kim Ok-boon) was murdered by her husband in Hong Kong. The Korean government proclaimed that she was “a female spy who tried to kidnap her husband and take him to the North,” but both the press and police of Hong Kong did not accept the ‘North Korean spy theory’ and raised a doubt about the possibility of fabrication. Again, the domestic press coverage of the case in Korea was strictly limited at the time.

The official demonic figure in the public sphere of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is a ‘spy’ who is omniscient, ever-present around us, and is seemingly dreaming of destruction at all times. Since the whole world was affected by ‘the fear of spies’ and their absolute ‘demonic quality’ was taken for granted, there was no particular recognition of the problematics of treating those labeled as ‘spies’ as non-persons and torturing them to force the conversion of their ideology. In 1993, Mr. Yi Inmo (1917-2007)—who went through thirty-four years of confinement in a South Korean prison, an adversity that is beyond one’s imagination—was finally sent back to the North, as he had dreamt. At the time, I was staying in South Korea as a translator and tourist guide. I remember reading in the newspapers that Yi received a cordial reception in the North. What is still lingering in my mind is how the conservative press in the South criticized Yi’s return to the North after realizing his ‘firm belief’ could be a help to the psychological unity of the North Korean people under the crisis of the regime. The tone of such criticism was that they had helped the North propagate the superiority of their regime. However, no one tried to think about the fact that Mr. Yi was not a spy but was indeed a prisoner of war. Yi was a young intellectual sent to the South as a war correspondent. He was captured by

the South Korean army in 1952 when he happened to leave his unit and joined the communist partisans. If he were treated according to international law, he should have been sent back to the North when the truce was signed. He should not have been cruelly utilized as the ‘visible demon’ or a ‘spy’ to strengthen the national solidarity. He should have been sent back on the principle of exchanging war prisoners. However, in Orwellian virtual reality, international law is no more than an empty statement. As a result, Yi, who only fulfilled his civic duty as a war correspondent, unwillingly had to take the role of being ‘the absolute visible Other of the whole nation’ and the ‘spy’ for about forty years. He had to perform it in a psychotic theater run by a monster called the nation-state.

‘Spy’ was, of course, an alias or a fake name given without consent by the producers of the ‘national theater.’ It was a name given from the outside, not a name that one accepted willingly. Some were prisoners of war like Yi Inmo and others came to the South as ‘unification agents.’ But, for them, ‘unification activities’ was fundamentally different from espionage. The unconverted long-term political prisoners, who have been tolerating the pressure of conversion that is beyond human capability, had a tendency to think of themselves as anti-foreign, pro-unification fighters rather than spies. When the nationalist left was the dominant force in the student movement, there was also a tendency to regard unconverted prisoners as ‘people who devoted their lives to unification.’ The most well-known case of denying the false charge of being a ‘spy’ might be that of Kim Seok-hyeong (1914-2006). The life of the unconverted long-term political prisoner described in his memoir *I Am a Member of the Worker’s Party of Korea!* (2001) literally presents a miniature of Korean modern history. Growing up as a child during the colonial period, moving to Manchuria to get education, embracing the socialist ideology, and being arrested and released by the Japanese police... When North Korea was established as a new nation, he naturally became part of the movement as a local socialist activist from the colonial period. While serving in different security institutions as a way of ‘protecting the new nation,’ he was sent to the South in 1960 and arrested in 1961. In a South Korean court hearing, he defined himself as a person who came to South Korea to discuss with intellectuals rather than as a ‘spy.’ In the end, he could not avoid the life in prison that continued for more than thirty years. In *Repatriation* (2004), a famous documentary on unconverted long-term political prisoners, Kim is introduced as an eloquent speaker who did not lose his feature as a thinker. In the meantime, as disappointment in the reality of North Korea is spreading, even the people who sympathize with unconverted long-term political prisoners regard their sacrifice for unification as ‘a heroic yet fruitless service’ for a wrong political regime. What



Sorge happened to serve at the headquarters of the revolution. Sorge's move from his initial position at the Comintern as a scholarly inclined communist from Germany to an agent for the Soviet intelligence agency was also possible since it was considered part of 'a specific kind of service for world revolution project' rather than a 'service for the sake of the Soviet.' During his service in China from 1930 to 1933, Sorge came across Hotsumi Ozaki (尾崎秀美, 1901-1944). At the time, Sorge was disguised as a correspondent of a German newspaper. Ozaki was a correspondent of the Asahi Shimbun. Being a pro-Chinese Marxist, he had concerns over the brutality of Japanese colonialists in China. The meeting between the two initiated 'The Sorge Spy Ring.'

In 1933, Richard Sorge moved to Tokyo, disguised as a correspondent from a German newspaper. His main objectives were to observe the changes in the relationship between the two fascist states of Japan and Germany and to find out on Japan's plans for invading the Soviet Union as an ally of Germany. Sorge acquired many top secrets by himself as he provided analysis of the political situation in Japan to German intelligence agencies, which led him to establish close connections to important figures including the German ambassador to Japan. However, his main source of information was Hotsumi Ozaki. Ozaki served as a leading advisor of Chinese affairs to Fumimaro Konoe (近衛文磨, 1891-1945), the prime minister of Japan at the time. He was willing to prevent the full-scale invasion of China. In the end, Sorge acquired almost all the details of Hitler's plan to invade the Soviet Union just a few days before its start date (June 22, 1941) and reported the information to Moscow. Above all, Sorge acquired the top secret of Japan, which was the initiation of preparation for the 'southward advance' against countries including the US and the UK. The decision was leaked from the royal council (conducted by the Emperor Hirohito) on July 2, 1941 after the plan to invade the Soviet Union in collaboration with Germany was suspended. Upon the acquisition of such information, the Soviet Union could turn the tide of the war against Germany by sending dozens of divisions from the Manchurian border to the Western Front and thus preventing Hitler's invasion of Moscow. It might be no exaggeration to say that the Communists in Germany and Japan, who had not been supported properly by the Soviet Union, saved the Soviet Union—and further saved the Allied Forces as a whole—from the danger of losing the war.

How did Stalin treat his saviors Sorge and Ozaki, then? In October 1941, a key communist figure in Japan underwent 'thought conversion' and secretly informed about thirty individuals that had ties with the 'spy ring,' including Sorge and

Ozaki. A number of people were arrested and put in jail, and key figures such as Sorge and Ozaki were executed in November 1944. While almost three years have passed since the arrest, the Soviet did not show any interest in Japan's offers to send the 'big name spies' to the Soviet Union under certain conditions. Rather, the Soviet Union did not take any measure for Sorge and his colleagues. They even sent his Russian wife into exile in Siberia. She was left there to die in illness and starvation in 1943. Though the 'Sorge incident' became a global sensation after some of the related documents were studied by the US Army and disclosed to the public following the defeat of Japan, the Soviet Union did not officially recognize Sorge and his colleagues as 'heroes' until 1964. How could such 'ingratitude' towards those who saved the nation be possible? The answer is simple. Sorge was himself a Leninist communist who craved the defeat of fascism and the ultimate achievement of the world revolution. He did not feel particular patriotism towards the Soviet Union as a nation-state. Sorge's close friends who recommended him to the Comintern and the military intelligence were also internationalists who were purged by Stalin between 1937 and 1939. From the viewpoint of Stalin and other Stalinists, Sorge was a typical 'Trotskyist,' the one who believed in the permanent world revolution. In the world of Stalin, fascism was a main enemy. However, 'Trotskyism,' an essentially revolutionary spirit, was a devil more threatening than fascism. While fascism threatened the Stalinist state from the outside in a military sense, Trotskyism, which recognized Stalin as a traitor to the revolution, fatally threatened the legitimacy of Stalin's regime. Thus, even though a 'Trotskyist' saved the fate of the Soviet Union, he was ultimately no more than a potential enemy. Doesn't this somewhat resemble the case of Kim Yak-su? He was sent to jail in South Korea in 1949 on charges of being a 'spy' and sent into internal exile in North Korea in 1959 after being caught in the purge against 'factionalists' opposed to Kim Il-sung. It was after he moved to the country in order to find freedom and sovereignty.

In 1939, Sorge received a secret order from Moscow to "temporarily return" to the Soviet Union. However, he remained in Tokyo, knowing that the 'return' was another name for torture and execution by firing squad. Since Sorge as a vestige from the pre-Stalin period was an object of much distrust, Stalin did serious damage to his own Red Army by dismissing Sorge's intelligence on Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union. Even though Sorge continued to provide information to Stalin's regime, Sorge and Stalin had exactly opposite purposes in their relationship. One might ask about what made Sorge continue to collaborate with Moscow while he criticized the purges against his colleagues and could not accept Stalin's ruthless dictatorship. It might be possible to assume that Sorge

anticipated that the Soviet Union would escape from Stalin's dictatorship and become a truly socialist state. He might also recognize the Soviet Union as a relatively more positive force than the fascist Germany or Japan.

Stalin left Sorge to be executed. Being a Trotskyist sympathizer, Sorge worked with Stalin's archenemy Bukharin for a long time at Comintern. In 1934, he enraged authorities by criticizing Stalin's political line of 'socialism in one country' (basically, strengthening of the Soviet nation-state) to his Soviet comrade in Shanghai. Sorge said, "The Soviets neglect the principle of internationalism, caring only about the Soviet state and being passive in achieving world revolution." Stalin's Soviet Union must have been a difficult place for Sorge to survive. However, after Stalin died in 1953, there was little change in the atmosphere. On the one hand, Sorge—known to have shouted "The Red Army! International Communist Party! Communist Party of the Soviet Union!" (in rudimentary Japanese to influence the Japanese executioners) before he was executed in Sugamo prison in Tokyo—was almost an ideal fit as an exemplary Communist hero in many respects. On the other hand, the commercial appropriation of Sorge's image had already started in the West while the Soviet Union was ignoring him. Since Sorge was experiencing chronic stress, it was natural for him to indulge in alcohol and women. Vigorous and valiant by nature and highly intelligent, he was successful in his intimate relationship. In other words, he was an 'every woman's man' who had relationships with many Japanese women while keeping the wife of the German ambassador to Japan as his mistress. A handsome Soviet spy, exotic Japanese beauties, the triangle, square, and pentagon of love relationships, and the international spy network... Wouldn't he be the best subject for a spy film? In 1961, a French film titled *Qui êtes-vous, Monsieur Sorge* (Who Are You, Mr. Sorge?) was released. Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union at the time, happened to watch the film and concluded that the Soviet Union should not miss this excellent subject for propaganda. Thus, Sorge the Trotskyist received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union on November 4, 1964. Films, books, children's books, and even stamps with his face on them were immediately produced. Of course, there was a general silence or only very brief mentions of Sorge's 'free love' in the rather puritanical atmosphere of the Soviet Union. The main subjects were his internationalist spirit, rock-solid beliefs, his outstanding intelligence and insight, and so on. At the time, the disgraced friendship between Bukharin and Sorge and Sorge's sympathy towards Trotsky's ideas were simply ignored. An authentic revolutionary from the Comintern era, who had different aims

with Stalin, became a mere avatar of an 'exemplary' political system as he was materialized as a symbol in the Soviet Union/Eastern Bloc. At the same time, the commercial appropriation of Sorge's image continued in the world outside of the Soviet Union. In fact, such appropriation is still continuing. Masahiro Shinoda (篠田 正浩)'s 2003 film *Spy Sorge* is an example of the trend. The film presents a well-made reconstruction of the atmosphere of Sorge's time, featuring him as a lascivious and attractive man. However, there is no depiction of Sorge as a critical intellectual who interpreted Rosa Luxemburg's theory on the accumulation of capital, worked as an international communist theoretician, and even anticipated the coming of the American hegemony in the world system from the viewpoint of a Marxist socio-economic expert. That kind of Sorge was to be silenced both in the Soviet Union and the outside world.

The major spectrum of materializing 'Sorge the spy' ranges from a 'lascivious man' to an 'exemplary party member.' In reality, however, neither Sorge nor Ozaki was avatar of the Stalinist system. And the system did not recognize them as its loyal subjects in the first place though they later received the honorary posthumous titles. They were autonomous, critical, and highly idealistic intellectuals who chose to work with Moscow for their own reasons. Then, depending upon the nature of each case, wouldn't such complexity be recognized in the cases of those who provided intelligence to the North Korean regime? Wouldn't it be possible to find similarity with Sorge in Yi Imno or Kim Seok-hyeong? Although the tragic confrontation between the two Koreas has been forcing us to take on the logic of dichotomy, such a black and white logic should be overcome. What will guide us to the era of unification, in which individuals and autonomous personalities take center stage is the recognition of the grey area where different motivations, consciousness, and situations are intertwined with one another.

(Translation by Jaeyong Park)



Disobedience in Byelorussia  
: Self-Interrogation on ‘Research-Based Art’

|  
Sean Snyder  
|

***Good evening, I'm in charge of security for El Al, do you speak Hebrew?***

In the art world, people don't entirely know what they are talking about. They ask a lot of questions. It's not that people don't know what they already know, but rather that they want to know something more in order to do the next thing—and somehow get it right. That's enough of a reminder that you might have something to say, and that at some point it might make sense. It is, in fact, those who ask questions who make the entire mechanism function.

The single most interesting discussion I have had about art was not with an artist, curator, critic, or the like, but with an El Al security officer a few years ago when I was detained and subsequently escorted onto a flight to Tel Aviv. I really messed up when I mentioned that I never intended to be an artist. As it turned out, the interrogator was himself an artist, or, more precisely, a cartoonist.

During the flight, I was separated from my laptop. When asked, I didn't think to mention that it contained a folder of al-Qaeda videos clearly marked as such. Only later did I consider the possible consequences of my curiosities, which would have been more than difficult to justify as “artistic research.”

***Are these your only bags? Do you have any weapons or sharp items in your luggage? Is this laptop yours? If I were to look at your laptop, what would I find on it?***

I know what I said because I immediately transcribed what I remembered from the series of interrogations as soon as I arrived at my hotel. I have since tried to figure out why I said what I said, which I will try to clarify here in the present tense by returning to the original questions in the form of self-interrogation. Although I was familiar with El Al's procedures—another red flag for the interrogator—I suppose that what struck me most was that I became annoyed at having the same ritualistic conversations you end up having when participating in art exhibitions.

**Where do you live? What sort of art do you make?  
What are you trying to say?**

I have often placed myself in precarious situations in order to access information and images for my work. I have been thrown out of places, been arrested, had cameras confiscated, have faked journalist credentials, paid bribes, and so on. A compulsion? A “research-based art practice”? Well, more the former, supported by the notion of the latter.

Art is facilitated by responsible practitioners that frame art. And artists are often bound to their own caricature. The stereotypes are well known: savant, creative, hysteric, convoluted, contradictory, and so on. However, the institution also has its connotations: mental facility, the state, government, social order, and so forth.

As I write, I will not assume the role of the artist, but more that of a cartoonist. I will enter a state of psychosis for a few days in an attempt to explicate in the form of satire and caricature the notion of “context” and its relation to art, occasionally fluctuating between scientific and clinical terminology (applied arbitrarily).

**What do you mean you’ve been invited to participate in a conference?  
I thought you said you’re an artist.**

As an artist, I generally don’t like to involve myself in discussions about art. More often than not, they exemplify what not to do rather than what to do. They often reveal the way art is instrumentalized. However, in this case, I will make an exception and write something.

As I understand it, the format of *e-flux journal* is intended to generate a new form of discourse. I am always optimistic when I read these sorts of formulations. *e-flux* itself is a reflection of the art world, in which the entire spectrum of production is laid bare. Its organizational structure is based on the simple necessity of disseminating information and is interestingly not bound to contextual framing—conflicts of interest, party affiliations, art magazines, et cetera—and, unlike most of the art junk mail that somehow ends up in my inbox, I don’t automatically delete it. I read some of it.

As *e-flux journal* has begun to establish some general parameters, broadly concerned with issues surrounding the institution, I would like to mention the immediately relevant questions posed by Tom Holert in regard to the production



Disobedience in Byelorussia, *Soviet Life Magazine*, November 1988.

of knowledge in art that correspond to the growing discussion about “research-based” art practice and its institutionalization.<sup>1</sup> I also agree with Irit Rogoff’s comments on the occasional circular patterns in regard to “context.”<sup>2</sup>

I have recently produced two works that reflexively, if obliquely, address issues related to how I see current art practice, works that unexpectedly border on some

1 “I am particularly interested in how issues concerning the actual situations and meanings of art, artistic practice, and art production relate to questions touching on the particular kind of *knowledge* that can be produced within the artistic realm (or the artistic *field*, as Pierre Bourdieu prefers it) by the practitioners or actors who operate in its various places and spaces. The multifarious combinations of artists, teachers, students, critics, curators, editors, educators, funders, policymakers, technicians, historians, dealers, auctioneers, caterers, gallery assistants, and so on, embody specific skills and competences, highly unique ways and styles of knowing and operating in the flexibilized, networked sphere of production and consumption. These variety and diversity have to be taken into account in order for these epistemes to be *recognized* as such and to obtain at least a slim notion of what is at stake when one speaks of *knowledge* in relation to art—an idea that is, in the best of cases, more nuanced and differentiated than the usual accounts of this relation” (Tom Holert, “Art in the Knowledge-based Polis,” *e-flux journal*, No. 3 [February 2009] <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/40>).

oblique form of “institutional critique.” It’s certainly not a category or designation I would want to end with, but something that simply happened, and I would like to attempt to identify the short circuit.

Concrete thinking has led me to believe that the recently applied designation “research-based” artist is possibly appropriate. The next in a series of terms applied to my practice. Of course, such terms are necessary to rationalize art; typically, however, when such terms are applied, I try and circumvent them and do something else.

I recently conducted a form of research on “research-based practice”—my own—and would like to explain the hypothesis and outline some subsequent results so they can be held up as a specimen for analysis. I will try and explain in plain language, not the language that gets confused in the real world, the sort of words automatically corrected by Microsoft Word. The word I got tangled up in was “context.” I will explain how it happened.

What I will attempt to underline should serve as something of a potential warning to designations such as “research-based practice.”

I am curious myself. Does it give ammunition to the notion that research-based practice should be institutionalized? That I should be institutionalized? Or re-institutionalized? After all, isn’t the artist as incoherent psychotic generally the most acceptable practice? More seriously, the practice of art is not confined to finality. It is centered on questioning rather than illustrating, self-reflexive without guarantee, and, as any material practice, open to the possible consequences.

2 “And so the art world became the site of extensive talking—talking emerged as a practice, as a mode of gathering, as a way of getting access to some knowledge and to some questions, as networking and organizing and articulating some necessary questions. But did we put any value on what was actually being said? Or, did we privilege the coming-together of people in space and trust that formats and substances would emerge from these?” (Irit Rogoff, “Turning,” *e-flux journal*, No. 0 [November 2008] <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/18>).

3 See “Deadly plane crash at Tokyo airport,” CNN.com (March 23, 2009) <http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/03/22/japan.plane crash>.



Mass Wedding Ceremony, Unification Church, South Korea, 2000

### **Why do you do it? What are you trying to say?**

I was late sending the signed documents to the institution. The art institution. But I did have an excuse this time. The FedEx plane crashed at Narita this morning.<sup>3</sup> That is an unfortunate fact. It was very windy last night. I was not expecting anything. But other people were expecting something from me. And it will be delayed. Because plane accidents are more important than discussions about art. Than anything I do. And I can talk about plane accidents. I can talk about the different models and types of planes, which airlines, the dates. But it’s up to journalists to check facts.

Then there are art journalists. And they understand what they understand. And that’s good. But sometimes they try and explain things they don’t really understand because sometimes they speak about politics. And they confuse other journalists.

While I am writing this text, I am listening to conservative American talk radio online. Not because I like it, but because it is annoying. People talk. And talk and talk. And it presents itself for what it is. But sometimes the host has something funny to say. For example, “Even a blind squirrel can occasionally find a nut.” As art has an increasing interest in other disciplines, it seems to attract people who have a little more to say than to insist on their imaginary roles in the institution. They just talk, telling us who said this about what, and so on. And they have increasingly more to say. Based on what others have to say. And they will keep

talking. Until you remember. Demanding more discipline or the Bologna Process. Because anyone can get away with anything in art, if one is insistent enough. And it's precisely this sort of "discourse" that often leads me to question the discourse itself.

Here in admission of my own gullibility, I'll diffuse some of my comments. As a kid, I spent hours a day, listening to short-wave radio. Particularly the English-language broadcasts from socialist countries. One host named Vladimir Posner, who spoke with a perfect American accent, was particularly convincing. I also had a subscription to a magazine titled *Soviet Life*. I found everything very impressive, so much so that when I was thirteen I went to the Soviet Union in a student exchange. I remember being in Leningrad, sitting in two groups, drinking bottled lemonade and discussing politics with well-versed Soviet students who were intent on convincing us that their system was better than ours. After explaining the capitalist system to us, they invited themselves to visit us in the United States. It was a bit unexpected. When we left the building where the conference was held, they threw a dead pigeon out the window at us. Much the same confusion predominates in the art world, whose idealism wouldn't exist without a basis.

***I thought you said your work includes photography. Why don't you have camera equipment with you? There are many interesting things to photograph in Israel.***

"All works of art are objects and should be treated as such, but these objects are not ends in themselves; they are tools with which to influence spectators" (Asger Jorn).

Topicality creates the expectation that theory and politics can be enforced through art. But art is not propaganda.

Let me give an example of the arbitrary nature of what might be misconstrued as politics. Imagine that you are watching television. And you are following the capture of Saddam Hussein. Not actually following Saddam Hussein, but watching it on television and reading about it on the Internet. You are curious. Incidentally, you notice near the television a book with the title *The Dictatorship of the Viewer*. And you, the "irrational" artist, invert it. Viewer of the Dictatorship. Knowing you exhibit in the art world. And it will be inverted again. Viewer of the Artist viewing the Dictatorship. And you the artist are aware of the implications.

A few years later, it finally happens. You cause the media to speak to itself. Nonsense. Feedback. And it tells you what not to do next.

I recognized the journalist. He was from CNN. He had a lot of makeup on. More than I realized he had to wear on television. He was in my exhibition in the institution. He wants to talk about my exhibition. I tell him I want to talk about the show. I mean his show. I tell him I watch his show. But he is talking about my exhibition. I tell him I can talk about the subject of what's in the exhibition but it will take a while. But I would rather talk about the subject of his show. But he wants to talk about journalism. Then I tell him, so let's talk about his show. But he still wants to talk about my exhibition.

While preparing for the camera, he asked; what is the purpose of your work, again?

I had to come clean and explain my intent. The exhibition is an attempt to collapse all meaning of the subject, it is about the futility of representation. To make you think about the subject you see. About what you already know. To look again in the real world. Nothing more.

The consequences were productive. I'm not exactly talking about ethics, but I realized everything had come full circle. For a moment, I was able to use art to cause distortion in the media. To occupied space. But I also knew there was something wrong.

***So where can I see your work? In international media, do you mean like magazines? Do you have examples of your work with you?***

Dictated by new formats, there is amnesia that art exists in a particular time and space. The often archaic processes of the art world are unable to articulate the practice. Unable to keep up with cutting and pasting itself into the present, the Internet is a quick reference tool for art professionals, giving the illusion that art can be comprehended without seeing it.

I can talk about "dematerialized" art because I have seen it in books. But I never experienced it. Conceptual art was communicated by means of postcards, faxes, and magazines before I was born, and I read about it years after it was made. The mechanisms and conventions on which the art system relies are in fact real. There are institutions, galleries, critics, publications, and so on. A lot of wasted paper and thought goes into the mechanization of cultural production, providing evidence that ideas were exchanged, and often the illusion that they were communicated.



Harvest Festival, *Korea Monthly Magazine*, DPRK, 1986.

**What do you mean? What is the myth of Bauhaus in Tel Aviv about? Why is it a myth?**

How can art negotiate its own means of mediation? How does the physical art space relate to the quick dissemination of information? How much of that discourse is nonsense? You can hope that at least the facts of the subject of research are checked.

Not an accusation, but an admittance of operating on the wrong frequency. Which can go nearly undetected. The slight incisions into the cultural fabric are more evidence of what not to do. My temporary conclusion has been not to update information about production. Ignore it and let it reside in a system that generates itself. Let meaning disintegrate until it collapses and can be made into a subject of its own.

To let information operate parallel to art in order to let me know something about the subject. Something I don't already know.

**Where did you study? What did you study?**

The art world sometimes seems more like school than school itself. So it's logical that the discussion about education arises. I have basically gone from one institution to another, that is, from art school to institutionalized professional art practice. I have long taken exhibition thematics as serious propositions with potential. And when the subject is based on a secondary or non-existent notion, I make it into the subject itself. In some cases, I have produced work simply to see what happens, then

I determine its function and go from there. When I can't detect what the intent of the exhibition is, it's an opportunity to try something, to experiment.

**Have you ever visited a synagogue?**

The rituals of participation can be pretty grotesque. They can be worse than school ever was. You don't want to go to the art bar. You want to go to a real bar. You have to go to the same fucking Italian restaurant the second night in a row because one artist is vegetarian, and a bad artist. A slobbering artist can't concentrate anymore on your conversation because an important curator walks in the door of the exhibition. You get introduced to someone you've known for ten years because the person wants them to know that they know you.

More artists steal the banners, slogans, and balloons from protesters until there is no longer protest. And disciplinarians speak about protest because art allows them to. And artists do it because they were told to do it. Another whining artist waiting for a crate with his art to arrive. He opens it and it's another neon. It looks like the neon in the last exhibition but it says something slightly different. Another slogan about non-conformity. He's talking about how he got the idea from Deleuze, while eating a cone of pistachio ice cream. Another moron does some "social design" that everyone is forced to sit in. Otherwise, you have to stand all night and look at it.

An artist from a country where you went to do a project asks you to give an interview for his magazine. You say sure, but you tell him to first read a text. Where you got the idea to start the project. The text was written by an architect. A theorist. The artist doesn't write back. He publishes the article with the photograph you took to illustrate the text. Uncredited. The same artist goes to the same place you did the project. And does the same thing, in a different way. His version. There's a monument to the country he immigrated to in his own country. So he makes a video of the monument of the country he immigrated to in his own country. It's a better project.

A curator shoving a card in another curator's face interrupts your discussion. Talking about her plans to do an exhibition of Hungarian artists in Turkey. You ask if the title of the show will be Hungary Turkey. You are serious. She thinks you're a lunatic. Why not? Her card is from an American-supported foundation. Because you read it and know who taught her to shove cards in people's faces. And you somehow feel responsible, but not really.



*Unsung Heroes*, North Korean Film Series, DPRK, 1981.

You should exploit your background. Scandalize and provoke. Politely.

Recently an art historian proposed that Van Gogh did not cut off his own ear, that it was likely the result of a fight with Gauguin who threw a glass at him. This came from a researcher looking carefully through existing criminal documents. They have been there for more than a hundred years, while the fictions have been made.<sup>4</sup>

#### ***Where did you meet? How long have you known each other?***

But experience goes along with it. There are interesting people in between, so it's worthwhile. Like school. And then you get institutionalized, in art institutions. So you have different responsibilities. You have to talk. A lot. About yourself. And they send you a press package with what they have to say, and you read it because your work is about media and you're curious about what the media writes about your work. "Is interested in this..." "Examines that..." You read it and you think, what the hell? That's not what you were thinking—at least not what you thought you were thinking. And the facts are all wrong.

<sup>4</sup> See Bärbel Küster, "Wir müssen einen Schnitt machen," *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (February 24, 2009) <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/833/459475/text/>.

#### ***Do you have any Jewish relations or has anyone in your family immigrated to Israel?***

I'd rather speak Japanese to someone who might understand the second or third time I repeat what I'm saying than with someone who simply will never understand what the hell I'm talking about with art. But, if they are not involved in the art world, I try to explain.

Last year, I went through the process of Japanese immigration. Japanese immigration is very strict. There are twenty-seven classifications for visas. I gave them too many documents and they were confused. They were unsure whether I was applying for cultural purposes, humanities, or what. It was a kind of a surprise when the immigration officer said, "But your last visa was from an institution. It says you are an artist. Can you prove that?" On a technicality, I qualify for permanent residency.<sup>5</sup> I suddenly was reminded I'm an artist.

Say you decide to start a center in Ukraine together with some academics in the university. There was a Soros center, but now they complain about funding for art and that's understandable. But when they get it they don't always use it for art. And that's understandable too. You don't want to start another art scene, you just want to do something with what you know because there is no contemporary art, at least as you understand it. There is a new private museum with animals behind glass. I mean the art. It's part of a shopping mall. It's decadent and amusing. At least people get more interested in art.

Then you talk with someone you know in the art world who is also interested. He is the editor of a magazine. A real magazine you read in art school. He had a similar idea and you realize you might be able to do something together. A lot of people get interested in the idea. Suppose the University has a film archive with more than five thousand 16mm films and they belong to the center you started. They would have been thrown out if you hadn't organized them and put them on shelves so they can be screened and edited. You know you can't watch them all. You don't want to do an art project with the films. You just want to watch them. And invite other artists to make art projects.

<sup>5</sup> See "Guidelines for Contribution to Japan," Immigration Bureau of Japan, <http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/tetuduki/zairyuu/contribution.pdf>.

You know that all the formatting problems of the art world you've encountered for years can be solved with one cheap media player that is made in China that you can get on the market for seventy dollars. It plays everything. You're in Ukraine and there is no formatting, as you know it. You can get new pirated software as soon as it's on the market, the black market, where there's no formatting. You end up speaking with people about "context" and they don't know what you're talking about. So you have to explain and explain, and in the process it starts to make sense, maybe not to you, but to them. It sounds convincing, and then maybe you can make some meaning out of that for yourself. So you try and do something with what you have learned—what you always understood as "context." It might fail, but so what?

***How long have you had it? Has it been in your possession all the time?***

Back to the art world. I have had interesting discussions with other artists who have also worked with the same subject and I have spoken with art journalists who don't know the difference between North and South Korea. But the journalists like the idea of North Korea.

I could use North Korea as a sort of metaphor for the art world. Not the politics and horrific conditions that exist in the country. They are real. Not to bring "awareness" to the art world. These things I can't change. I am not delusional. Let me be clear here, not to sound irresponsible. I am referring to the circulation of information. I am thinking of the insularity of the country. This is a metaphor. Or, concrete thinking.

For example, you can take someone's statement, de-contextualize and reframe it so that it might sound as if it applies to the Bologna Process:

It has trained a large number of revolutionary talents in the crucible of the arduous revolutionary struggle, thus successfully playing a pivotal role in carrying out the policy of training native cadres and the policy of intellectualizing all members of the society and actively conducted scientific researches, making a great contribution to the development of the nation's science and technology.

But it's not. It's from the other day. Kim Jong-il visiting a new swimming pool at a University.<sup>6</sup>

A short anecdote related to Liam Gillick's research on the experimental factory.<sup>7</sup> I am reminded of an incident that speaks to the fate of all good intentions; in the 1970s, Sweden's Social Democratic government sent a few thousand Volvos to North Korea on the trust of the Swedes. The North Koreans just ripped them off and never paid for the cars. They are still on the streets in Pyeongyang.<sup>8</sup> An important consideration here is where the production ends up. Who accumulates the knowledge? Who is producing what for whom? Will you get back what you give?

Once again, my interest is nothing new. When I was a teenager, I listened to Radio Pyeongyang. It was again the interestingly contorted language. Propaganda. North Korean State Television edits the outside world into a surrealistic and alien spectacle with consistent themes: war, accidents, natural disasters, intimidating technology, worldwide protest, extreme physical activity and endurance, and so on. Appearing once a week, towards the end of the news report, following the perfunctory fifteen to twenty minutes of praise of Kim Jong-il and reports on his daily activities, the program is called the "News of The World."

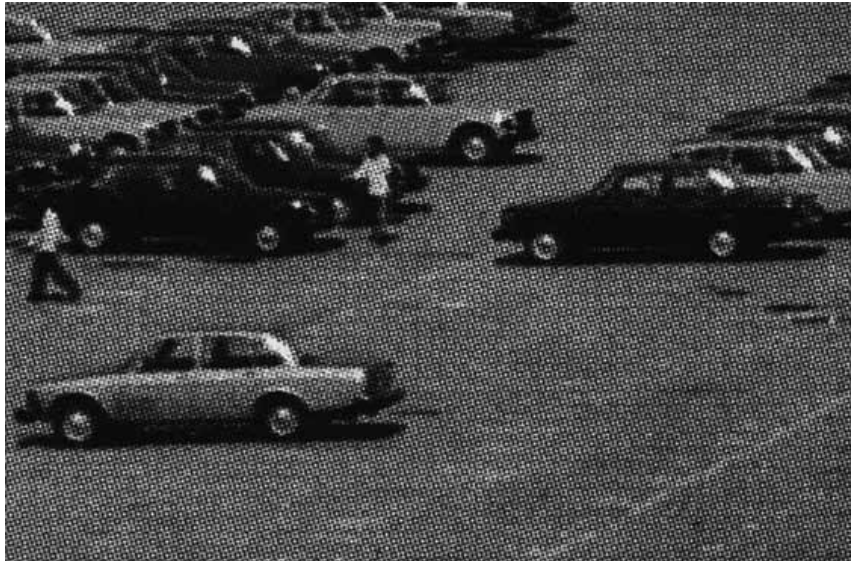
Without realizing that you have nearly become a thematically programmed production zombie, you start to listen to yourself repeating yourself. Cynically. You realize this when you are talking to students about how to do the same. You sound convincing because it's what students expect. Because you have experience. And then you have to catch yourself and tell them what you are thinking. Because that's more useful.

In another city for yet another reason, I ran into Stephan Dillemath by coincidence, in yet another academy with yet more students. But these students were different. The same fantasy I had in school of the art world. I felt like I was

6 See "Kim Jong-il Provides On-the-Spot Guidance to newly built Swimming Complex at Kim Il-sung University," *Korea News Services* (March 19, 2009) [http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2009/200903/news19/20090319-1\\_2ee.html](http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2009/200903/news19/20090319-1_2ee.html).

7 Liam Gillick, "Maybe it would be better if we worked in groups of three? (Part 2 of 2): The Experimental Factory," *e-flux journal*, No. 3 (February 2009) <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/41>.

8 See Volvo Car Corporation, "75 Years of Volvo Taxis," Press Release (March 11, 2005) <http://www.volvocars.com/intl/corporation/NewsEvents/News/Pages/default.aspx?item=58>.



Detail from DPRK publication, Volvo 144s, 1989.

finally back in the real art world. The art world of the Akademie that I read about in art school. The illusionary, bohemian, delusional, real art world of art. Where everyone reads faked scripts, wears costumes, and talks incoherently. I have recently found myself wandering around the art supply store, looking at paint materials.

At the end of the night, I had to leave and go back to the institution. The art institution.

Anyway, here is where I would start to identify the short circuit. I often found that the notion of “context” doesn’t necessarily translate. The further off and more “peripheral” the places I exhibited, the less knowledge there was about “context.” But I could still discuss the subject of the research. And then I might attempt to explain “context” and its considerations.

Or, Kim Jong-il maybe it’s simply a disorder. I am, in fact, a savant. I have Asperger’s syndrome. I can remember a lot of information. I can archive. And it can be a fucking intricate mess. And I can present it as art.

Not that the subject of archiving is not interesting. I just can’t read another concept based on another concept for yet another exhibition about archiving. It gives me

a headache. And the idea of more curators, archiving concepts of other curators archiving artists to archive the notion of the archive, is annoying. So is the idea of more and more artists, digging through more and more archives as another pretext for another exhibition.

To try and understand what the hell I am doing, I look at Walter Benjamin. Not in his archive, but in a book. By someone who researched his archive and edited it. His list of seemingly meaningless pictures and notes is justification. The mistakes, what is crossed out, misspellings, diagrams, notes in the margin. Constant revisions. Editing. Something more idiotic than the last thing I have archived for whatever reason.

The knowledge of truth does not exist. For truth is the death of invention.  
– Walter Benjamin

Architecture is not politics. A photograph of a building is not politics, but it can generate readings. I have never attempted to make political art. I have made art informed by politics in terms of the narratives and visual surfaces ideology produces. I have never inferred the notion of truth. In fact, I have worked with distortion, played with presentation, implying truth. I passed through a matrix of contradictory forms that imitate authority, and alluded to the problems and failures of representation.

Artistic experimentation, whether presented as research or not, precludes an outcome—a conclusion or a statement. It is entirely reliant on the dismantling and framing of a given subject matter.

This situation of self-correction reminded me of the regime I was once seduced by. I caught myself going all the way back to when I was about sixteen. On the premise of producing an art project, I bought the issues of *Soviet Life* that I had received with my subscription at that time. When the magazines arrived, I realized I actually just wanted to re-read them and see what I could remember. One article, in particular, has an interesting series of images. They contradict the current situation in Byelorussia. It is even optimistic in a twisted way. And I remember the photo from when I was sixteen years old.

Concrete thinking makes me consider the art world though metaphors in order to make it seem rational so I don’t have to spend all my time in the institution. I mean the art institution. So I can exist in the real world. I learned in school that



you can always walk out of class when you don't like it.

**So is it your main profession? Who sells your artwork?  
Who buys the artwork?**

There is not one instance, in which I have been turned away from approaching another discipline for source material. Occasionally, I have been altogether stopped, and probably for good reason. Yes, much of the language of "context" remains largely untranslatable for a broader society (depending on where you are), but people do know what art is. First, there is skepticism, as most people have preconceptions. Followed by explanation. At the end, when they see what you have done with what they entrusted you with, it often comes as a surprise. The result informs their discipline. In these cases, it is successful. But that's the point where it's often useless in the art context.

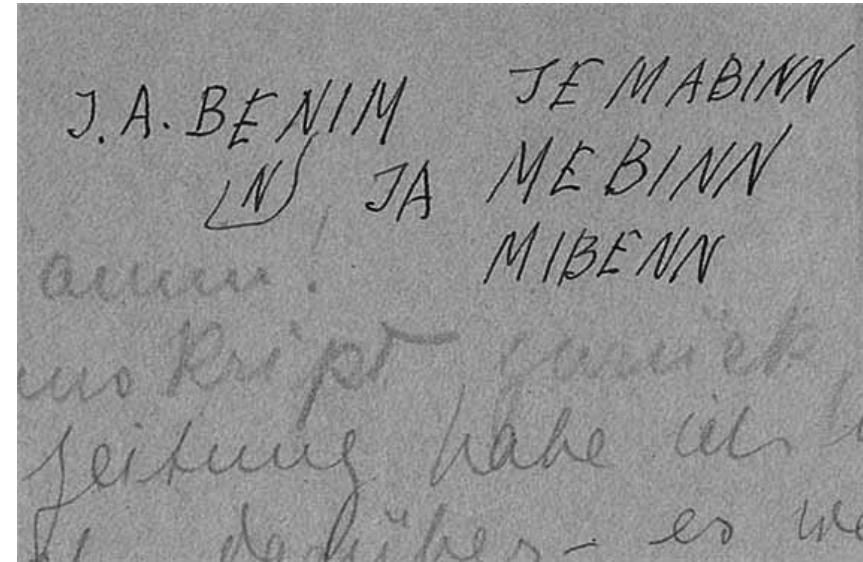
What is often forgotten in discussions about "research-based" art practice is that it cannot simply be reduced to research. To do so is to forget what art can do and what research can't. Art makes the form, the site of knowledge. Without rejecting the content. It is art itself that delineates its own borders.

Here again, I see possibilities for the notion of hijacking art. If you can convince someone that art is intangible, it can act as a stand-in for something else. And then maybe you can get something done with it, inside or outside any discipline if that is, in fact, what you want.

I first learned this a few years ago from two El Al interrogators and a curator. Who works in an institution. An art institution. One of the interrogators was skeptical about whether I was an artist when he called the curator on the telephone. The curator later told me that the interrogator was also a cartoonist.

A Chinese translation of this text has been published in issue #6 of *Contemporary Art & Investment*.

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Walter Benjamin, Archive.

## A Grandmother Hiding like a Spy and Praying like a Ghost

|  
Gong Sun Ok  
|

When I was asked to write an essay, I remembered what happened many years ago in my childhood. In particular, regarding this biennale's theme "Ghosts, Spies, and Grandmothers," I have seen someone who corresponds to these three categories. It was early spring when I was a first grader in elementary school. The weather was cloudy around the twilight. By that time of the day early spring, it was slightly windy and coldness came into your clothes. There was coldness bitterer than in the middle of winter. However, people wore thinner clothes than in winter because it was spring anyway. I was picking mugwort on the bank of a reservoir. It was getting dark and there was no one on the bank. There was someone silently approaching me, a little girl. Who was it? A beast that would eat me? Or an adult man, someone evil? Anyway, an unknown animal or someone was approaching me from behind. The child, I, did not notice the signs of movement yet. I liked mugwort and I liked picking mugwort plants. I could not help picking mugwort plants that were coming out from the soil everywhere, burnt out after people enjoyed setting a fire on paddies and fields during the first full moon of a year in the lunar calendar. I thought I could not forget about mugwort even when I got back home that evening. I would think about the mugwort even while sleeping. I would want to move my hands before I managed to get asleep. That is why I had to pick mugwort despite the cold weather and coming darkness. At that very moment, behind my back, I heard the sound "Let's go-oh." It was not "Hey you, let's go" or "Come on, let's go" but "Let's go-oh," in an odd voice. It was not a familiar voice to me. In those days, I could tell who the person was just by hearing their voice. I could distinguish not only people in our village but also people in neighboring villages and small towns. The voice I heard at that moment was not the voice of anyone from our village or neighboring towns. To be more specific, the voice was not the voice of any farmers in my village or a neighboring village, either. It was neither the voice of a worker at the brewery nor a clerk at a small shop or bus station. It was neither the voice of a person at a rice soup restaurant nor a worker at a shoe store or linen shop in the downtown marketplace. It was a male voice similar to a female voice, or vice versa. It sounded like laughing or crying at the same time. I could not measure the person's age but when I looked back she clearly had the look of a grandmother. The person's black hair was raised upward in Korean style and the person was wearing

a white traditional jacket, black pants, and white rubber shoes. The one wearing a grandmother's costume looked at me with a confusing facial expression—I could not tell whether the person was smiling or staring at me—and said “Let’s go-oh.”

Later, I don’t remember how I came back home. One thing I remember is that I was very ill in bed in the spring of that year, running a high temperature. Therefore, I could not attend school and I went back to school next year at age nine. Was the grandmother a real old lady, spy, or ghost? My uncle who had been to the Vietnam War said the grandmother was certainly a spy. He thought that a spy in disguise as a grandmother tried to lure a child like me to North Korea. My father agreed that the uncle’s idea that a total stranger in our neighborhood could be a spy was reasonable. A pretty girl living next door said a grandmother wearing a white traditional Korean jacket and black pants appeared again and again in her dream and told her not to get married, adding while staring at her with raised eyebrows that she would die if she got married. Based on her dream, the girl said that the grandmother I saw was a ghost. My mom said that she was probably a ghost because I fainted right after seeing the grandmother. So, do grandmothers sometimes become spies and ghosts? If that grandmother were a spy, we would have had to report to the police and arrest her. If she were a ghost, we would have had to drive her away through a shamanistic ritual or just ignore her, calling her an illusion. All of the village people said they would have to drive away the old woman if she appeared on the bank of the reservoir again, whether she was a spy or a ghost.

A few years ago, I spent some time with grandmothers in the countryside. Grandmothers and civil servants in the county office were having an argument. The reason was that an illegal stone factory was established near a village where those grandmothers lived. There were also grandfathers there, but the main power in the argument was with the grandmothers. Grandfathers just walked around grandmothers and casually gathered at meal times under a large tree in front of the county office. This was because the grandmothers prepared meals. Grandmothers both demonstrated and prepared meals. They fed their husbands first and then ate food themselves. Grandfathers scattered to smoke after having a meal. Grandmothers washed dishes and then again shouted their slogans against the stone factory and demanded the county authorities cancel their permission regarding the factory. When they went home, they prepared a meal to feed grandfathers and fed domestic animals before they finally had their meal. Grandmothers without husbands looked relaxed because they didn’t need to serve their husbands first. Grandmothers said:  
 “How did I know that I would join deemo, which I’ve never done in my life

before?

I thought only students do deemo. In the past, I begged my children not to join deemo. However, nowadays, my children keeps telling me not to join deemo. An ignorant person like me does deemo in front of the county office. This is an unbelievably great period of my life.”

In front of grandmothers who pronounced “demo” as deemo, a policeman clearly stood by the county office and the factory owner with a cunning smile. He said:

“You grandmothers are now doing an illegal demonstration.”

“You grandmothers are now violating the law and order.”

“You grandmothers are behaving in a way that fits the followers of the North Korean government.”

“You grandmothers are now more evil than communist partisans.”

Whenever he passed grandmothers intentionally or not, he played a trick on them saying, “You grandmothers…” Those grandmothers who did an illegal demonstration, violated law and order, behaved in a way that fit the followers of the North Korean government, and who were more evil than communist partisans existed not only in Jeolla-do but also in Miryang, Gyeongsang-do. Actually, they were everywhere in the country. I went to those grandmothers’ homes in order to look at how those people—who violated law and order, behaved in a way that fit the followers of the North Korean government, and who were more evil than communist partisans—lived.

Grandmother Kim stepped on a spider by mistake while cleaning up her room in the morning. The spider was squashed to death under the grandmother’s foot. It seemed that the dead spider was a mother. Somewhere a little spider ran to the dead spider and trembled beside the dead mother. Finally, the grandmother’s eyes were filled with tears. It was a scene from one morning of the eighty three-year-old grandmother Kim who was considered a criminal for doing illegal demonstrations, a follower of the North Korean government, and a person more evil than a communist partisan.

Grandmother Hong went to a chili pepper field early at dawn as she could not take care of the field for some time because of demonstrations. Grandmother Hong had

a conversation with someone in the dawn light. The conversation seemed very interesting as she laughed, too. In doing so, she kept picking chili peppers with her hands. When I asked what was so interesting, she said it was just tickling.

“Oh, it’s just tickling.”

“Where?”

“It is everywhere around me.”

“Why is it?”

“It’s tickling because that trumpet lily woke up just now.”

Looking at a ridge, trumpet lilies clearly appeared as they bloomed with drips of morning dew.

This was a scene from one summer morning of the eighty-year-old grandmother Hong, who was considered as a follower of the North Korean government and was more evil than a communist partisan.

Grandmother Oh was alone in her room. I thought she was not there because there was no answer when I called her. I opened the door, asking “Why didn’t you answer when I called you?”

She was crying. She could not answer as she was crying leaning against the wall alone in a room that was dark even in the daytime. Probably she wanted to pretend not to be there because she was ashamed of crying. I was surprised that a ninety-year-old woman cried and that she was ashamed of crying, too. I thought grandmothers never cried and were never ashamed of anything. I thought grandmothers never cried even at any horrible things in the world, and I thought they didn’t need to experience anything shameful any more. Anyway, the grandmother was crying. I thought she was crying because of the world that gives pain to the grandmothers.

I said, “Those who make you cry are bad people.”

She said, “They gave birth to babies. Look at how they move their little beaks in order to live a life.”

She was crying at the new-born swallows under the eaves.

“They are trying to live…”

I could not write anymore as I didn’t know what to call the tears of the ninety-year-old grandmother in thinking about creatures trying to live.

Grandmothers and the rest of the world were always apart. They were in their separate worlds. If grandmothers moved in this direction, the rest of the world moved in that direction. Now, the grandmothers’ world had disappeared to a faraway place we cannot reach. However, the grandmothers who were considered to have disappeared were still alive. For example, they were sitting on the stairway of the underground arcade leading to the subway station Geumnamno 5-ga, Gwangju. Seen from the main street that is bright, gorgeous, noisy, and wide, the grandmothers looked a bit awkward, uncomfortable, different, and even burdensome. However, when they sat clustered on the underground stairway they looked cute in a way. I stealthily sat beside them not because they looked cute but because I wanted to listen to what they were talking about.

“This must not go on.”

“We should subvert it.”

“This cannot be more evil.”

“They think everything is possible with money.”

“There will be a big problem at any moment.”

Who are these grandmothers? They are right. This must not go on. We need to subvert this evil world where they think everything is possible with money. Are these grandmothers also the followers of the North Korean government? As they insist that they should subvert the capitalist system (the world of money), are they trying to subvert our society? As they are secretly stirring up the social atmosphere by saying that there will be a big problem, are they conspirators of a rebellion? A Japanese grandmother named Toyo Shibata wrote poems in her late nineties, and one of her poems says she hopes to hear a question on what she thinks about the prime minister’s policies instead of a question about simple numbers everyone knows when taking a test for dementia. Instead of questions such as:

“Tell me your name.”

“Do you know your son’s age?”

“Let me know your address.”

“Is this a circle or a rectangle?”

Can’t we ask grandmothers these questions? :

“What do you think of Israeli attack on Palestine? And the US attack on Iraq?”

“What do you think about Korean people’s high approval rating for the current administration and leading party despite the National Intelligence Service’s illegal involvement in the presidential election, the president’s breaking her promise, and her disastrous personnel management?”

Are grandmothers really away from what’s happening in the world? Didn’t someone push them away from the world? Then, are those grandmothers on the underground stairway in Gwangju—who insist the world should be subverted—spies?

“Oh, my dead father-in-law appeared in my dream last night, and he begged me to give money for his wedding so much that I slapped him over his face.”

“A mother and her son had affairs, respectively, and when they were caught rummaging my bag they ran away. In doing so, wind flew from the west and as they moved to the West over the wind they threatened me by shaking their fists. Following their ancestors’ example, the old woman’s grandson had an affair and the granddaughter-in-law feels so frustrated.”

“On a day when a crazy woman runs in the middle of the main road, wearing a red skirt and green traditional jacket, with a coquettish smile, it rains without fail. I guess it’s going to rain.”

Do their conversations incomprehensible to me because they are ghosts? If you see grandmothers in a city center, you might need to check whether they are ghosts or spies.

My aunt (the wife of my father’s older brother) is eighty five years old. She often tried to heal sick children through incantations. In my memory, my aunt was always a grandmother. Even when young, she was a grandmother to my children and tried to heal the kids through incantations, too.

She wrapped a bowl of rice in cloth, and then put it on the forehead of a sick child who was running a temperature. When the young grandmother chanted an incantation, her eyes were loving and fierce at the same time.

“My usually healthy baby got seriously ill all of a sudden. I don’t know whether it’s simply because the kid is unfortunate; whether you, *Jambapgaksi*, met the ghost of a person who had been shot to death, the ghost of a person who had been stabbed to death, or the ghost of one who had starved to death and you’re trying to take our baby to a ghost. However, you, *Jambapgaksi*, go away after eating this rice. Shoo, shoo, shoo... if you don’t go away even after eating this rice I’ll stab you in the neck deeply and plunge your body into the sea, so go away right now.”

Sick babies knew that *Jambapgaksi*—who was trying to take a baby to a ghost—was shocked by the sound of the young grandmother, striking a gourd dipper with a cast iron knife, and ran away after eating white rice.

My aunt, who was a young grandmother, became an old lady who looks like a new bride. On Sunday early morning, a church’s minibus comes to the village and takes all the grandmothers in colorful clothes to church. Their children went to cities, and many of their husbands died. Therefore, only dogs, cats, and grandmothers move around the village. In the village where only grandmothers live, there is no one to stop the dogs and cats when they fight. They say people could be stopped by using a stick but these animals just ignore grandmothers. Although dogs are naturally such creatures, they avoided people if they got caught mating in the past. However, nowadays, they seem to ignore grandmothers as they mate anywhere in the village and they don’t separate even when kicked. Cats move around during the daytime as if on a punitive expedition against their enemies, and they freely come in the kitchen of any house and steal food at night. While suffering from those cats and dogs, grandmothers who take a church minibus on Sundays say that they depend only on the pastor of “our church” and find consolation in their pastor’s preachings.

They say, “People always need someone or something to depend on,” and “We can live only when we have faith.”

The Lord whom my aunt believes in and depends on is served with a bowl of clean water every morning, and frequently served with white rice and seaweed soup.

“I pray, I pray to Jesus who carried the cross. Please have mercy on these poor people and let our family members be on good terms with one another. I hope for national prosperity and the welfare of the people as well as the bright future of the world. Also, I earnestly pray they will feel happy in contentment and have no sickness or accidents. Amen.”

The more earnestly my aunt rubs her hands, the brighter the face of Jesus (she feels). My aunt believes that both *Jambapgaksi* and Jesus need to eat white rice and seaweed soup. Thereby, everything becomes okay. Is my aunt doing well or doing something in vain when she prays with a bowl of clean water in front of the cross?

“Well, grandmothers, let’s pray in this way. First, gather your two hands around your chest at an almost 90-degree angle and never rub them. I told you if you rub them, prayers are less effective.”

The young pastor of “our church” said so. However, my aunt still earnestly rubs her hands towards Jesus as she thinks it’s not like truly praying if she doesn’t rub her hands. Are my eighty five-year-old aunt’s prayers to Jesus really effective? Who knows?

“I know it, as you children of our family are all okay with no illness or accidents,” my aunt says.

My aunt hides like a spy and prays like a ghost. That is why I live this well. It is certain that my aunt’s prayers are very effective, considering that my life is okay today.

(Translation by Kim Hyun-kyung)



Jakrawal NILTHAMRONG, INTRANSIT (Part)

Darkness before the Dawn  
: Modern-day Antigones Who Do Not Stand Alone

Cho Han Hae-joang

**Talking about Grandmothers**

In late May of this year, director Park Chan-kyong sent me a note asking if I could write an essay for an exhibition to be entitled, “Ghost, Spies, and Grandmothers.” He said that lingering international conflicts about the “truth” of the ‘comfort women’ reminded us of the role of our grandmothers in the violent process of modernization of society. He asked me to touch on the suffering and the struggles they had undergone, as the history of the Cold War still has many secrets to be unlocked. However, I found the prospect of writing about these women who had been so oppressed in their existence and the idea of trying to save them somehow in the present-day would only be tedious and ring hollow. So I’ve decided to face this challenge in my own fashion, by writing personally about my own two grandmothers in the hopes that readers can think about the lives of grandmothers in a more intimate way.

In this essay, I’ll refer to my grandmothers in the Korean way, calling my maternal grandmother “Gupo grandmother,” as she was from Gupo, and my paternal grandmother “Sangju grandmother,” because she came from that town.

**Gupo Grandmother**

My grandmother on my mother’s side, Lee Jeong-ja, was born in 1900 to Lee Chambong, a rich grain dealer who lived in Gupo by the Nakdong River (SE area of Korea, not far from Busan). Great-grandfather Lee was from a noble *yangban*<sup>1</sup> family but lost his parents early before he later made his fortune together with his older sisters. In those days, *Chambong* seems to have been a kind of honorary title you could buy, a bit like the fake degrees you can buy today without stepping foot inside a classroom. His wife gave birth to only two daughters and no other children, but Chambong Lee—who was active and hard-working in all things—adored the girls. Favored by her father, the oldest daughter grew up as woman of



Gupo grandmother in her thirties with her eldest daughter and the eldest son



high spirits. In those days, out of propriety, *yangban* boys went to school and girls did not, but still great-grandfather educated his daughter by inviting teachers and students who had studied in Japan to come into their home and teach Gupo grandmother subjects like Chinese characters, Korean language, and arithmetic. Then, for some reason, she grew curious about the neighborhood children who attended the local school, so Gupo grandmother begged her father to attend school as well. Oh, there are so many family stories about her. For example, once when her homeroom teacher entered the classroom, he found no students present and later he learned that Lee Chambong's daughter had taken all the students to her home and had taught them herself. It's not clear if she didn't like the teacher or just wanted to play with her friends, but being headstrong and always surrounding herself with others was my grandmother's way from childhood through her old age. Although my aunt claims Gupo grandmother quit attending the school because she found out that a low-class girl was among her classmates, I doubt it. Gupo grandmother was someone who didn't discriminate against others—in fact, she was the most open-minded person of her generation that I've ever met. She died of a heart attack when I was in 8th grade. I remember asking her many questions in my childhood but now time has passed and I don't clearly remember who told me what. The following is based on recollections from various family sources.

At the age of eighteen, Gupo grandmother married the third son of the Han family, who lived in Dongrae but were originally from Seoul. Her father-in-law ran a factory that produced traditional long-stem pipes with elaborate decorations and her mother-in-law, Mrs. Hyeon,<sup>2</sup> was said to be from the family of a high-ranking government official who had returned to his ancestral hometown at the end of the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910), frustrated by the condition of the country. I guess that the Han family was more accepting of new, foreign culture earlier than others in Seoul and there were also several interpreters and foreign envoys in the extended family. They seem to have been a cultured family. My great-grandfather, the pipe factory owner, read the *Dong-a Ilbo*, a daily newspaper founded in 1920,

1 *Yangban* were the hereditary elite of the old Joseon dynasty, guardians of propriety and Confucian ritual, who were often landowners and made up the upper ranks of the government bureaucracy.

2 Korean women retain their family names at birth (i.e., their father's family name or "maiden names") for the duration of their lives.

from the date of its first publication and collected all of the issues at home. Also, my great-grandfather Han didn't accept the post of *chambong* when the county government offered it to him, unlike my maternal great-grandfather, Chambong Lee, my mother once told me. Looking back, it is likely that he was considered akin to today's *nouveau riche* and was not very respected by his daughter-in-law's family in Dongrae. Great-grandfather Han had five sons, all of whom studied in 'modern' schools. In 1900, he sent his first son to Japan to become a doctor, but that son heard the news of Korea's annexation by Japan the year that he graduated (1910) and so did not return to Korea, but rather went on to China. He opened a hospital in Shanghai and his whole family supported the Korean independence movement from there until liberation in 1945. The second son was an inventor who graduated from an engineering college in Japan, after which he led an idle life in Japan and Korea. The third son, my grandfather, was a warm-hearted man and especially devoted to his mother. He attended Gyeongshin Middle School, a Christian school. The fourth son got a job after graduating from high school, worked hard to save money, and then bought a violin. He was passionate about music and the violin throughout his whole life. Later, he majored in music at Soongsil College and even went to the US to continue his studies. This son is the grandfather of a famous singer-songwriter, Han Dae-soo who composed the popular song, "The Nation of Happiness." The youngest son majored in business in university and worked in accounting throughout his adult life.<sup>3</sup>

My grandfather Han married the first daughter of a rich family in Gupo (my Gupo grandmother) because he thought that his father-in-law would support him so he

3 Of my four grandparents' families, I respect the Han family the most. Most of all, I liked an uncle who was nicknamed "Faraway Cloud." He gave me a piece of calligraphy that read "A deep-rooted tree" when I was leaving for the US to study, and another piece "Love your country with passion" when I got married. This uncle composed the Joseon dynasty's (1392-1910) first musical *Arirang* during the Japanese colonial period and also served as the creative director in the Independence Army's art troupe, which was in exile in China. Later, he refused to be buried in the National Cemetery, and so was buried in a family burial ground. They say he said "I don't want to be buried in the same cemetery as thieves" when refusing the state cemetery. He was angry with the Korean government because the government did not support the Independence Army veterans after liberation when they were short of money to buy coal to heat their houses and he used to spend all his salary to help heat their homes. This uncle was an excellent artist and a man with a feminine side, so I used to visit him whenever I went to Busan. Although this strays from my story about my two grandmothers, I cannot fail to include this uncle when I speak of my family. For me, Uncle Faraway Cloud was an exemplary person who loved himself as well as his family, hometown, friends, neighbors, country, and the world.

could study in Japan. My Gupo great-grandfather actually did end up sending his son-in-law to study in Japan but was irked that he chose to study English literature and soon called him back to Korea, saying that it was cheaper to hire someone who had studied in Japan rather than sending him there to study himself. Although Gupo grandfather respected his father-in-law's wishes, he was silently resentful in his heart. He ended up lending large sums to his friends and was careless about running his business until he eventually failed at it. He didn't drink but loved music, so he would stay long into the evening at the *gisaeng's* house<sup>4</sup> in order to listen to them sing and play Korean songs to Korean traditional instruments. Gupo grandmother, who was a bit of a tomboy, was startled to learn that the man she had married was this fastidious gentleman who never had a hair out of place. During their marriage, she often felt weighed down by her overly taciturn husband. According to my mother's memories of childhood, Gupo grandmother would spend the day socializing and smoking with her friends, but as soon as Gupo grandfather was seen approaching from the distance, all the smoking paraphernalia would be hidden away as it was seen as improper behavior for younger women.

As she felt stifled by her marriage, Gupo grandmother gladly decided to rent a room to an Australian missionary woman who had come inquiring about a place to stay. As my Gupo grandmother was a very sociable woman, she and the missionary woman soon struck up a friendship. My curious grandmother often would accompany this lady to church and would read the Bible with her, too. After a while, she herself came to believe in Jesus. One of the reasons for this may have been that she gave birth to several sons after she gave birth to my mother (her first child), but they all died before they were four years old. After that heartache, she stopped worshipping at the Buddhist temple and converted to Christianity. Through her friendship with the blue-eyed, unmarried missionary, she came to realize that women can live good lives even without getting married. With this in mind, she persuaded her younger sister (my great-aunt) to go to Japan to study medicine, even though my great-aunt's heart wasn't in it. When her mother (my great-grandmother) passed away while she was in Japan, she was deeply shocked and came back to Korea, never to return to Japan. Later, she married the son of a neighborhood family that owned a rice mill. In my childhood

4 A Korean-style *geisha* house where they performed music to entertain the gentlemen guests.

memory, my great-aunt's house was a large mansion surrounded by high walls covered with beautiful flowers. Looking back now, it was the style of house fit for a Japanese colonial official. My Gupo grandmother, though, was cut of different cloth. She told her first daughter (my mother) that she should live a life fit for a new enlightened age. She counseled her, "You don't need to serve one man. Be a person who serves our country." My mother wasn't an especially talkative person, but she repeated the same advice to me many times when I was young so I imagine she wanted me to take to heart the same message. My mother had an idealistic streak and she dreamed of working for the enlightenment of farming village like the heroine Chae Yong-shin of *Sangnoksu* (*Evergreen Tree*) by author Sim Hun. My mother thought of becoming a doctor to serve villages without doctors. As a big fan of Lee Gwang-su's novel, my mother felt angry at Lee's sell-out to the Japanese colonizers. When Shinto shrine worship was mandated by the colonial government in her high school years, she refused to participate in, and thus was not permitted to attend medical school in Japan. Nonetheless, she hoped to work for the disadvantaged and to live for Korea. However, there was a rumor going around that any unmarried women would be mobilized as comfort women, so she married a Korean student in Japan in 1944. He was studying literature and seemed so thin and pale that it didn't look like he'd have a long life span.

But, back to the story of my Gupo grandmother. As she came to know more about the life of the Australian missionary, she longed for a life not limited by the old ways and customs. With time, she even thought of separating from her husband, but I'm curious about what she thought her life would be like since divorce was completely unimaginable in Korean society of the time. With time, her husband finally failed in business. Being faithful, Gupo grandmother thought that she needed to stay with her husband until he could manage life on his own, and so she followed her husband and moved with their four children to Pyeongyang. She was twenty eight at the time. Arranged by his younger brother, Gupo grandfather was hired as a manager at a department store, Taeanyanghaeng, a place serving missionaries. It was a suitable job for grandfather as he had experience in business and was good at English. After working at the store for three years, Gupo grandfather suggested grandmother that they study theology together. He had attended a Christian middle school and experienced the failure of his business, all the time observing the lives of foreign missionaries. All these factors may have pushed him toward making such a decision. So, together, the two of them entered the Pyeongyang Christian Theological seminary. Later, their daughter (my mother), who had been expelled from school for refusing to do shrine worship, also attended the same seminary. My Gupo grandmother was the oldest student

at the school and late for class every day, while my mother was the youngest student and adored by her teachers.

In my family, there are many oft-told stories about Gupo grandmother. When she was young, she often gave speeches for the National Debt Repayment Movement across the country. When she went to give speeches, my great-grandmother, who was a good seamstress and very conscious of social status, didn't like her daughter wearing humble cotton clothing, and so made clothes with a silk inner lining for her. Gupo grandmother always called people by their personal names and eschewed the use of honorifics and she didn't isolate herself from groups of men. Whenever she saw the town mayor who was a former classmate of hers, she would just call out his name, avoiding the more seemly "Mr. Mayor." When she met missionaries in Pyeongyang who looked down on Korean people, she would scold them saying, "Go back to your home country right away. If you came here to love people, then love them. Otherwise, you should not stay here." Although she adored her first son-in-law (my father), she pushed him to divorce my mother when he began to treat mother badly. In my childhood, I often went together with Gupo grandmother to the public bath and I remember her scolding people who left the water running after they'd washed. Men who littered or urinated in the streets also got a scolding. Our relatives often said that grandmother, an eloquent public speaker and broad-minded person, ought to run for public office. She kept a diary everyday and on March 1st each year, she would note down the names of the people who had joined the independence movement to commemorate their struggle and their love of country. My mother often said that I resemble Gupo grandmother in a lot of ways, except that I know I am not as courageous as she.

After graduating from Pyeongyang Christian Theological Seminary, my grandfather quit the job of department store manager and the couple went back to their hometown in the south by the year 1941. Gupo grandfather—who had become a pastor—prayed that God would let him work for God's Kingdom through some kind of work other than preaching and said he received the message, "Take care of my children." Thereafter, he began to take care of orphans who wandered around the Busan Port area. He formed a community called Aerinwon (Love for our Neighbors) and began to live with the orphans, but the Japanese stepped up their oppression of Koreans in the years leading up to their surrender in World War II, and so the colonial police started to arrest people who refused to participate in Shinto shrine worship. In those days, coats with strings attached were not allowed for Koreans as they could hang

themselves if arrested, so Gupo grandmother wore a coat without strings, ready to go to prison if caught. One day, a policeman called my grandparents secretly and told them to move to somewhere the police could not easily find them. My Gupo grandmother then convinced her father—my great-grandfather, Chambong Lee—to donate a mountain and farmland in the Gupo area so that her family and the orphans in her care would have some place to move to. Her father didn't understand why she would want to take care of "those child beggars" who often had skin diseases or chronic diarrhea, but in the end, he donated all that his daughter asked for because his persistent daughter "rolled on the ground" while pleading with him, they say.

Dozens of orphans and widows of the Aerinwon community worked hard on the farmland, but they needed to find some other ways to supplement their income. Unlike my grandfather who just prayed for things, my grandmother was a good breadwinner, so she sent products like embroidered handkerchiefs to churches and relatives all across the country to try to solicit donations. One of her sons, who was very sociable, also helped her in this endeavor. Gupo grandmother had such a wide circle of acquaintances that they could manage to get food from somewhere whenever they were down to their last morsels. At the end of World War II, many people who refused to perform shrine worship against the Japanese orders hid themselves in the community's hiding place in Gupo to avoid possible retaliation by the Japanese. After Korea's independence from Japan, Gupo grandmother allowed her first son to run a public bath to support the community. My grandmother had stopped thinking about divorcing her husband despite their bad chemistry because they had come to see each other as partners doing God's work, and they maintained mutual respect for one another. Nevertheless, their first daughter (my mother) often had to play the role of mediator between her two parents because of their widely different characters.

After the Korean War broke out, the number of orphans increased dramatically, so my grandfather had to take care of orphans in Busan while my grandmother cared for over one hundred orphans in Gupo. I lived with my grandmother when I was a child, so I grew up with many other children, including one child who insisted he saw ghosts and another who shouted "fire" every night. My grandparents made the children join the prayer meeting every dawn, but they didn't force their own grandchildren to do so. I asked them for the reason for this different treatment later when I had grown up. Their answer was that children who had grown up without their own parents could not live without knowing God's love. My taciturn but generous maternal grandfather was strict with teachers and nannies, but

never beat or scolded children. He was a quiet man who unwaveringly loved each child. However, my quick-tempered grandmother sometimes beat or harshly scolded children when they had done something wrong. At Aerinwon's reunion parties, such as the 50th and 60th, I found that many people remember my grandmother's quick-tempered love more strongly than that of my generous grandfather. My grandmother would always pray that she would not treat orphans any differently than she did her own children. She was delicately built and hot-tempered, and ended up giving birth to six children. Probably because of this, she often suffered from ailments. She always said she had muscle aches, so I massaged her back and legs many times. On a spring day in 1963, she went to a dental clinic, took a bath, and paid a visit of condolence to a neighborhood family. Later that day, she died at home. She was just a bit past her sixty first birthday and I was a middle school student.

### **Sangju Grandmother**

Now I think I need to talk about how my paternal grandmother (my Sangju grandmother) met Gupo grandmother. Sangju grandmother, Mrs. Gang Bong-woo, was born the youngest daughter of the Gangs, a family that originated in Jaeryeong. This family was strictly conscious of belonging to the noble class. Sangju grandmother married a man from a neighboring family without many relatives but with some land. She was happily married and had one son and four daughters. However, she suddenly lost her husband to typhoid fever. This was a catastrophe for a woman of twenty eight in those days. She had to care for her four children and had to prepare the elaborate special foods for the memorial services of her husband's ancestors almost every month. She had a wise older brother who was well-versed in the Chinese classics and traditional medicine. He was also a noted doctor in their community. Her brother could not accept the situation where his smart, younger sister had to live as a widow, a social position that was isolated and discriminated against in those days. Therefore, he brought a Christian pastor from Daegu to the town in order to introduce Christian culture to the community, and thus save his sister from the ordeal that the Confucian patriarchal culture imposed on widows. With the help of the insightful brother, Sangju grandmother converted to Christianity and built a church on one corner of her large yard. As a result, many in the town converted to Christianity and gave up the practice of memorializing their ancestors in the Confucian way. Instead, they could devote this time to the education of their children. After converting to Christianity, Sangju grandmother sent her son to a Christian school in Daegu and later even to Japan for further studies. She also allowed her first daughter to



Sangju grandmother at around sixty years old

attend the Pyeongyang Christian Theological Seminary and her second daughter to study at the Shinmyeong High School in Daegu. In this way, she provided all of her children with a modern education. Interestingly, her wise older brother did not send his own children to school. I am still curious about him and want to know whether he didn't because he had so many children to educate. My smart and bold Sangju grandmother drew many other widows to her church so she had lots of support around her.

Sangju grandmother's first daughter, who became my aunt on my father's side, was my mother's classmate at Pyeongyang Christian Theological Seminary. After graduating from the seminary, my mother often visited her friend's home and church in Sangju where she helped with the pastoral work. At the time, Sangju grandmother's older brother praised my mother, saying that she was a "noble person destined by Heaven." On the other hand, my father was seeing a woman in those days but Sangju grandmother didn't like her. One day, my father visited Gupo with a big bag of rice and it wasn't long after that before he ended up marrying my mother. The two grandmothers became best friends right away and they were also companions in spirit, living in a new era, while ignoring traditions they could no longer accept. I still remember the time family members made fun of Sangju grandmother when she got her first perm, after being convinced to get one by Gupo grandmother. The two grandmothers went on sightseeing trips across the country together and would take sand baths in swimsuits together.

Sangju grandmother took over the role as head of the household and would often use long phrases with Chinese sayings in them. To me, it looked like a game to figure out whether the listener had been born to a noble family or not. When we, the grandchildren, grew up, she advised us not to marry people from certain backgrounds as they were originally of low birth. I felt annoyed at such words because she seemed to discriminate against people and put people down. On the other hand, Gupo grandmother never used such Chinese phrases although she knew them well. For me, Gupo grandmother was my true grandmother emotionally as we shared our daily lives with each other. Sangju grandmother was more like a visitor, so I felt offended by her implacable consciousness of social class. I remember that I was even more disappointed in her when I found out that she didn't know how to write those difficult Chinese phrases in proper Chinese characters even though she used them often in speech. This was the judgment of a mushy-headed granddaughter I realize now. What is more important was that everyone recognized and envied the friendship between my two grandmothers.

Around the time of Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945, there were many students who returned to Andong and Sangju from Japan after studying there. Under the influence of the education they had received abroad, many of the young men were "red," or had accepted the idea of communism. Later, many of these men died in fighting brought about by ideological differences and the Korean War. My father often said he would have become involved in socialist activities if he had not been a Christian, and that he would have died earlier as a student soldier if he had not married a woman from Gupo. Sangju grandmother was a faithful helper of widows who had lived miserable lives because they had to conduct so many memorial services every month that they themselves were left with not enough to eat. If they attended church, they didn't have to conduct Confucian memorial services. Instead, they could meet friends in similar social circumstances and help one another in the village—focusing on the education of their children. Sangju grandmother also took care of some sick people in her house, especially those who were mentally challenged. People said she drove the ghosts from those people and fed those who otherwise would not have been fed. Unlike Gupo grandmother who lived a poor but happy life surrounded by orphans, Sangju grandmother suffered from the sad deaths of male relatives who were framed as spies and executed as communists. Also, she lost her first son-in-law and second daughter in the bitter struggle between leftists and rightists in Korea. However, she enjoyed life in her own way. She and other widows in Sangju took care of their children together in the house in Sangju with the church attached. When she needed a change, Sangju grandmother was free to visit her son's home in Busan where her friend, Gupo grandmother, lived. She lived without the traditional burden of widowhood until she died at around ninety years old.

### **Grandmothers' Time and My Time as a Grandmother**

My two grandmothers lived through an especially turbulent time in Korea's history but they seem distant from spies and ghosts. This may be because they accepted a somewhat different kind of transcendent order in their lives. Especially in the case of Gupo grandmother, this may be because she formed a kind of utopian community at odds with the times to take care of orphans. Perhaps the two grandmothers found ways to enjoy their lives outside of the strictures of mainstream society, they perhaps lived as spies and ghosts in relation to those trapped within it. When Gupo grandmother's younger sister went to a fortuneteller, she asked the woman to tell Gupo grandmother's fortune as well. At that time, the shaman said, "You older sister's god is too strong and I cannot

tell her fortune.” Even fortunetellers were afraid of Gupo grandmother, and Sangju grandmother drove the ghosts from her life by herself. Maybe she was fundamentally brave and able, but I guess she would not let fear eat at her soul. I think these grandmothers were able to live through this dark era with relative ease because they moved earlier than others toward the “dawn.” They created a new society as they left behind the paralysis of the colonized nation and the order of darkness they could never accept. This is why I don’t like the sentences, “In our everyday vocabulary, a grandmother is someone who is perhaps least associated with political power. In real life, grandmothers are living witnesses who have endured the ages of ghosts and spies” in the overview of the biennale theme. Isn’t power concentrated in some people in that case? Power is not something fixed but something that is formed while being given and received by people. My grandmothers did not entrust their power to the Japanese ruling class of the patriarchal systems. They were the rightful owners of their lives and created “power” as they took care of one another.

The stories of these two grandmothers do not represent typical women’s experiences during the early-twentieth century in East Asia. They did not live like ghosts with deep sorrow or surrender to the power of the pro-Japanese ruling class. They lived in a liminal time of their own making and left to the next generation the message that we do not need to obey the established order. My grandmothers were like ethereal beings who lived in the time of darkness before the dawn, living lives of courage instead of being suppressed. Today again, thick darkness surrounds us like it did one hundred years ago when my grandmothers lived. Still, we wait for the dawn with hope again today, and what we need may not be conformity but a sense of imagination about how to live outside and with a sense of transformation. If some people insist that we first analyze the crux of our current social system, I want to tell them—instead of trying to search for the most victimized—to search for the “assailant-type victims” who are very confused with today’s reality. We should summon those who (usually filled with hatred and hostility) label anyone with opinions different from their own as followers of the North Korea regime; the special group of grandfathers who is neurotic about spies as we were so blindly in the old days; “money ghosts” who believe that everything

is okay only if we make money; and “youth ghosts” who lock their minds up inside video and computer games whenever they have a free moment. Maybe we should ask them to reveal themselves and provide them with time for healing.

Darkness is getting thicker. Is this darkness just a sign that the dawn is near? We are disheartened at the site of the Ssangyong Motor Company’s layoffs: in places where the damage done by the Four Rivers Project is revealed; in Miryang where the construction of 765kV high-voltage transmission towers is forced upon the least powerful; and in our unresolved sorrow and anger about the Sewol Ferry disaster. The instrumental power wielded in the name of the government has spread out all over the land, telling people to sacrifice their lives for the country. The modern nation formed in the era of territorial conflicts has no ability or will to solve today’s crises. It has become a stunted, wicked organization, and there is no sign that a new order will be established soon. Here, I don’t simply mean the current Korean administration by the word “nation.” I mean as well past administrations that dreamed up and forced national mega-projects such as the Saemangeum Development, the construction of a naval base and of transmission towers, and the ridiculous Four Rivers Project upon us. In other words, “nation” includes the subjects of concentrated state power including the opposition parties who could not effectively stop such projects or who secretly complicit with them. And, as well, the Korean people who rubber-stamp these decisions are also included in the power of the nation.

Ulrich Beck, who presented a theory of the risk society in the 1980s, recently gave a lecture in Seoul. He called Korea’s current situation “emancipatory catastrophism” and declared that the huge shift or more towards *Verwandlung* (Metamorphosis) has already started through global citizens/people/resident’s reflective learning.<sup>5</sup> Recent disasters such as ongoing climate change and the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident reveal our ongoing reality. As people realize that such disasters are not limited to one region or even one country but are problems on a global level, post-modern times (which is itself undergoing self-destruction) are emerging, he thinks. Sites of reflective learning are none other than the places where robberies and hijackings are being conducted by the market and the government. State power tries to build high-voltage transmission towers across the orchards and villages owned by diligent, life-long taxpayers and two thousand some policemen and women are assembled to haul away just six elderly grandmothers from the construction site, all the while mocking the residents’ life-and-death resistance. Centralized state power has already become too corrupt and wicked for anyone to fight against. Therefore, now is the time

5 Ulrich Beck, “Emancipatory Catastrophism: What does it mean to Climate Change and Risk Society?” July 8, 2014. Lecture at the Seoul Conference 2014 jointly held by the Joongmin Foundation for Social Theory, Center for Social Sciences in SNU, National Assembly Forum on Climate Change, and the Climate Change Center.

that we need emotional determination rather than reasonable judgment—not simple regime change but a fundamental transformation of individuals. Just like caterpillars make cocoons before becoming butterflies, a rapid social maturation is required now.

I actually went to Miryang the other day with my students in order to make our “cocoons.” As masters of empire divided up land into colonies by drawing arbitrarily on maps just centuries ago, the bare-face truth about state power was revealed in Miryang as the high-voltage transmission towers are being built arbitrarily built through villages. I visited some women who shared these truths with me. Mrs. Deokchon, who initiated the struggle against the transmission towers in order to keep a promise to her father-in-law to preserve their home town; Malhae grandmother, who says that “this war is the biggest war,” even as someone who has experienced the cruelty of Japanese colonialism and the Korean War; Manager Yeong-ja, an excellent speaker who had wanted to be a soldier; Mi-hyeon, the wife of a local school principal who was just a quiet housewife before becoming an activist; another housewife Gwi-yeong, who visited tents for those involved in the sit-ins daily with her puppy Rocky, while longing to see her daughters studying in Japan and in Seoul; and Eun-sook, the wife of the chair of the resistance committee, who is busy raising her four children while farming the couple’s land. These are all women who share the will of Antigone, who buried her brother/father Oedipus by violating the “law that kills people.” Grandmothers in Miryang feel confused and say they don’t know why the government will not listen to them; they do not wish to fight but only wish their simple words to be heard by the government. They say they hear the mountains cry out in pain and so they want to talk about it and cannot understand why the government considers them such mortal enemies.

I will go to Miryang more often now as the residents are starting their second season of resistance after the government’s violent destruction of the tents they used for their sit-in demonstrations on June 11 2014. These grandmothers in Miryang will not allow something to be built that endangers the lives of their grandchildren. Since I know that their lives are my life and the lives of my grandchildren, I will meet them as an “insider” instead of an “outsider.” I will join in the struggles in Gangjeong, Miryang, the no-nuclear movement, and those of the Sewol victims as they seek out positive ways to struggle against power that is deaf and blind. Remembering my two grandmothers, I will—with their blessing—join the group of grandmothers that are bringing on the dawn of a new era.

## No Beginning, No End

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Tajima Masaki  
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In ancient China, natural disasters were interpreted as evidence of a change in the Mandate of Heaven. Natural disasters are not, of course, the beginnings of things. Even when they superficially appear to give rise to great changes, they do no more than expose some event that has already begun to take place. Great change does not start with an earth-shaking roar; true change begins with subtle intimations and whispers. It may begin with a single drop from a pen, written by candlelight, or with a single word from an elder, spoken at the hearthside. For this reason, for Aristotle, though there may be a point in time that could be called an end of a matter, there is no definite point that can be called its beginning.

However, the 3.11 disaster was not a conclusion either. We hesitate to speak of this event's historical significance, not simply because it was the beginning of something which has not yet fully revealed itself to us, but because it is difficult to say that the event itself has come to an end. If anything, it may have only just begun. Regardless of the huge scale of the disaster, if it were simply that the tsunami swept away everything in an instant; there would at least be a clear point in time from which one could say the reconstruction began. After the long night of sorrow would have come the morning of the recovery. However, the most distinctive feature of this disaster, that feature which so disheartens us, is the numbing timescale involved in the destruction of the Fukushima nuclear power plant.

The consequences of the disaster are so difficult to determine as to make even the anguished voices of those asking “when can I return to my hometown?” sound hollow. There was no prospect for a return to normalcy even after the disaster. Not a single person believed even the construction schedules when they were announced officially after much waiting. Even had our optimism repeatedly betrayed been rewarded, even had the radiation leakage been stopped, the reactor core been properly cooled, long-term stability been achieved, the site perfectly sealed in a sarcophagus of water or concrete, even then we could not have said with any finality that the disaster was over. The iodine released into the atmosphere, ground, and ocean may decay rapidly, and even the cesium, which



has a 30-year half life, may be reduced to negligible levels through dispersion or decontamination. Be that as it may, vast amounts of uranium and plutonium will continue to slumber ominously in the stone sarcophagi, however tightly we may seal them in. To reduce the radioactivity of plutonium 239 by half will take 24,000 years. We stand amazed at that fact, paralyzed by the incomprehensible, unimaginable timescales we are suddenly faced with.

Of course, nobody would claim that the plutonium repeatedly released into the air during nuclear experiments poses no threat to humans. The amount of cesium alone released into the Irish Sea by British nuclear plants is said to be 400 times the amount released by the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima. Consider the fact that the amount of radioactive materials released by atmospheric testing is but a fraction of the amount contained in the Fukushima plant's structures. Now consider the fact that these structures are located very near peoples' homes.

What will those four sarcophagi, perfectly sealed in concrete, look like after 100 years? Only a quarter of a century has passed since the Chernobyl disaster, but already the concrete is aging and beginning to crack. The Fukushima sarcophagi will never last 100 years. We cannot even imagine, let alone be sure of, their condition several hundred years in the future. Will there be more people or fewer? Will civilization have advanced or decayed? It is not inconceivable that the tragedy that occurred on Easter Island, famous for its moai statues, will also occur on our islands, or across our entire world. Will the inhabitants of a future, decaying civilization have the technology and materials to repair the stone sarcophagi? Will the plans for those concrete structures be preserved? Even if they are, will future people be able to read them? Will those people speak Japanese or a similar language? We can answer none of these questions with certainty. In a few hundred years, the sarcophagi will be weathered and lost amid the pages of time.

Even so, some things are definite. For example, even after that amount of time has passed, the plutonium in its stone sarcophagus will be almost completely unchanged and remain dangerous. A thousand years later, two thousand years later, of only half of the plutonium, less than ten percent will have decayed.

The world's only planned final disposal site for highly radioactive waste will be located in Finland, deep underground in an empty mine. Apparently, it contains abstract sculptures and pictures illustrating the danger, as it is assumed that people living tens of thousands of years in the future will not understand our languages. Even if a stone sarcophagus can be maintained somehow for 100

years, who can say with certainty that the organizations, technology, and materials to keep it repaired will exist some tens of thousands of years hence? If it is not kept in repair, this sarcophagus will, like the hero of Parsifal whose never-healing wounds continually ooze blood, soon begin to leak plutonium-contaminated water.

At first, new problems will present themselves every ten years or so. Before even the first decade passes, conspicuous levels of radiation damage will be observed. It will begin with cancer among the plant workers, with cases starting to occur among children and pregnant women. There will be repeated rumors, which will be called "harmful rumors" by the authorities, regarding food. Some tens of years later, cracks will be found in the concrete, and we will discover that contamination is leaking through the structure's floor into the groundwater. When this happens, it will be stressed that this will have "minimal impact on health," but the steadily increasing number of cancer patients will erode the people's trust.

Just thinking about these things brings a deep and chronic weariness down upon us. The scale of the issues to be addressed is too vast, and one cannot help but feel that continuing to focus thought on these things is an empty exercise. In this sense, then, the consequences of this disaster have yet to truly make themselves plain. It will take an unimaginably long period of time for us to learn the nature of the incident we are facing and the depth and scale of its consequences.

Needless to say, cover-ups of accidents and attempts to intentionally underestimate construction and planning costs will occur and keep on occurring, just as they did immediately after the disaster. This will happen because, as we know intuitively even now, the demand for such cover-ups will come from various quarters—from the numerous for-profit groups, vested interests, and privileged parties involved. Such attempts will fail completely. They will fail because the sarcophagi will remain, plain for all to see, a problem beyond our ability to control. Consequently, these efforts to cover up the real situation will succeed only in bringing their own shamefulness into sharp relief. On the whole, and in the long term, they will erode trust in all parties involved therewith.

The revelation that Tokyo Electric Power, in particular, has maintained cozy relationships with successive government regimes and officials came as little surprise. More dramatic has been the ongoing loss of authority on the part of the mass media and the coterie of tame academics and commentators who are brought on to do little turns for the camera. No more public trust for those clever

little monkeys and their trainers.

We learned that the electric power companies, despite the fact that they already hold regional monopolies, continue to distribute huge advertising fees to the television industry, buying them a systematic and strategic influence over public opinion. To silence any objections to their nuclear policies they need to do no more than threaten to remove their advertisements from the networks. In this manner, anti-nuclear sentiment has been systematically marginalized. Once such a system has been established, there is no need to buy off particular individuals. The nuclear power agenda creates work, and therefore organizations and workplaces, executive positions for former government officials, research institutes, and advisory boards. These bloated organizations and their staff certify, endorse, authorize, and support one another. While a few of those who were toeing the line may have been blinded by money, those motivated by such “base interests” are probably very exceptional. The majority of them are simply picked up by the flow of the times and carried along. Then, after long years of friendly and gentlemanly relations, they are unable to refuse board memberships, and are thus brought into the fold. These people do not, either by intent nor habit, behave in an inordinately selfish way. However, in that they have no room to consider diverse opinions or opposing views, their thinking is prone to bias and narrowness. This is precisely the nature of the Imperial Rule Assistance Associations during World War II: founded on respect for harmony, hatred of heresy, and the elimination of dissent.

The realities of this modern day Imperial Rule Assistance Association are apparent even to simple folk such as ourselves. It has been clear enough even to us that the mass media and the scholars and critics that provided all those explanations and insights on the news, ostensibly telling us about the real conditions, were in fact providing a smokescreen to hide the truth from our eyes. This was definitely a serious miscalculation on their part. They must have known well enough that the way to win the public's trust was to make some show of critical thinking abilities, or, at the very least affect, a neutral point of view. They had become, however, overly used to their tranquil days with the Press Club and the same old routine of work, replete with business entertainment excursions. So, it was their tolerance for sudden incidents, for real news, had been lowered to the level of the bureaucrats. So, their judgment, “at a time of crisis,” of the scale of events unfolding before their eyes was distorted. They were unable to do any more than merely continue to pass on the communiqués from Imperial General Headquarters,<sup>1</sup> as usual. They had even prepared a response to intimidate anyone who tried to warn of danger:

“malicious scaremongering is unacceptable.” Such threats were initially taken at face value and during the time of general obedience which followed, even the hydrogen explosions were swept under the carpet.

At the press conference directly after the incident, Tokyo Electric's management was caught unprepared, like Macbeth unable to believe his own eyes at the site of Great Birnam Wood actually moving toward him. They called for the public to “act calmly,” while they themselves had clearly lost their calm, their eyes darting back and forth plaintively, as if they were desperately searching for some form of deliverance.

As my allusions to the “Imperial General Headquarters” and “Imperial Rule Assistance Associations” indicate, the situation was undeniably, albeit inadvertently, evocative of our prewar memories. Indeed, the collection of individuals and organizations involved in nuclear electric power interests is reminiscent of the groups that had vested interests, both military and private, in Manchuria.

In Japan, once vested interests exceed a certain scale, it becomes difficult to even discuss fundamental changes to policies related to those interests. The Manchurian Incident caused the mobilization of soldiers, whose families were then desperate for news of the war as they had an interest in those soldiers' safety; as a result, newspaper sales expanded rapidly by providing war coverage. Thus, the newspapers promoted the war, which influenced the people to support it, which in turn bolstered the military expansion policy. The expansion of the war by the military provided an excuse for the expansion of military spending, and as the China front expanded, so too the number of command appointments in all regions increased. In this way, the military, citizens, and mass media, locked in a feedback loop, were all positively engaged with the expansion of the war, resulting in a continuous increase of the number of parties with vested interests in it.

This mechanism was to re-emerge in the post-war period as a recurring and indeed ubiquitous phenomenon. Even with something like dam building, once

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1 *Daihonei happyō* (大本營発表) “Imperial General Headquarters announce.” During the war, every news item on the war situation started with this phrase. All such announces were, of course, full of lies and deceptions. This phrase has come to be an expression symbolic of the public deceptions of our government.

a plan has been conceived, those with a stake therein form up around that plan and carry it forward as if it were one of the portable shrines carried in Japanese festivals. It then becomes difficult to make any revisions to that plan. When the vested interests are on the scale of a Manchuria, or nuclear power, or the Japan-US alliance, it becomes impossible to stop them until they fail of their own accord. Even politicians, who gain power through publicly promising to reexamine the US military bases on Okinawa, are forced to fold in the face of the chorus of industries, including the mass media, affiliated with the Japan-US alliance, calling for them to reexamine that public promise. In other words, we cannot affect change counter to the direction of this Imperial Rule Assistance Association, even through elections. Why does this country operate under such a mechanism?

Since the Meiji period, the void in the center of this country of ours has been the Emperor. This center maintains a structure, a sort of secret club for the elite, wrapped in concentric circles around it. The walls of this club are invisible to the outside world, but quite visible to those within. That is, viewed from the outermost part, all of this club's members appear to be equal, but from the inside, it is evident which members are in the inner circle. Those in the inner circle work together and exchange information, which by gentleman's agreements is not leaked to the outside world. Just being in this club provides benefits in the form of mutual accommodation, and as mutual trust is guaranteed, members naturally receive many new opportunities. Those who sense the implicit size of the benefits conferred by this system will feel that the preservation of the system is of far more importance than the competence, or lack thereof, of individual policies. Therefore, rather than debate the rights or wrongs of specific policies, they ultimately maintain the status quo and attempt to preserve harmony. The existence of this secret club gives the lie to debates over policy.

Though on the surface the political parties seem to engage in fierce debates among themselves, and with academics and the mass media, behind closed doors they join hands chummily and make calculated bargains—this is something we have been used to seeing since the inauguration of the Imperial Diet during the Meiji period. Those who refuse to agree to the gentleman's agreements of this friendly club are labeled traitors or unpatriotic and anti-social.

The problem is that this secret club's organizational principles are based not on some value system, nor on any doctrine of rules, but only on the multidimensional interests generated by mutual solidarity. If they were united under some principle

or doctrine, it would be possible, using that doctrine as a point of entry, to criticize their internal inconsistencies from without, or resist them under a different set of principles. However, as this is not the case, the challengers have nobody with whom to argue. Even if a discussion should appear to be taking place, this will not change the real situation. The secret club will turn a blind eye to its own secret agreements, regardless of what they say during such discussions. Even if the opponents appear to have won, for example by winning an election, their agenda will not be executed as-is. One can see this in the fact that while both the political leaders and the Emperor himself wished to limit the scope of the Sino-Japanese War, they could not stay its expansion. Once the portable shrine procession gains momentum, it cannot be controlled through discussion. Consequently, in Japanese politics the only people who believe they can reach agreements through debate are the politically naive. The more access they have to the elite secret club's inside information, the more cynically they view politics and discussion.

This system is mainly the product of the centralized government established in the Meiji period and the educational system that supplements it. Examining the demands of the lower-ranking samurai during the Meiji Restoration, in contrast to their requirement for free and open debate, i.e. “a proliferation of debate” (as per The Charter Oath's assertion that “all matters (of the State) are to be decided through public discussion”),<sup>2</sup> there was an expectation that “the appropriate persons be given high positions” (again, from the Charter Oath: “each [commoners and officials] shall all be allowed to pursue their own calling so that there may be no discontent”).<sup>3</sup> The overall trend since then has been towards deprecation of the former clause and ascendancy of the latter. Thus, the energy that once fueled a political desire to participate in open debate was re-channeled into breaking into the power structure and ascending through its ranks.

To prevent the government from devolving into anarchy due to incessant power struggles motivated by personal interests, Kowashi Inoue (1843-1895) et al.

2 *Banki kōron ni kessubeshi* (万機公論に決すべし) “all matters (of the state) are to be decided through public discussion.”

3 *Onoono sono shi wo toge, jinshin wo umazarashimen* (各々その志を遂げ、人心を倦まざらしめん) let everyone have chance to his dream and ambition. The two clauses (2 and 3) are included in the Charter Oath (the Five Oaths of the Meiji Emperor), promulgated after the Meiji Restoration.

contrived a pseudo-religion through the Imperial Rescript on Education and the practice of remote veneration of the Emperor via portraits. These practices were spread nationwide through normal schools, which implemented a moral education program. The Imperial Rescript on Education is carefully devoid of any specific religious values. Rather, it emphasized the irrational adoration of those in authority, and devotion to group values (“uniting the hearts of the multitudes”). Thus, it was formed a power structure with an empty void, free of any principles, at its center, surrounded by concentric ranks of the successful. After the war, aside from an exceptional period, during which it appeared that American constitutional values (freedom of speech) might be imported, this mechanism was recreated, and continued to operate as the system for centralizing the modernization of this country of ours.

This system may be judged efficient in as much as it has avoided unproductive political opposition, and harnessed loyalty to the organization and the drive for success for the purposes of modernization. However, a cumulative range of historical experiences have proven it to be an extremely unwieldy apparatus in attempts to avoid catastrophes such as the Sino-Japanese War, or at least publicly debate them or set them under political constraints.

The Japan-US Security Arrangements and a new constitutional framework were imposed as the basic conditions for postwar Japan’s acceptance by the “international community,” and were inevitable given the fact of Japan’s defeat and the realities of the Cold War. This was nevertheless extremely compatible with the careerist mentality of Japan’s elites who were accustomed to putting aside principles and adapting. When combined with the unexpected economic benefits that Japan received from the Cold War, the new system became an unquestionable given. In other words, Japanese society basically avoided examining or confronting the values brought by the Americans, and instead adopted them as an empty framework, within which was established a structure for careerist competition, the criteria for the judging of this competition stemming from American concerns and evaluations.

For now, neither this system nor our mindset seem likely to face significant change. The Japan-US Security Arrangements, whose useful role ended long ago, are unlikely to undergo fundamental reexamination. It is like a dam built for a purpose that is no longer relevant, yet continues to exist under some pretext or other. It is not easy to change this through discussion.

However, no matter what kind of discussions are held, no matter what kind of government is formed, no matter what ideas the mass media tries to trumpet or silence, it is clear that the eerie ruins of the Fukushima sarcophagi will remain irrespective of how many decades or centuries pass. I feel that this will make any positive attempts to speak of future dreams, or constructive efforts to redeem the past and move on to the future, seem like exercises in futility, the whisperings of “gravity’s ghosts,” a shadow that makes all our hearts grow heavy and sink ever deeper into the gloom.

Some individuals have probably recovered robustly from the disaster, and some towns have already begun restoration work. However, this is not the case everywhere. There are also towns to which nobody will ever return, and people who will never recover. To those left in areas where the population is already aged, what use is the hope that someday in the future communities may be restored? If anything, for them, the memories of days gone by that are still vivid in their minds will be of more comfort. Precious to us is the lesson that there are some things that, once lost, will never be regained.

(Translation by Jon Morris)

From *3.11 as Concept* (思想としての3・11). The original Japanese version was published by Kawade Shobo Shinsha Publishers (2011) and a translated Korean version was published by Greenbee Publishing (2012).

In Eventful Times  
: Concerning Capitalism, Electric Power  
and Well-intentioned Nationalism

|  
Koizumi Yoshiyuki  
|

On that day, the sun had gone down before I first learned about the earthquake and tsunami. I had had memories of holding a research meeting with graduate students at the time the earthquake happened, but having just looked once more over my schedule book, that research meeting had been on Thursday, the previous day. That Friday, I had finished a meeting in the morning and eaten lunch, and after returning to my university office, I ought to have been going through my e-mail. Probably because here in Kinugasa, Kyoto, I was too far away from the event to feel any tremors, my memories from around that time are as normal memories, and are already jumbled and out of order.

The following Saturday and Sunday, as per instructions from the university, the persons responsible in each department were to check after the safety of students who came from the affected areas in eastern Japan. I tried making contact with each of these students via telephone and e-mail. The university found itself unable to simply do nothing, so we cut short our weekends and started taking action. I was far from sure as to whether this action even had any meaning, and this left me feeling more than a little guilty. If contact was made and a student's safety was verified, then the student might be encouraged, and we would certainly feel relieved. I wondered what would happen if no contact could be made. As the attempt to make contact would be addressed to the student who may or may not have died, one would not be able to confirm simply by the lack of a response then and there whether or not they were alive. If another person had that student's phone or computer and erroneously reported the death of the owner, what would we do then? At the time, no one had the time to act case by case, and everything we were doing was some kind of reflex response. I am not lacking in common sense, and I feel I know how to cope with situations in a case by case manner at least, so on Monday I belatedly had a colleague contact students by phone. Even then, I was unable to dispel the feeling that something was odd. I was unable to put that feeling into words then and there. Thinking back on it, however, it was probably a discomfort in

response to our attachment to simultaneity, the apparent need to try to eliminate, at all costs, the distances of space and time.

The analytical philosopher Michael Dummett reasoned that when a very long time is taken for news of someone's welfare to arrive, or if because that time is so long, the fate of someone far away has been objectively decided before the news arrives, the people who are waiting for that news to arrive will nonetheless pray for that person's safety, and it is a mistake to consider those prayers wholly meaningless and futile. He attempted to reason that those prayers are in fact neither meaningless nor futile. Moreover, if we presume that they are neither meaningless nor futile, the reason for so doing is that we are wagering on the possibility of reverse causality that can influence from the standpoint of our own present the past of a person far away.<sup>1</sup> The notion Dummett must have been attempting to defend through that obscure argument was that until news of someone's safety arrives, one has no choice but to wait. One must wait, and if one is waiting, news will eventually arrive. Even if no news arrives, that non-arrival is a kind of notice in itself. Within that waiting is even included a greeting or address from the one waiting to that person who, even if he or she is alive, may not make contact and must instead walk a different road in a place far off. We might even add the following. To wait is to be tested as to whether one who has been fortunate enough to survive danger will choose you as a person to contact. It may not be us, those who wait, who are to select friends anew, who reach out in solidarity.

Of course, even Dummett would make a phone call to someone far away if he heard that something had happened there. The question of whether one can make contact or not links directly to choices of action, and anyone would take that phone in their hand if the distance involved made it necessary. That person, however, would surely face a sense of doubt. It would be less than fully sane to entertain no doubts whatsoever regarding those in places far away or overseas. To have no doubts concerning the process of ascertaining the safety or lack thereof of a person far

<sup>1</sup> From Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978). If we examine this in the mode of analytical philosophy though the circumstances that Dummett has set forth are different from the circumstances, in which information about a disaster that has already occurred is relayed to me, I believe nonetheless that what follows does not contradict Dummett's "spirit." Let me take this opportunity to note that I heard from a certain famous philosopher that, after World War II, were Dummett to have been invited to a Japanese university, this might well have actually come to this country.

away would be the act of one forced into an attachment to simultaneity set by the speed of mechanisms such as telephones and e-mail. From the point at which one abandons such doubts, the order of place and time has gone slightly off kilter.

No sooner had the situation at the nuclear power plant become clear, bringing with it the need for speedy reporting and a readiness to act, than I found that I myself had become attached to simultaneity. I stared at pictures and video footage and read newspaper articles and updates on the internet continually. Even with those constant updates, there was no change in the fact that days were passing with the ordinary time where I was and the extraordinary time in that other place progressing concurrently, yet not synchronizing or aligning. In that way months and years might pass. Though the distance involved is probably the ultimate reason for this feeling, this experience of time is what I feel to be so extraordinary, even absurd. Of necessity I returned to my routine as a university person. Within that routine, while going on with my work of thinking, reading, and researching about this and that,<sup>2</sup> it occurred to me that "I can picture even now who is going

<sup>2</sup> By way of supplementary information, at this point there are two things I would like to note. Firstly, the key aspects of the concept of divine punishment are indicated in the following works: Harry Harootunian Hatan, "ShitaKokka" (Failed State), *Gendai Shisō* (現代思想) Vol. 39, No. 7 and Makiko Yoshimaru (牧子嘉丸), "Ishihara Tochiji no 'Tsunami ha Tenbatsu' Hatsugen" (石原都知事の「津波は天罰」発言, Governor Ishihara's statement that "the tsunami was divine punishment"), *Sekai* (世界) Issue 817. For further details on divine punishment thought, refer to Yasuda Masahiko (安田政彦), "Shoku Nihongini mieru Jishin Kiji" (続日本紀にみえる地震記事, Articles on Earthquakes in the Shoku Nihongi), *Shoku Nihongi Kenkyū* (續日本紀研究) Issue 300 and Kageyama Terukuni (影山輝國), "Kandai ni okeru Sai to Seiji" (漢代における災異と政治, Natural Disasters and Politics in the Han dynasty), *Shigaku Zasshi* (史学雑誌) Vol. 90, No. 8. To sum up the concept of divine punishment, we might borrow the terminology of Walter Benjamin and say that it is little more than governmental discourse designed to associate a natural disaster with mythical violence in the form of divine violence. Thus, in fact, the recent critical discourse against the power companies and the government originates from the same place as the governmental discourse itself. Almost no one stood up in support of the position that the 3.11 disaster was divine punishment. On this point, see Koizumi Yoshiyuki (小泉義之), *Tomurai no Tetsugaku* (弔いの哲学, Philosophy of Mourning). To the limit of my knowledge, earthquakes provide no examples of the noble or sublime. After the Lisbon earthquake, Kant made a considered appraisal of a number of studies of the event. From the structure of discussions of its sublimity, it was clear that a necessary condition for the production of such works was safe ground for the observers to be standing on. European intellectuals such as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus* (in the chapter entitled 'Geology of Morals'), have not taken calamitous earth changes into consideration as part of their natural philosophies.

to talk about what,”<sup>3</sup> and right from the start I could not help but think that I could also see what I too was going to talk about. In fact, while I listened to and read truly a great many words, I would immediately think “that’s wrong,” “that’s off the mark,” or “you could say something else,” repeatedly finding fault in and to myself. Whenever I thought of something, I would repeatedly draw a mental line through it and cross it out.<sup>4</sup> Below, in order to connect to this experience of extraordinary time even in some small way, I have written down part of what I was thinking, including things I crossed out after finding fault with them.

Sakai Naoki has engaged himself in criticizing “A Community of Sympathy.”<sup>5</sup> As Sakai has rightly pointed out, the community of sympathy that has abruptly emerged is covering up the fact that the community of citizens is (and should be) the place of contention and confrontation concerning the causes of and responsibility for this disaster. Also, the rites that collectively confirm sympathy for the victims and mourning for the dead, especially the various rites being performed in cultural industries and sports industries are making matters worse in terms of a proper response to the disaster. They function, effectively, as censorship by suppressing those whose comments might interfere with this feeling of collective consolation. To go a little further still, the community of sympathy performs the function of glossing over the fundamental confrontation between local places and those far away, the irreconcilable confrontation between the “haves” and the victims who are now the proletarian “have-nots.” We must

3 From Nagahara Yutaka (長原豊), “Bōda no Namida, Kanman na Artemisia Vulgaris” (滂沱の涙、緩慢な Artemisia vulgaris, Floods of Tears, Slow Growing Artemisia Vulgaris), *Gendai Shisō* (現代思想) Vol. 39, No. 7.

4 There are several things upon which I would like to comment regarding images and moving images. Here, I will mention just one, which concerns high resolution images. I have for some time been taken with the question of what a high resolution image portrays, and what people see in it. In general, high resolution images invite people to conclude that they are beautiful, but I have come to think differently. Recently, I have seen news photographs that portray the Sanriku coastal area in high resolution. Though they were indeed clear and distinct, I realized that they don’t match that conclusion. As has previously been pointed out by Gilles Deleuze and others, that feeling resembles a sense (or more accurately, a perception) of clearly seeing bizarre things akin to the experience of drugs or of looking through a microscope. I am unable to identify exactly what that was, but it seems to me that it is a frightening thing.

5 Sakai Naoki (酒井直樹), “Musekinin no taikei: mitabi” (「無責任の体系 三たび」, A System of Irresponsibility: A Third Time Over), *Gendai shisō* (現代思想) Vol. 39, No. 7.

not cease to criticize this “false religiosity of nationalism,” which emerges now not for the first time in our history. However, even if this of criticism is justifiable and necessary, I must admit that it is at odds with the way I now feel. No, if anything, this sort of criticism feels weak to me. I am still failing to put this well, and that weighs on my mind. I will try to put that personal hesitancy aside for the time being. The structure wherein the criticism of the community of sympathy and the criticism of nuclear power industry and government agencies is addressed as if to a single set is something that has been repeated and thus reinforced many times over, and yet I feel that within that structure some subtle trap has been laid for us. I should say again, here, that I do support Sakai’s argument both politically and ethically. The point he makes is one that “the eyes could see” from the start. Still, it seems likely that someone will feel it necessary to point out to me that if something is important enough, then it must be done again and again, and as often as necessary. Indeed. Still, what is this repetition? Let us turn to Louis Althusser, who criticized community of same race during World War II. Before he became a Marxist, Althusser had been a militant Catholic, and it was from this standpoint that he criticized the community of good will that mourned the multitudes of war dead, while being gripped with fear regarding the use of nuclear weapons. He expressed his criticism in the following way.<sup>6</sup>

This “international” which appeared as a statement of protest against fate is based on the awareness that the human race is being threatened. We might say that the human race, confronted with this threat, make up a “proletariat” conditioned by fear. Workers have been, according to various sociological, economical, and historical conditions, prescribed membership of the proletariat. Membership of the “proletariat” that has recently come into being, however, will be prescribed according to a single psychological condition: menace and anxiety.

This new proletariat, because of “every single action of every member” being controlled by “nuclear power technology and torture techniques,” is a group of people who have reached equality and parity under the downward pressure of fear. Thus, they are people who form solidarity by means of diverse emotions that tame fear. The “prophets” use these people for making their proclamations: “When the human race is dying right before our very eyes, why do sane people believe

6 Louis Althusser, “The International of Decent Feelings,” in *Ecrits Philosophiques et Politiques (1)*, translated by Ichida Yoshihiko (市田良彦) and Fukui Kazumi (福井和美).

in class struggle and revolution?,” “There is only one measure that will hold our destruction in check: a holy alliance that opposes fate.” For example, Albert Camus declares that, right now, “we” are neither victims nor mass-murderers. However, Althusser directs ardent criticism against this kind of cooperation, solidarity, and cosmopolitanism. The workers’ becoming the proletariat, their forming that proletariat expected to emerge in the near future, their becoming an ever more fitting entity, is not due to the “unease of tomorrow” preached by the prophets,<sup>7</sup> but the “tragedy of today” that the workers themselves are experiencing.

The face of a wall, the top of a table, inside the sheets, in the air we breathe, in the water we drink, we gain something in exchange for tragedy; in the money we make, even in the actions we take to drive away tragedy, there is the tragedy of the proletariat...the proletariat knows. Tomorrow is but another today. For today, the proletariat conditioned by tomorrow is merely a smokescreen that conceals the proletariat conditioned by quotidian ordinariness.

If follow Althusser, and I reiterate, if we follow the militant Catholic Althusser, even if the people controlled and conditioned by the unease of “tomorrow” have “mentally united,” what emerges is nothing more than “an identity on the verge of destruction,” “a herd identity.” On the contrary, it is the people actually experiencing the tragedy of “today” who defeat the herd identity and accomplish “a unification according to truth.” Where, then, is the essential point of divergence between these two parties?

Bombs are merely a product of human labor. The world where the human race is trembling when faced with what it has created is an exaggerated image beholden to the conditions of the proletariat of workers subordinate to the products of their labor.

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<sup>7</sup> Regarding this unease of tomorrow, I would suggest that it is necessity for an intellectual to come forth who will consider researching the “uncomfortable dilemma” (*itashi kayushi* [痛し痒し]) concerning “safety standards” (*anzen kijun* [安全基準], these terms are quoted from Inaba Shinichirō’s [稲葉振一郎] Twitter account). Although it is clear that for the present we could only deal with this in an ad hoc and pragmatic manner, we need to reexamine the concept of a safe country and a safe society as a whole for the entire latter half of the twentieth century, starting with a survey of the effects of the atomic bomb explosions. I do not wish to overstate my case, yet I fail to see how this type of research could possibly be carried out within the current received frameworks. We must analyze not only the “uncomfortable dilemmas” but the “laughing through one’s tears” as well, and thus search for a means and manner of survival.

There will be, certainly, words that come to mind that we will immediately wish to erase. The tragedy of “today” is not something which concerns an image but something which relates to reality itself. The uneasiness of “tomorrow” is not relative to an extent of risk, but relates to an unpredictable situation; moreover, it is in relation to a danger that is certain of being realized over a long period of time. This is surely something closer to the truth of the matter. What, then, of the point that nuclear power plants are also the product of human labor? Even on this point, if we throw it out to the internet of recent weeks, “I can picture even now who is going to talk about what,” and I can also see what I will talk about.

In this world that is presently enslaved to a fear of “tomorrow,” what shall we say of the conditions, now in place, by which workers are enslaved to somebody? What shall become of the issue of the precise identity of the proletariat facing the conditions imposed by the tragedies of “today?” It is not readily apparent to me who may speak of what, who may even speak, nor even what I may speak about. At the very least, however, it does not seem to be that that is where we must find the means to settle contention and opposition surrounding the causes of and responsibility for the disaster; nor the extent to which it has been the subject of deliberate concealments stemming from well-intentioned nationalism. I will try to address one more point.

A certain manner of speech and behavior that seeks to solve the miseries of “today” with the hopeful anticipation of “tomorrow” is now ever more common. This is not a mode of speaking and acting founded in a wish for reconstruction and recovery, but language and action based in the anticipation of tomorrow’s “national” experience. In particular, we are presented with speech and action unfolding in response to the debate on taxation and public debt. Let me share with you some things past.<sup>8</sup> The statesman Jacques Necker, who in 1789 convened the Third Estate which was in turn to trigger the outbreak of the French revolution, that “compared to the sources of capital that may be brought to effect through trust and confidence, taxation is but a minor issue.” This “trust and confidence,” as is often pointed out, refers to the fact that public debt is repeatedly deferred to the future and this continues to receive full acceptance in terms of its relation to

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<sup>8</sup> See Ōji Kenta (王寺賢太), *Daihyōsei, Kōron, Shinyō-Ryō Indoshi no Henbō to Renaru, Nekkeru, Didoro* (代表性・公論・信用—『両インド史』の変貌とレナル、ネッケル、ディドロ) and Tominaga Shigeki (富永茂樹) ed. *Keimō no Unmei* (啓蒙の運命, Vicissitudes of the Enlightenments).



the nation-state, that is, the public (the nation). Currently, this acceptance is reinforced by communities of like mind, and by well-meaning (inter) nationalism. It is also reinforced by a sickly language and action, which, while criticizing nuclear energy and government, has the appearance of one going to a doctor to beg for a prescription. It is unrealistic to think that the present functions of “trust and confidence” might somehow be fully redistributed among the public through taxation. This too is a source of the general acquiescence toward the system of “trust and confidence” based capital that makes it possible to bring the efforts of generations to bear on a single instant of time. It self-perpetuates. In other words, since the eighteenth century, the overwhelming majority of people have tried to resolve the tragedy of “today” into an acceptance of this kind of indebted “tomorrow.” I would not argue that restoration and reconstruction are presently being properly accomplished through these means, but I will not enter into any more painstaking a discussion of that issue here. I would make, rather, the following observation. The advent of the “tomorrow” and the form thereof which have been the continued subject of public discourse from the modern period onward to the present day are entirely at odds with the monumental and unfathomable experience of time. As Althusser has suggested, if enslavement to the uncertainty of “tomorrow” leads only to the communal cooperation of the herd, I suspect that it might differ little to reliance upon faith in “tomorrow.”

Humanity is bound up in multiple times, each different in nature. Or, perhaps it is that I myself have been made to realize that I am experiencing the ways in which humanity is caught up within multiple different times. The first timescale is that of a natural disaster or portentous catastrophe. A disaster or portent deriving from the movement and irregularities of the heavens is set within a cyclical, astronomical timescale. The timescale of a disaster or extraordinary phenomenon deriving from terrestrial fluctuations is set within geological timescales. These two are completely different. The second type is calendar time. Though this too is a set of cyclical scales based on the movements of the heavens, it is ultimately a linear timescale which has a definite starting point. The alteration of March 11 in the calendar to the more symbolic 3.11 was a ritual relating to a separate sociological, anthropological time. Thirdly, there is the time of the state and of capitalism. This is a time that moves the present by anticipating the future, or perhaps, time that promotes the duration of the present while anticipating what is to come in the future. There is the time founded in politics which takes hold of tax and public debt, binding them to itself. Fourthly, there is the physicochemical time of a material, indicated by the half-life of an element. Fifthly, there is archeological time, within which mankind carves into the earth in another attempt to restore a

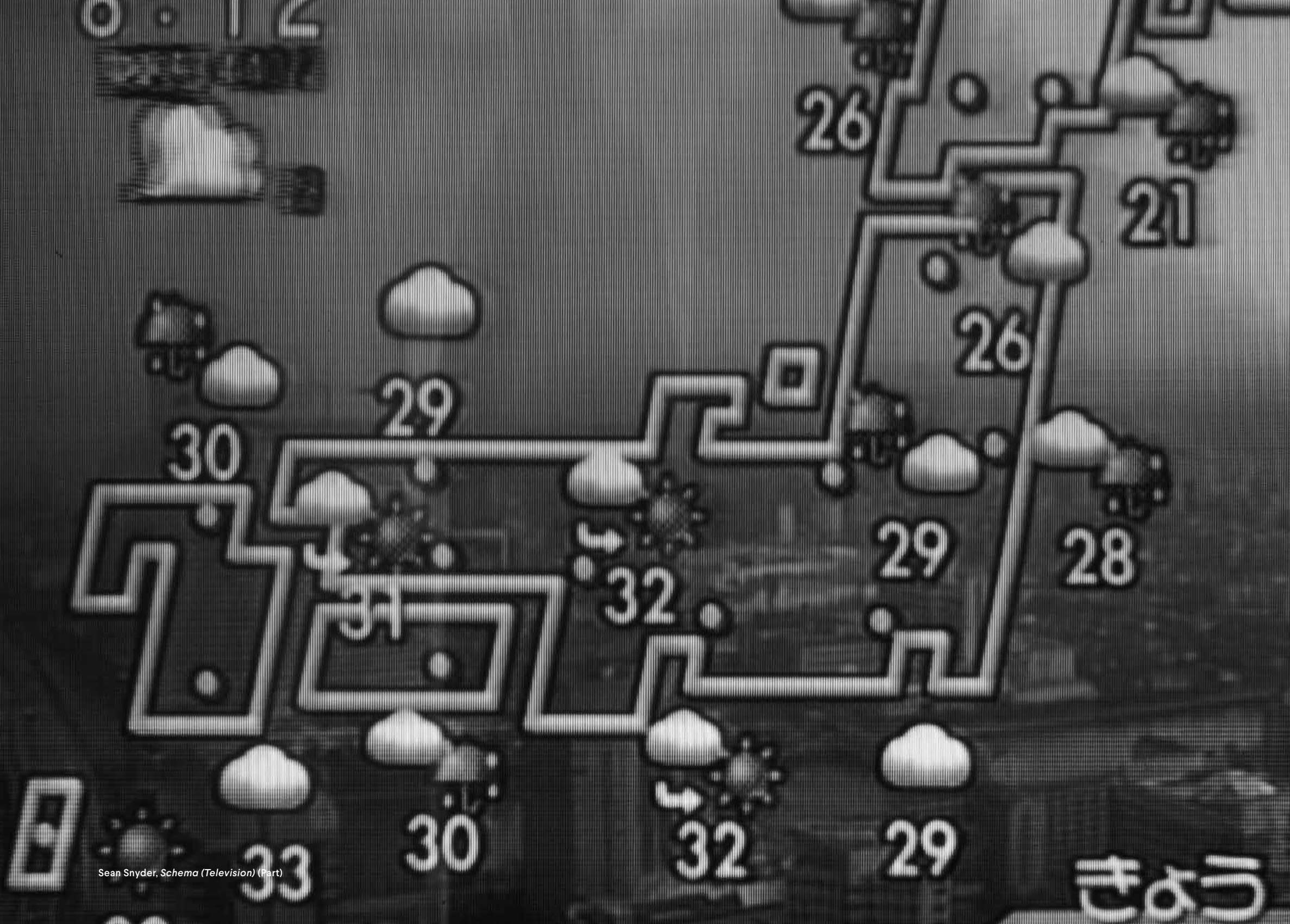
homeland, albeit one already restored many times over. Finally there is the time of the human lifespan, the whole tale of which may be represented by a short segment marked off on a long line. We might also say “by the short time that remains to us.” These multiple times are all connected and bind all of us all about. As to the question of “who may speak and of what,” I have no answer. From the outset, perhaps, the final word must rest with “what the eye can see,” a restatement of what is plain. Still, I will wait for the proletariat—children of that cruel event<sup>9</sup>—to step forth from among those who have experienced the tragedy of today.

(Translation by Jon Morris)

From *3.11 as Concept* (思想としての3・11). The original Japanese version was published by Kawade Shobo Shinsha Publishers (2011) and a translated Korean version was published by Greenbee Publishing (2012).

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<sup>9</sup> From Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, translated by Mark Lester (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993; originally published in 1969).



Sean Snyder, Schema (Television) (Part)

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## Pagyeong [End of Sutra Recitation]

Kim Keum-hwa

1 Within “The Song of the Blind Man’s Wise Words” [*Maeng’in deokdam ga*] there is reference to a text called the “Newly Written Sutra of Buddha, Immortals, and the Bright Hall” [*Bulseonmyeongdang sinjugyeong*], and in “The Sutra-Reading *Mudang*” [*Dokkyeongmu*] there is a text called “The Newly Recited Sutra of Buddha’s word and the Bright Hall” [*Bulseolmyeongdang sinjugyeong*]. The former has been passed down orally and so is uncertain accuracy, but the latter seems to be of more certain origin. “The Newly Recited Sutra of Buddha’s Word and the Bright Hall” means a sutra which is recited by a sutra-reading *mudang* [shaman] at ceremony, and is also called the “Bright Hall Sutra” [*Myeongdang-gyeong*]. The sutra is addressed to the heaven spirit, the earth spirit, the seven-star spirit, the dragon king spirit, and the mountain spirit, to whom it prays for long life, good fortune, the elimination of disasters. It begins, as with Buddhist sutras, with the phrase “*yeosiamun...*” [I heard the following. One day the Buddha...], but is not in fact a Buddhist sutra although it has assimilated aspects of Buddhism. The date, authorship, and transmission of this text is also uncertain.

2 This is only the likely meaning of the text whose interpretation is uncertain. Translator’s Note: The text is mostly in Korean, but there are a number of spots where it is peppered with lines in Literary Sinitic, a written language which is more often referred to as Classical Chinese, although it should be noted that this was a literary language by no means exclusive to China. The literary Sinitic text is pronounced in Korean and interspersed with Korean verbs and prepositions. While I have simply translated many of them, there are other cases, where it is unlikely that they would make any sense at all to the Korean listener, and in some cases not even to the learned editor of this text. In those cases, I have thus simply provided a Romanization of the Korean pronunciation in quotation marks, which I have followed with a translation in English in square brackets. Many of the Literary Sinitic phrases would have been recognized by the listener from the recitation of Buddhist sutras or famous Chinese poems although they may or may not have understood the meaning. English-speaking readers might imagine the recitation of a text in English but with Latin phrases interspersed, some of which might be recognized from the Vulgate Bible or widely known classics although they would not be understood by all listeners.

3 In this case, its meaning is clear as it frequently is the introduction to Buddhist sutras: “I heard the following. One day the Buddha...”

4 The earth spirits of the five directions are the spirits who control the safety and security of the east, west, south, north and center of a house. As may be seen above, they were each associated with different colours.

*Bulseolmyeongdang sinjugyeong* [*The Sutra of Buddha’s Word, the Bright Hall and Appealing to Spirits*]<sup>1</sup> says: Since it is “*cheon gang daeji sumyeongdang*” [Heaven descends to the earth, and establishes a good dwelling],<sup>2</sup> “*yeosiamun e ilsibul*” [I heard the following. One day the Buddha].<sup>3</sup>

When the Sun and the stars, the Moon and stars descend, when in the east the Blue Emperor Earth Spirit descends, when in the south the Red General Earth Spirit descends,

When in the west the White Emperor Earth Spirit descends and when in the north the Black Emperor Earth Spirit descends,

When in the center the Yellow Emperor Earth Spirit descends—that is when all the Earth Spirits of the Five Directions<sup>4</sup> descend.

5 Both are phrases from Buddhist texts.

6 This is a line from a poem by the Tang poet Li Bai (701-762), entitled “Climbing the Fenghuang Platform in Jinlin.”

7 This line is a slightly altered version of a poem by Li Bai, which in the original referred to an island in Yangtze River. However, in this text the name of the island, Neungna Island, is not the island in the Yangtze River mentioned in the original poem, but an island in the Daedong River within the city of Pyeongyang.

8 Eulmildae is a famous pavilion on Eulmil Peak in Pyeongyang, which is associated with the story of the immortal maiden Eulmil who was so taken with the scenery of this location that she came down from heaven to the mountain peak and with the story that, General Eulmil, son of the famous Goguryeo General Eulji Mundeok, defended this location in a battle.

9 Manpokdae is a natural rock platform on Mount Myohyang in Manpok-dong, Hyangsan County, North Pyeongyang Province. It is famed for its beautiful views.

10 Plum blossom petals refer to the sexual organs of women. “Thing” refers to the male sexual organ.

11 This refers to Hwanghae Province, currently divided into two provinces of North Korea. Its southern reaches are not far from north of Seoul. The “magistrate” referred to in the song would have governed one of many counties within Hwanghae Province during the Joseon dynasty, and not all of Hwanghae, which as a province was under a governor.

12 The meaning of these four syllables are explained in the remainder of the line.

13 *Mongchwi* ghost is interpreted as “a ghost who married in a dream.”

Having “*Ilswae dongbang gyeoldoryang*” [first sprinkled water to the east and purified our minds], and “*iswae nambang deukcheongnyang*” [second sprinkled water to the south to obtain coolness],<sup>5</sup> so “*Samsan ballak cheongcheon oe*” [Three Mountains peaks half soar beyond the Blue Sky],<sup>6</sup>

If “*isujungbun*” [The two streams divide] around Neungna Island<sup>7</sup>; if it is Neungna Island, then it is the Eulmildae,<sup>8</sup>

If it is Eulmildae, then it is Manpokdae<sup>9</sup>—and has fallen down the high green cliff.

A ghost of one who died when his thing was broken, pressed down by plum blossom petals.<sup>10</sup>

A ghost who, as Magistrate of Hwanghae,<sup>11</sup> was not able to receive one piece of white rice-cakes in three years—you have gone a little crazy, ghost!

Round and flat little white rice cake ghosts, suddenly the four-eared ghost of the four directions.

A desperate ghost hanging on to the stone bridge over high rocks and stone cliffs.

“*Doksu gongbang*”<sup>12</sup> a ghost of one who lay down and slept alone in an empty room, and then fell down and broke to pieces.

A dead maiden who became a finger-thimble ghost, a dead bachelor who became the *mongchwi* ghost.<sup>13</sup>

A widow who committed suicide within the separate hall within the nine-fold palace and became a ghost with a grudge.

A widower who died and became the wooden post and wooden pillow ghost.

All of you eat and go away, and I will also partake and go away.

14 *Malmyeong* is another name for the *Manmyeong* Ghost, which is a spirit honored by *mudang*, and is the deification of the mother of Kim Yusin of the Silla period. She is known for her tough upbringing of Kim Yusin, and the effort that she put into his education. The *Malmyeong* ghost who made the leaves fly is a passage in the *Jade Box Sutra (Okkapgyeong)*, a text which was used in exorcisms.

15 This, as well as the previous Literary Sinitic quotation, are quotations from “The Song of Everlasting Sorrow,” a poem by the Tang poet Bai Juyi (772-846).

16 The meaning of *seongsa* is uncertain. Possibly it means shrines and temples. Certainly, seen from the context, it would seem to have some connection with Buddhist temples.

17 This is from “Night Mooring near Maple Bridge,” a poem by Tang poet Zhang Ji (ca. 712-779). Hanshan Temple is a Buddhist temple 3.5 km west of the city of Suzhou in China’s Jiangsu Province. Gusu was originally to the west of Suzhou, but may be used as an alternative name. Translator’s Note: The translation of the title follows Witter Bynner. See John Minford and Joseph S. M. Lau, *Classical Chinese Literature: An Anthology of Translations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

18 This is a line that appears in a number of exorcism manuals. Its meaning is uncertain.

19 This refers to the flood that is said to have overwhelmed northern China during the reign of the legendary King Yao.

A ghost who made the petals fly, during “*chunpung dori hwagae si*” [In spring breezes, when the plums and peach flowers bloom].

*Malmyeong* ghost,<sup>14</sup> who made the leaves fly during “*chu odong yeomnak si*” [In autumn rains, when the paulownia leaves fall].<sup>15</sup>

A *seongsa*<sup>16</sup> ghost, who praised Buddha at the “*goseongoe hansansa*” [Hanshan Temple outside of the city of Gusu].<sup>17</sup>

An actor ghost, who walked the tight-rope during “*Hwaganpung chambangsi*” [the time the spring wind flowing through the flowers came for a visit].<sup>18</sup>

A hobbling one-legged ghost who grabbed the lamp at the third watch of night and melted.

A love-sick ghost who longed for a recently departed loved one, in Wolmyeong Temple, when the moon at the window was bright.

A ghost who peeked out of the main gate.

A ghost of some useless idiot with the good luck to fall in love with woman married to somebody else, and he could not do anything about it,

And then, jumping over the wall at the third watch of night, he split his testicle sack open and died.

And now, a frozen ghost, a ghost of one with better luck, the hero of rough cotton, who for ten years had nothing to put on his naked legs and neck and died frozen stiff.

A ghost who died, body bloated, in a rainy-season flood as big as if it had been raining for nine years.<sup>19</sup>

A beggar ghost who begged at the front gates of 1,000, no 10,000 houses.

20 The interpretation of this line is uncertain.

21 According to the explanation of the *manshin* Kim Geum-hwa, this is the ghost of one who died when he ate while stealing after sunset.

22 The Military Hero [*Gunung*] ghost is a spirit worshiped by *mudang*. As a military ghost, he drives away misfortune coming in from outside.

A ghost who died longing for his lover, face red from drinking in a private brothel.<sup>20</sup>

The prostitute ghost, who was intoxicated and woozy while clasping wine cups of gold and jade.

A ghost of some man with the terrible luck to put his love into an empty fantasy, and wandered around all over the place, and died with his head resting on his arms.

A mountain spirit ghost who is being condoled in a pure place in a deep mountain and hidden valley.

A wicked ghost, who appears grotesquely to us in night-time dreams—half waking and half sleeping.

A lustful woman ghost who wanders around at night when “*weollak oje sangmancheon*” [The moon sets, the crow cries and dew fills the sky].

A ghost of thief who “*illak seosan*” [when the sun sets behind the western mountain] at sunset, “*yuchang cheonghyeol*” [whose pure blood flowed unrestrained].<sup>21</sup>

A woodcutter ghost, who died cutting trees in the depths of the mountains.

A ghost who was bitten by a viper on a little wood path in the woods.

A fire-death ghost, who burned to death in a fire, when fire was added to a blazing oven.

A murderer and thief becomes the criminal ghost, and a life-long prisoner becomes a prison ghost.

A Dragon-god ghost, who crossed over the vast ocean in a boat.

Even in the chaotic winds of the world, a Military Hero *Gunung* ghost who calls the troops to order.<sup>22</sup>

23 The interpretation of this line is uncertain.

Translator's Note

Assuming the interpretation is correct, the reference to the household registry should be understood as implying that someone who has no descendants will not be recorded in either public or private documents.

A hobbling one-legged ghost who lights the lamp in the shade of the blue willow.

If one is killed with a gun, one becomes a murdered ghost, if one is killed with a knife one becomes a ghost who died from steel.

Totter totter, an unmarried ghost, with no children and no grandchildren is a ghost who won't be recorded in the household registry.<sup>23</sup>

A ghost of one who died beaten to death with a bamboo spear because he committed a crime against the people of the world.

Some silly bitch had the good luck to choke to death on yeot candy which she bought with rice she sold without telling her mother-in-law,

And became a ghost when she choked on the candy and died splattering her diarrhea on a brush mat.

[All of you ghosts], eat and go away, then I will also partake and go away.

Eat moist food and go, take the dry food with you and go.

The women will put the straw coils on their heads and carry the food away, and the men will gather food into sacks and carry the food away.

I pray that your wishes may be fulfilled.

(Translation by Adam Bohnet Footnotes by HAH Sunhee)

## A Commentary on *Pagyeong*

|  
HAN Sunhee  
|

*Pagyeong*, which means the “end of a sutra recitation,” refers to a kind of song. It is a type of folk song or vulgar song that has been passed down in the Pyeongyang Province and Hwanghae Province (the western region of North Korea). It is also known as “the song of the blind.” It was sung by a shaman at the end of *gut* (shamanistic rituals) and mainly deals with entertaining the ghosts of people who suffered from contempt before death—including a maiden, bachelor, widower, and widow—with good food so that they can leave for the next world. In order to understand *Pagyeong*, we need to have two types of Korean shamanic ritual in mind. One is the standing *gut*, in which a shaman stands and dances during the *gut* and the other is the seated *gut*, in which a blind person, priest or fortuneteller recites sutra, while being seated, striking a drum and gong. In the past, those who recited sutra—not only in the western region but across the country—were mainly the blind and there were more often men than women. They made their living by fortunetelling and were known to have been in competition with shamans.

Sutra recitation is strongly shamanistic and it plays a role in protecting human beings’ real lives. One who conducted a ritual tried to heal the sick and prayed for the welfare and prosperity of a family through sutra recitation. In order to cure a disease, they recited *Okchugyeong*, the most important sutra to exorcise sundry evil spirits, and they recited *Antaekgyeong* for the peace of a family. In particular, those who conducted rituals in the western region always recited *Pagyeong* after reciting *Antaekgyeong*, a collection of well-wishing remarks. However, in Hwanghae Province, when shamans conducted standing *gut* for *Madanggut*, which was staged at the end of *Cheolmurigut* or *Mansudaetakgut*, they completed rituals by reciting *Pagyeong*, being possessed by the ghost of a blind shaman. In other words, a female shaman entertained important gods in the main *gut* with a hearty table and let them leave the site first. Then, at the end of the ritual, she was possessed by a blind fortuneteller’s spirit and wished all kinds of ghosts and minor gods to eat well and go away. Kim Keum-hwa, the famous female shaman who inherited the *gut* of the Hwanghae Province, also has called all sundry evil ghosts at *Madanggut* and has finally staged *Pagyeong*, taking the role of a blind fortuneteller, while playing the *janggu* (double-headed drum) alone.



The lyrics of the *Pagyeong* written in *Kim Keum-hwa Mugajip* (*Kim Keum-hwa's Shaman Song Collections*) mixes characteristics of Buddhism and Taoism as well as geographic/cultural features of China and the western region of North Korea. It is similar to the lyrics of *Pagyeong* handed down by Kim Jong-jo (1898-1948), a famous traditional singer in the western region. The song starts with *Bulseolmyeongdang sinjugyeong* [*The Sutra of Buddha's Word, the Bright Hall and Appealing to Spirits*] that prays for blessings of the heaven spirit, the earth spirit, the seven-star spirit, the dragon king spirit, and the mountain spirit. Influenced by Buddhism, the Earth Spirits of the Five Directions—that are worshiped as guardians of directions in shamanism—appear in the song, which freely includes quotes from the poetry of the Tang dynasty when Taoism was prosperous, including the poet Li Bai's "Climbing the Fenghuang Platform in Jinlin," Bai Juyi's "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow," and Zhang Ji's "Night Mooring near Maple Bridge." The Tang poems are mixed with the names of famous places in the western region of Korea such as Eulmildae and Manpokdae, and thereby the song is transformed into an indigenous piece.

Now, with Korea's geography and nature as the background, all ghosts who pathetically died appear in the lyrics. They are ghosts of people who were frozen to death, who starved to death, who died of illnesses, who were drowned to death, and who were killed with a knife. Therefore, they could not enter the next world and wander around this world as vindictive ghosts. Many of them died with deep sorrow because they had hopeless love until death. They include a dead maiden ghost, dead bachelor ghost, a ghost of a woman who had conflicts with her mother-in-law, a ghost of a man who fell in love with a woman married to somebody else, and a prostitute's ghost. These sundry ghosts belong to nowhere and cannot even prove their identities. As such, it is also a characteristic of *Pagyeong*, in which humor related to sex is highlighted. It is romantic but scary, sad but comical. A shaman wishes all these poor ghosts, "All of you eat and go away, and I will also partake and go away."

A ritual like *Madanggut*, part of *gut* in the Hwanghae Province, exists in other regions, too. It is called *Duitjeon* in the central region such as Seoul and Gyeonggi Province, *Georigut* on the east coast, *Jongcheonmegi* in the Jeolla Province, and *Dojin* on Jeju Island. It is a ritual to serve food for all the sundry gods and ghosts that are not treated as official gods in shamanism and that might harm people's lives. A blind man appears in all of *Madanggut*, *Duitjeon*, and *Georigut*. In *Madanggut*, a blind man recites *Pagyeong* and in *Duitjeon* he appears as

Shimbongsa (a character of a folktale) to tell jokes before he opens his eyes. Why the blind? Why do blind people recognize ghosts better than others? Why does a minority with a physical disability do something good to beings that are invisible to ordinary people? These questions cannot be answered from the perspective of modern-day ocularcentrism in the West, which considers eyes<sup>1</sup> as the most dominant sensory organ in the human body. *Pagyeong* reminds us of the simple fact that all is not as it seems. It reminds us of the ethics regarding invisible beings that have been suppressed by modernity's visual systems.

(Translation by Kim Hyun-kyung)

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1 Kwon Seongyung, "A Study for the Character and the Meaning of Blind from *Mu-Dang-Kuk-Nol-Yi*," *Korean Shamanistic Studies* Vol. 21, Association for Korean Shamanistic Studies, 2010.

## CONTRIBUTORS

### Park Chan-kyong

Park Chan-kyong (b. 1965) is an artist and filmmaker based in Seoul. His subjects have extended from the Cold War to traditional Korean religious culture, from 'media-oriented memory' to 'history reconstruction.' He is currently working as an artistic director of SeMA Biennale *Mediacity Seoul* 2014. He has produced media based works such as *Sets* (2000), *Power Passage* (2004), *Flying* (2005), *Sindoan* (2008), *Radiance* (2010), *Anyang Paradise City* (2011), *Night Fishing* (2011, co-directed with Park Chan-wook) and *Manshin* (2013). His works have been exhibited in international venues, such as Gwangju Biennale in Korea, De Appel in Amsterdam, REDCAT Gallery in Los Angeles, Kunstverein in Frankfurt and many others. He has won various prizes including Hermès Korea Missulsang (2004), Golden Bear Prize for Short Films of the Berlin International Film Festival (2011) and Best Korean Film of the Jeonju International Film Festival (2011).

### Wang Hui (汪晖)

Wang Hui is professor of Literature and History at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Sent for compulsory "re-education" for his role in the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, Wang is a leading member of China's "new left" movement and a past editor of *Dushu*, one of China's most influential literary journals. His most recent book is *The End of the Revolution: China and the Limits of Modernity*.

### Li Ang (李昂)

Lin Ang, a prominent woman writer from Taiwan, has made tremendous contribution to women's literature in the world with her persistent, in-depth investigation of the intriguing intertwining of gender and politics in social life and literary creation. Beginning her writing career at the age of sixteen, she has published more than twenty novels and/or collections of short stories. Many of her major works have been translated in different languages, published world-wide, reviewed by *The New York Times* and other major newspapers in many

countries, and made into films and TV series. In 2004, Li Ang was awarded The Chevalier de L'ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French minister of Culture and Communication as an acknowledgement of her literary achievement.

### Heonik Kwon

Heonik Kwon is a social anthropologist interested in Cold War history. Having previously taught anthropology at the University of Edinburgh and the London School of Economics, he is currently Senior Research Fellow in Social Science and Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at Trinity College, University of Cambridge. In 2013-2014, he has been a university visiting professor at the College of Social Sciences, Seoul National University. Author of several prize-winning books, he has completed an intimate history of the Korean War. His new writing project deals with the plurality of Cold War memories in East Asia.

### Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL

Born in 1970 in Bangkok. He started making films and video shorts in 1994 and completed his first feature *Mysterious Object at Noon* in 2000. Since 1998 he has also mounted exhibitions and installations in many countries. His art projects and feature films including *Blissfully Yours* (2002), *Tropical Malady* (2004) and *Syndromes and a Century* (2006) have won him widespread recognition. His recent film, *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* won the Palme d'Or at Cannes.

### Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)

Bertolt Brecht, original name Eugen Berthold Friedrich Brecht, German poet, was playwright and theatrical reformer whose epic theater departed from the conventions of theatrical illusion and developed the drama as a social and ideological forum for leftist causes. Until 1924 Brecht lived in Bavaria where he was born, studied medicine (Munich, 1917-21), and served in an army hospital (1918). From this period date his first play, *Baal* (produced 1923); his first success, *Trommeln in der Nacht* (Kleist Preis, 1922; *Drums in the Night*); the poems and songs collected as *Die Hauspostille* (1927; *A Manual of Piety*, 1966),

his first professional production (*Edward II*, 1924); and his admiration for Wedekind, Rimbaud, Villon, and Kipling.

During this period he also developed a violently antibourgeois attitude that reflected his generation's deep disappointment in the civilization that had come crashing down at the end of World War I. Among Brecht's friends were members of the Dadaist group, who aimed at destroying what they condemned as the false standards of bourgeois art through derision and iconoclastic satire.

### Vladimir Tikhonov

Vladimir Tikhonov was born in Leningrad, Soviet Union in 1973. He received a master's degree in Korean ancient history at St. Petersburg National University of Russia in 1994 and was granted a doctorate from Moscow State University with the same major in 1996. He worked as a lecturer at Russian State Humanitarian University (1996) and a full-time contract-based instructor at Kyunghee University in Suwon (1997-2000). He was an associate professor at the University of Oslo (2000-2006), and since 2006 has been a full professor at the same university. Tikhonov is mainly interested in areas including the early history of Korean nationalism and modern history of Korean Buddhism. His major publications include Korean books such as *Your Korea I* (2001), *The History which Betrayed Me* (2003), *The Myth of the Survival of the Fittest* (2005), *More to the Left to the Left* (2009), *There Is No Country for You* (2012), and *Be the Leftists* (2012). He is Korean by nationality and a member of the Korean Labor Party.

### Sean Snyder

Sean Snyder lives and works in Berlin. He is a research based artist who adopts an analytical approach to the circulation of information and imagery within the global media. Snyder has been recognized internationally with solo exhibitions at, among others, the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Secession, Vienna; Portikus, Frankfurt; de Appel, Amsterdam; Artist Space, New York; Koelnische Kunstverein, Cologne.

### Gong Sun Ok

Gong was born in Gokseong, Jeollanam-do in 1963. Gong Sun Ok debuted as an author in 1991 with her novella *Seeds of Fire* through the winter issue of the literary journal *Creation and Criticism*. She has continued to write for 23 years. Her novels include *My Thirties Left Behind in Oji-ri* (1993), *The Years* (1996), *Red Baby Blanket* (2003), *Come to the Sorghum Field* (2002), *Wandering Family* (2005), *Yeongran* (2010), *When I Was Most Beautiful* (2009), and *Where Did the Song Come From?* (2013). She also published collections of stories such as *Bloom, Daffodil* (1994), *A Wonderful World* (2002), and *Merrily through the Night* (2007). Her collections of essays include *Hitting the Road at Forty* (2003), *A Happy Dinner* (2008), *I Cried in the Field of Milkvetch* (2000). Gong Sun Ok received the 13th Shin Dongyeop Writing Award in 1995, Today's Young Artist Award in 2004, and the Manhae Literature Prize in 2009.

### Cho Han Hae-joang

Cho is a cultural anthropologist (Professor Emeritus of Yonsei University, Director of Haja Center). She graduated from Yonsei University's Department of History before she received her M.A. in anthropology from the University of Missouri and her Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles. After returning to Korea in 1979, Cho has taught at Yonsei University and has been actively involved in social movements and writing. She has focused on the exploration of the transformation times of Korean modern history, particularly on the public as a creative commons shared by people. Since the early 1980s, Cho has worked as a member of a feminist group called Alternative Culture that tries to create alternative culture in Korea. After the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s, she founded the Seoul Youth Factory for Alternative Culture (aka, Haja Center, 1999) which is an alternative cultural studio and creative public area for teenagers. Recently, she suggested a solution to ever more confusing changes in today's world through the concept of 'villages,' that revitalized local communities or networks. Since 2012, she serves as the chairperson of the 'Village' Community Committee, which is one of the major transitional projects of Seoul Metropolitan City. She is the author of many books including *Women and Men in South Korea* (1988), three volumes of *Reading Texts, Reading Lives in the Postcolonial*

*Era* (1992, 1994), *Children Refusing School, Society Refusing Children* (1996), *Reflexive Modernity and Feminism* (1998), *Children Searching School, Society Searching Children* (2000), *It's Life-Learning Village Again* (2007), and *Jagonggong: for Villages of Reciprocity* (2014).

Tajima Masaki (田島正樹)

Tajima is a philosopher who deals with issues in metaphysics based on linguistic philosophy. He conducts studies by embracing Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic insights, while studying political philosophy and art of modern times.

Koizumi Yoshiyuki (小泉義之)

Koizumi is a philosopher who mainly studies René Descartes, Gilles Deleuze, and Emmanuel Levinas. He also writes criticism on comics and subcultures.

Kim Keum-hwa

Kim Keum-hwa was born in 1931 in Yeonbaek, Hwanghae-do. She fell ill at the age of twelve with *mubyeong* (shaman's disease). Then, at the age of seventeen, she received *Naerim-Gut* (initiation ritual) from Kim Cheon-il who was an established shaman and her grandmother on her mother's side. Kim Keum-hwa had a lot of experience while accompanying shamans who were conducting *gut* (rituals). Two years later, she was recognized for her skills which were good enough to single-handedly perform *Daedong-Gut* (the largest ritual to help a village's wealth and well-being) and started an independent practice as a shaman. At twenty, when the Korean War broke out in 1950, she took refuge and worked in Incheon. She moved to Seoul in the midst of *Saemaul Undong* (New Community Movement) and the Anti-Superstition Movement led by the Korean government. She was first covered by the press in 1967 when she won an individual award with her performance of *Yeonpeyong Song* and *Baeyeonsin-Gut* at the National Folk Competition. In 1982, she started to be paid international attention after her performance in the US for the 100th anniversary of Korea-US amity. Since then, she has taken over all the shamanistic rituals for the country as a leading shaman. Later, she was invited for performance tours and lectures to many foreign countries including Spain, Russia,

Austria, France, Germany, China, Italy, and Japan. Through this, she has widely promoted the religious, artistic, and cultural value of Korean *gut*. When Levi Strauss came to Korea, he paid a special visit to Kim Keum-hwa's *Mansudaetak-Gut*. In 1985, Kim was designated the skill holder of Korea's important intangible cultural property with *Seohaean Baeyeonsin-Gut* and *Daedong-Gut*. In 1995, at the age of sixty five, she conducted the opening performance for the celebratory ceremony for the 3rd anniversary of Korea-China amity, and staged *Kim Keum-hwa Daedong-Gut* at Hoam Art Center (Seoul). She staged countless performances of *gut* both in Korea and abroad, including *Daedong-Gut* at the top of Baekdu Mountain and *Jinhon-Gut* for the repose of the famous composer Yun I-sang's soul in Berlin, Germany. Currently, she is working hard to train the younger generation and to hand down Korean shamanistic culture at Keumhwadang (*Seohaean Pungeo-Gut* training center) established on Ganghwa Island in 2005. She authored books including *Kim Keum-hwa's Shaman Song Collections* (1995) and *Share Blessings and Relieve Grief* (1995).

HAN Sunhee

HAN Sunhee is a filmmaker and researcher based in Seoul, South Korea. She has produced theatrical documentaries including *Talking Architect* (2011), *Manshin: Ten Thousand Spirits* (2013) and *The Basement Satellite* (2013) as well as a TV documentary *Shaman of the Sea* (2012) for Discovery Channel Asia-Pacific Networks. While developing numerous documentary projects, she has also been actively writing stories and editing books and publications. Recently, she has completed her research project titled "*Gut* Documentary of Kim Soo-nam and Kim In-who" for the Asian Culture Complex in Gwangju.

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The images printed here are scenes from the exhibition SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2014 under the theme of “Ghosts, Spies, and Grandmothers.”

Mediacity Seoul, now in its 8th edition, is an international biennale organized by the Seoul Museum of Art. A total of 42 artists (including teams) and 42 films were invited. The exhibition was held both at the Seoul Museum of Art and the Korean Film Archive simultaneously from September 2 to November 23, 2014.

Each exhibit can be viewed through photographs and audio guide on [www.mediacityseoul.kr](http://www.mediacityseoul.kr).

Manshin Lee Sang-soon,  
Seoul Saenamgut  
An opening event of the Mediacity  
Seoul 2014





[Left] Haegue Yang, *Sonic Full Moon—Medium Regular #2*, 2014  
[Right] Joo Jae-Hwan, *The World Has Lost Its Colors; The Sun and the Moon Have Lost Their Light*, 1994



Tamura Yuichiro, *Suzuki Knife, Social Cooking*. 2014. Commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2014



Haegue Yang, [Left] *Sonic Full Moon—Medium Regular #2*, 2014 [Right] *Sonic Dance — Half Sister*, 2014



YAO Jui-chung, [Left] *Something Blue*, 1998-2009 [Right] *Long Long Live*, 2013









[Left] YAO Jui-chung, *Beyond Humanity*, 1992-2008 [Right] Basim Magdy, *Time Laughs Back at You like a Sunken Ship*, 2012



[Left] YAO Jui-chung, *Beyond Humanity*, 1992-2008  
[Right] Unknown Artist, *The Complete Map of the Celestial Sphere (Hon-cheon-jeon-do)*, 19th century



Basim Magdy, *Every Subtle Gesture*, 2012-ongoing. Commissioned by SeMA Biennale *Mediacity Seoul* 2014



Nilbar Güreş, *Open Phone Booth*, 2011





Yoneda Tomoko, *The Parallel Lives of Others—Encountering with Sorge Spy Ring*, 2008



Nina Fischer & Maroan el Sani, *I Live in Fear—After March 11*, 2013



[Top, Bottom] Lina Selander, *Lenin's Lamp Glows in the Peasant's Hut*, 2011



Joanna Lombard, *Orbital Re-enactments*, 2010



Nilbar Güreş, *Open Phone Booth-2*, 2014

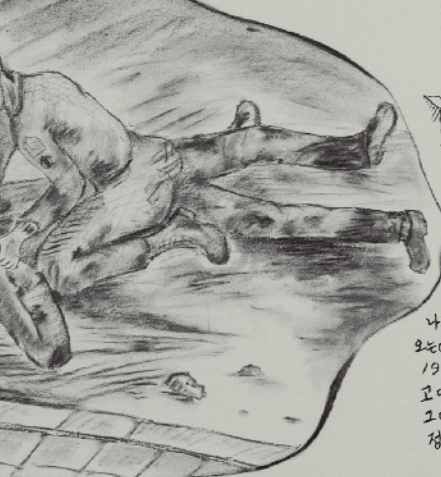


Basim Magdy, *The Dent*, 2014. Commissioned by the Abraaj Group Art Prize, 2014



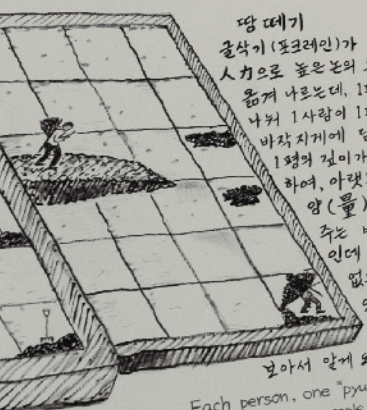
YAO Jui-chung, *Beyond Humanity*, 1992-2008





나는 후에 제대물려져 집에 오는데 서울을 통과하던 그때가 1960년 4.19 의거 당일 날이었고 고대생들이 경찰의 발포로 쓰러지던 바로 그때였었다. 학생들의 값진 피로 이승만 독재 정권이 무너지고 민주당 정권으로 이어진다.  
※ 나는 버스 뒷좌석에서 4.19 의거장면을 봤었다.

I completed my military service in April 19th 1960. On the way back home, I passed through Seoul. Interestingly, it was the day of April 19th uprising. It was the day when students of Korea University was Killed by polices' gunfire. Sacred blood of students toppled the authoritative Lee Sung Man regime and led to establishment of Democratic Republic.  
※ At the end row of a bus, I watched the April 19th uprising.



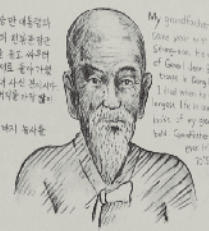
담뱃찌기 골삭이(포크레인)가 없던 옛날에는 人力으로 높은논의 흙을 낮은논으로 옮겨 나르는데, 1평씩(6자x6자) 나뉜 1사람이 1평씩 흙을 파서 바락지기에 달아 힘겨워 날라 1평의 깊이가 일정하도록 정하여, 아랫논으로 옮기면 양(量)으로 따져 노임을 주는 방법이 담뱃찌기 인데 지금은 불수 없애 었다. (나도 형남 보아서 알게 되었다.)

Each person, one "pyung"  
In those days, people had to move dust in the upper to lower paddy, because there was no excavator. Each person was responsible for the "pyung" (36 square feet) of paddy. They used wooden back rack to carry the dust and set the height of each paddy bed even. However, this work is done by machine today, therefore, we can't see people doing it anymore. (I and my big brother had worked on it together before. That is how I came to know it.)



1950년 9.28 수도 수복되고 농촌고장마을 앞산에 놀러산책을 하다가 있었는데 갑자기 앞에서 총을 쏘며 '순둥이'의 연락대를 이지 하질래 손을 들고 열광을 보니 조동학고 선생님이 위용경장이 되어 우리마을에 맨 먼저 오시는 중이었다. 이상한 사제간의 만남이었다.

우리 할아버지는 이 중만 예술감독과 동양시와 그 부속을 포함한 원주군을 통치하는 권력이 막강한 농도 싸우며 가는 도중에 보충고 32사도 불가사위 노릇을 하며 1년 6개월을 보냈었다.



My grandfather was born in 1890. He was a military officer. He worked in the military for a long time. He was a very hard worker. He was a very good person. He was a very kind person. He was a very honest person. He was a very brave person. He was a very smart person. He was a very strong person. He was a very beautiful person. He was a very rich person. He was a very powerful person. He was a very famous person. He was a very successful person. He was a very happy person. He was a very healthy person. He was a very long-lived person. He was a very good person. He was a very kind person. He was a very honest person. He was a very brave person. He was a very smart person. He was a very strong person. He was a very beautiful person. He was a very rich person. He was a very powerful person. He was a very famous person. He was a very successful person. He was a very happy person. He was a very healthy person. He was a very long-lived person.

In order to come back to Korea from Aomori Port in Hokkaido, Japan after Reinstatement in 1945, 6 thousands people were making a crossing over the East Sea night and days for 1 week. There was one woman who delivered of a child and she gave birth to a baby in a ship. Due to a newborn's simple every people get sick but overcome it at last. However, the newborn baby's name was born as 'Seon' and has been at sea.



내가 기억하다 (1945년) 일본에서 귀국을 할때 배에서 한 여자가 아이를 낳았는데 그 아이의 이름을 '선'이라고 지어 주었다. 그 아이는 배에서 태어났는데...



Forced ill cattle to eat gravel  
When I was six, our cattle stopped eating. My father was worried, so he had the cattle hungry by opening its mouth. He was very worried because it was very interesting. Maybe he was more worried because the cattle's help for farming. It was very interesting to me. There were no vets in those days.

After Recovery of Seoul on 25th September 1948  
I was out to take a walk along the river in the morning. At a station, a man passed a sign to take the train. I raised my hands and looked at the sign. It was my teacher's brother. He was a very good person. He was a very kind person. He was a very honest person. He was a very brave person. He was a very smart person. He was a very strong person. He was a very beautiful person. He was a very rich person. He was a very powerful person. He was a very famous person. He was a very successful person. He was a very happy person. He was a very healthy person. He was a very long-lived person.

Haejun JO & KyeongSoo LEE,  
A Ship Believing the Sea is the Land, 2014  
Commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2014





Min Joung-Ki, [Left] *Manmulsang Rocks on Mt. Geumgang*, 2014  
[Right] *Bibong Fall at the Mt. Geumgang*, 1999



Jawshing Arthur Liou, *Kora*, 2011-2012



[Top, Bottom] Bae Young-whan, *Autonumina—Ten Thousand Years' Sleep, Seonbawi Inwang Mountain*, 2010-2014



Rho Jae Oon, *Wands*, 2014. Commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2014



Mikhail Karikis, *Children of Unquiet*, 2013-2014

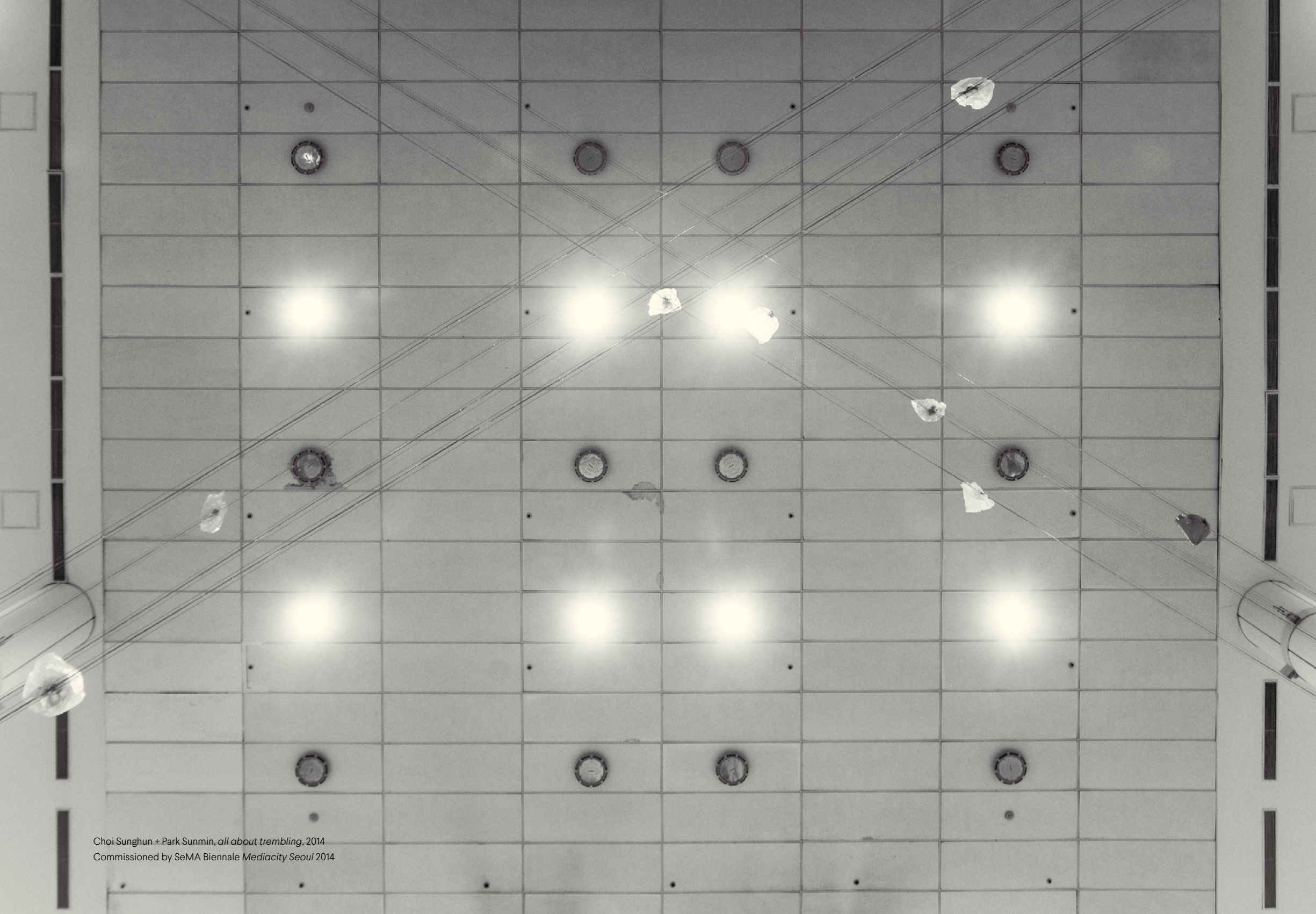


Zero Dimension / Kato Yoshihiro, [Left] *Zero Dimension Archive*, 2014  
[Right] *Zero Dimension Documentary Film*, November 1969



Naito Masatoshi, *Ba Ba Bakuhatsu (Grandma Explosion)*, 1988





Choi Sunghun + Park Sunmin, *all about trembling*, 2014  
Commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2014





Choi Sunghun + Park Sunmin, *all about trembling*, 2014. Commissioned by SeMA Biennale *Mediacity Seoul* 2014



Haegue Yang, *Sonic Rotating Oval—Brass Plated #13, #14, #15*, 2014  
*Sonic Rotating Geometry Type E #23*, 2014



[Top, Bottom] siren eun young jung, *Le Nouveau Monde Amoureux*, 2014



[Left] Pilar Mata Dupont, *The Embrace*, 2013  
[Right] Choi Gene-uk, *North Korea A, B*, 2000



[Left] Ho Sin Tung, *Hong Kong Inter-vivos Film Festival*, 2012  
[Right] Otty Widasari, *Jabal Hadroh, Jabal Al Jannah (Green Mountain, Heaven Mountain)*, 2013



[Left] Otty Widasari, *Jabal Hadroh, Jabal Al Jannah (Green Mountain, Heaven Mountain)*, 2013  
[Right] Jesse Jones, *The Predicament of Man*, 2010



SU Yu-Hsien, *Hua-Shan-Qiang*, 2013





Truong Cong Tung, *Journey of a Piece of Soil*, 2014



[Top, Bottom] The Propeller Group, *The Guerrillas of Cu Chi*, 2012



Truong Cong Tung, [Left] *Journey of a Piece of Soil*, 2014  
[Right] *Magical Garden*, 2012–2014





[Top, Bottom] Eric Baudelaire, *The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi, and 27 Years without Images*, 2011

[Top, Bottom] CHUNG Seoyoung, *Old Problems Gathered in a Temporary Manner*, 2014  
Commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2014



[Top, Bottom] CHE Onejoon, *Mansudae Master Class*, 2014  
Archive installation: Commissioned by SeMA Biennale *Mediacity Seoul* 2014

[Top, Bottom] Ho Sin Tung, *Hong Kong Inter-vivos Film Festival*, 2012





Nina Fischer & Maroan el Sani, *Spelling Dystopia*, 2008



Sang-il Choi, Jiyeon Kim, *Grandmothers' Lounge: From the Other Side of Voices*, 2014  
Commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2014



Jakrawal NILTHAMRONG, *INTRANSIT*, 2013



Mikhail Karikis, *SeaWomen*, 2012



Rho Jae Oon [Left→Right] *Stardate s#03\_Three Men Questioning Time*, 2011  
*Stardate s#02\_Partisan*, 2011, *Stardate s#01\_Stardate*, 2009



Ho Sin Tung, *Thin Veiled World*, 2014 and *A Closed Circle of Unknowns*, 2014  
Commissioned by SeMA Biennale *Mediacity Seoul* 2014