

**The Visual Culture of Hauntings**  
*in post-colonial Korea*  
**The Ethics and Aesthetics of The Real**  
**In Modern South Korea**

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## Abstract

My thesis explores the history and psychology of the *Minjoong* (grassroots) *Realist Art and Culture Movement* which emerged during the democratisation period in South Korea in the 1980s and early 1990s. Following territorial decolonization and 35 years of rapid industrialisation led by the military dictatorial regime, the 1980s and the 1990s marked a time of insurgence of popular antagonism against the regime and the dominant norms of society which had repressed the expressions of the grassroots people in the society. I examine how the emergent culture – a ‘visual culture of haunting’ – is instigated and formed by numerous haunted subjects and the return of repressed memories. This culture is marked by works of Lim Oksang and Oh Yoon who materialised the ghosts of the *minjoong*, who had long been repressed by “silencing structure” and “culture of forgetting” of Korean society. They actively dealt with the personal and historical trauma and haunting imagination of a future as part of the incorporation process of the internal images of “the Real”. The ‘Real’ translates the irreducible core of memory and imagination of the *minjoong* which has previously unrepresented. I also explore how the repressed and silenced “subaltern” groups in Korean modern history, especially the former sexual slave women, have gradually come into the historical light providing their testimonies in this emergent cultural and political milieu. I point out the significant role of feminist intellectuals and artists who are committed to the resolution of the women’s issues. For instance, their repressed voices are facilitated, reactualised and materialised through an art therapy workshop set up by a young artist, Lee Kyungsin, and documentary-making set up by the young film maker Byun Youngjoo. The paintings of former sexual slavery victims, Kang Dukkyung and Kim Sukduk, as well as Byun’s documentaries, *Nazen Mosori 1 and 2*, witness the innermost voices and life performances of these women, who were previously constrained by their own personalised shame and the negativity of *Han* (long repressed grievance).

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## Introduction

A British friend asked me “is there a culture of anxiety in modern East Asia?” The East Asian culture is exemplified by Japan, and the “four tigers,” of which South Korea is one. This culture has been celebrated as the epitome of a fast growing industrial techno-topia. The citizens of those nations are perceived to be happy and proud of their quick “success,” not being subject to anxiety of any kind. However, a culture of unease and grievance has been pervasive within the sub-national realm of society, and suppressed by domestic politics and unrepresented on an international level. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, we witnessed these suppressed populations explode on the street with their demands for democracy and the redemption of the past rather than a continued devotion to the national imperative of the increase of GNP. They continued this struggle by forming numerous grassroots political, cultural organisation and movement groups over more than a decade. What instigated this and where did this power of transformation and change in *minjoong*<sup>1</sup> come from?

### Korean studies

Goo Hagen says in the introduction of his book, *Korean Workers: The Culture And Politics of Class Formation* published in 2001 that his study of Korean workers who radically arose in the 1980s is to fill the gap in Korean studies today. He acknowledged that on the one hand, critical Korean scholars in Korea were often involved in the movement themselves, so neglected the analytic investigation of this subject. On the other hand, Korean Studies scholars in the world especially in the field of development studies have been more interested in the fast growing economic development of South Korea and its democratisation, which is viewed from the perspective of politics and economy.<sup>2</sup> Goo emphasises the fact that the investigation of the concrete human experience

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<sup>1</sup> 민중 *Minjoong* roughly translates grassroots, or mass or the people of the multitude, the term widely used to give a collective identity to the insurgent people in South Korea, in the 1980s and 1990s

<sup>2</sup> Goo Hagen, *The Korean Workers: The Culture And Politics of Class Formation*, Cornell University Press, 2001. p.24-38



of the workers, that is the culturally and psychologically specific factors that shaped the upheaval has been terribly lacking. His standpoint in studying this subject is interchangeable with mine. I have been concerned with the absence of a fair analysis of the emergent 'culture' which was brought out by the previous repressed and subalternised *minjoong* and the artists who aligned themselves with the emancipation process of *minjoong* during the period of this upheaval, stemming from the cultural and psychic specificity and complexity of experiences of Korean modernity.

### **Post-colonial<sup>3</sup>**

I would like to see my work in relation to the works of those who attempt to develop the field of post-colonial studies beyond what the previous generations of scholars, such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, had developed. Their works were centered on the critique of the mode of representation of "the other" in the West, and repairing it. Said developed the analysis of the representational machine that the west operated in order to control the other and Bhabha proposed a theoretical revision of the previous study of imperialism and new forms of inquires into postcolonial identity and culture in formation, which is

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<sup>3</sup> There is a sentiment or some argue that the name of 'postcolonial' invokes the old fashioned anti-imperialism study (although Homi Bhabha once provided the definition of 'the postcolonial' as something other than the discipline developed under this tradition, the name still tends to attribute to the world at our disposal to the past event called colonialism so it does not easily discriminate itself from 'anti-colonial study' the central premises of which lie in the opposition between the colonized and coloniser)so it must be replaced. Whether direct or indirect response to this sentiment, those genre such as 'cross-culture studies', 'globalisation studies', 'field work'\* have arisen, which to a different degree embrace the significant questions 'the postcolonial' has raised, and develop its disciplinary scope further. Beyond the tendency that 'the postcolonial' has been limitedly understood as a discourse analysis or theoretical enterprise, these new genres of studies have brought a positive tendency that increases the field work on the western and non-western world which indeed are entangled together in the complex power relationship that is of exchange, of negotiation and conflictual.

\* Field work conference, at Victoria Miro Gallery, in London, 16th and 17<sup>th</sup>, May, 2003, is organized by Irit Rogoff and her AHRB Research Project Team, Translation The Image-Cross-Cultural Contemporary Arts, was a fresh attempt on this regard. The organizer writes that "In doing Field work we step outside of ourselves to critically reflect upon the confines of our practices and locations. By conceptualizing the arenas of our activities as fields, we creatively engage with the parameters that frame and separate them. This conference is an interdisciplinary effort to identify the bodies of Knowledge informing the emergent field of Visual Culture. By unframing disciplinary practices and bringing together artists, theorists, academics and curators, we aim to exemplify the dynamic relations of several field on the move, this at a moment in which the visual arts are becoming central in the production of new knowledge."

never fixed. This generation of postcolonial studies has registered the “diaspora” (whose subjectivity can not be explained through the previous discourse of national identity, nativist discourse, anti-colonial militant identity but as hybrid, decentred, fragmented, multiple subject) studies within the academic discourse. The authors emphasise and warn us of the danger in any claim of the representation of the other as it may cause them violence. They also willingly register their work as a contribution from the ‘in-between’ position (between nations and cultures). But as Stuart Hall argued in the article, *When Was ‘The Postcolonial’? Thinking At The Limit*’ in 1996,<sup>4</sup> and elsewhere, that critical voices against this ‘postcolonial’ have been posed by concerned critics such as Ella Shohat and Anne McLintock from within the field. The critics discern that the theoretical languages developed around the ‘postcolonial’ studies tend to be merely celebratory of the ambiguity of identity and meaning and worryingly, suspend the history informed by the more overwhelming reality of the postcolonial world: that is to say, they tend to suspend the study of ‘post-decolonisation’ processes in the formerly colonized world.

It is observed that new postcolonial works of contemporary artists and intellectuals are more concerned with conveying the entangled and multi-layered reality of the politics and cultures of contemporary non-western worlds. They are believed to pay more attention to the culture in complexity, and the multi-layered mental landscape of the subjects, that is carried along all the way through their regional and global journey, with greater sensitivity and self-reflectivity. They are as Irit Rogoff says, both “analytic and imaginary work.” And the initiatives have been taken from everywhere. For instance, the publications of five Platforms of Documenta 11, 2002 led by Okwui Enwezor are the exemplary work that reflects this development in the field of study. To name a few, ‘Créolité? Creolization’, *Experiment with Truth: Transitional Justice and The Processes of Truth and Reconciliation*, *Under Siege: Four African Cities* Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, Lagos, ‘African cities?’. The

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<sup>4</sup> Stuart Hall, *The Postcolonial’? Thinking At The Limit*’, contributed for the book Ian Chambers and Lidia Curti ed., *The Postcolonial Question-Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996

editors' point in the preface on the publication of Platform 1 echoes my concern. It says "if there is a politics of any kind to be deduced from the above [Documenta was presented as a kind of common public sphere where discussions and debates among artists, intellectuals, communities, audiences, action take place], it is a politics of **nonambiguity**, and the idea that all discourses, all critical models (be they artistic or social, intellectual or pragmatic, interpretive or historical), emerge from **a location or situation**, even when they are not defined or restricted by it."<sup>5</sup>

### ***Minjoong (grass roots) Realist Art and Culture Movement***

My work is an investigation of the history and psychology of the *Minjoong* (grass roots) *Art and Culture Movement* which emerged during the democratisation period in South Korea in the 1980s and 1990s. This time was marked by an unprecedented explosion of long-repressed voices, which had previously been thwarted by the repressive "silencing structure" erected by modern South Korean society. I attempt to show how the legacy of colonization and the subsequent industrial modernisation constructed this "silencing structure" and "culture of forgetting" which excluded and repressed critical, self-reflexive, and sovereign voices from the political and cultural public sphere. The political suppression of the marginalized created this anxious subtext at the sub-national realm of society. The dominant mode of intellectual interpretation's persistent language of forgetting of this has reinforced this trauma and unease in the population.

The emergent culture of this period is populated by the ardent *minjoong* and *minjoong* artists (whether artists him/herself is real *minjoong* or they are *minjoong* oriented artist) who are "haunted" by the past which disrupts the present as a trauma or is strongly present as witness despite the continuing repression. The spectral trope, aesthetic and political incorporation process of

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<sup>5</sup> Okwui Enwezor et. al. ed. *Democracy Unrealized. Documental 11-Platform 1*, Hatje Cantz, 2002, p. 11

the return of the repressed flourished in the scene of antagonistic cultural politics that the artists and subalterns each and together mobilised.

In chapter 1, I attempt a theoretical injunction of the emergent “visual culture of haunting” which refers to the counter-historical, ethical, and aesthetic practices of the *minjoong* and *minjoong* artists who participated in *Minjoong Realist Art and Culture Movement*, and the alternative community which came along in in development of these practices. Their attempt to materialise these historical ghosts through means of their visual arts and subversive speech acts offered sites for the counter-memory, transference, antagonism, and enabled forgotten memories to survive through the impasse of history. I discuss how the theoretical account of this ethico-aesthetico-political project of *minjoong* has been dismissed by the radical philosophical idealism employed by vanguard critics in the 1990s. The emergent culture witnesses the subjects who constantly engage in incorporating the materiality/forces of the “return” and reactualising the “duration”, and empowering alteration in the realm of the virtual universal. This appears to be a deeply pragmatic practice rather than representational, the mode of operation of which moves from the individual to the hyper collective, empirical zone of other *minjoong*, and from the local to the global.

In chapter 2, I attempt a rereading of the works of two Korean *Minjoong* artists Lim Oksang and Oh Yoon who embarked on the materialisation of the unforeseen “real” in the time of social amnesia. By dealing with lingering images of the psychic real, which have been compelling their time of recollections, their art has become testimony to the internal landscapes of the hitherto repressed people in modern Korea entrenched in *han*, anxiety, as well as constitutive of an imagined revolutionary future. I demonstrate how this is construed in a completely different tradition of Realism which is symptomatic and pragmatic rather than objective and rationalist. I demonstrate how they activate the “transference” of the hitherto repressed and incorporate the spectral matter which is neither dead nor alive and explore the stream of *durée* in constructing “the symptomatology” of the real. I also explain how such visual

materialisation involves the work of mourning that necessitates the deconstruction and work of *différance*.

In chapter 3, I discuss how Lim Oksang's works such as 'Earth' series and Oh Yoon's works such as, *Wonguido*, and *Doggabi* transform into a "vision machine", whilst consistently engaging in personal and collective memories-that of trauma and haunting-and evolving into a space of virtual dialogue with the de-centered others. This vision machine detests the pre-dominant "modernist" aesthetic norm of abstract modernism so exappropriates it in its very machinic procession. It does it by engendering an affective acceleration of the vision of the immanent power of *minjoong* that derives from the sub-national, hyper-collective history of *Han*. *Han* is the vernacular expression for the unspoken sensibility and culture of the Korean *minjoong* entrenched in unresolved grievances and resistance. *Han* is the dormant forces of sorrow and resistance latent in the psycho-historical realm of the suppressed and marginalised people. I argue Lim and Oh's works in this way embody a unique ethical, aesthetic and political vision of *Han* that is immanent in the sovereign history and sensibility of the *minjoong*.

In chapter 4, I move on to discuss the issues of the "silencing structure" and "subaltern speech" and the role of the intellectuals/artists in relation to the case of the former "Military Comfort Women." The estimated range between 80, 000 and 200, 000 Asian women, about 80 percents of whom were Korean, were coerced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military during the World War Two. These women only came into the historical light in 1991, when some victims began to testify their past in the 'Comfort Houses'. I trace the constituent elements of the 'silencing structure' that are revealed through the testimonies, such as the hegemonic role of Japan and the US after the War, which incapacitated South Korea's post-war inquiry into such atrocities, and the persistent patriarchal rationale in post-war South Korean society. By analysing the testimonies of victims such as Kim Haksun, and Kim Yunsim, I demonstrate how the speech of the women has been materialised through the internal psychic

inversion which led them to transgress the official history. I also demonstrate that the women's self-representative speech and performance is not a manifestation of pure individual consciousness but one that is continuously facilitated and evolves through the inter-subjective relationship with others. By examining the role of the feminist intellectuals who had worked with these women, I envision how and what interesting chains of "openings" take place whereby on the one hand, the victimised women overcame their foreclosure by encountering these listening others and on the other hand, intellectual women could were able to approach the elided truth of the history.

In chapter 5, I examine how young artists such as Byun Youngjoo and Lee Kyungsin have facilitated the sites of "transference" of the repressed desire and expression of the former sexual slave women through their arts. Byun Yoongjoo made three documentary films-Nazen Moksori(1995), Habitual Sadness(1997), and My Own Breathing (2000) in her 10 year relationship with these victim women. In order to make the difficult transference possible through her camera, Byun undertook a "participatory" film making which allowed her to gradually establish a communicative ground between her film crews and the women. I introduce and analyse the interesting aspects of the process of this film making in this regard and the visuality of the films-especially *Nazen Moksori* 1 and 2. Lee Kyungsin set up an art therapy workshop in 1993 for these women which resulted in more than 100 paintings made by Kang Dukkyung, Kim Sunduk, and Lee Yongnye. I also introduced how Lee's workshop succeeded in bringing out the significant innermost testimonies of the women establishing inter-subjective and collective pragmatic spaces of the "transference." In discussing this, I reappraise the pre-existing theory of representation, subaltern, and intellectual, that is based on an idealist notion of individuality and otherness. I reappraise the issues raised by Spivak, through her exemplary text, 'Can The Subaltern Speak?' (1988) and propose a new theory of "representation" utilising Lacan's theoretical model of "transference". Lacan's theory of transference-which encompasses fresh discussion of "subject", "analyst", "desire", and the "Other"-

enable us to contemplate those positions and representation in a non-idealist but more pragmatic basis.

In chapter 6, I re-examine the underlying ethos, aspiration, and politics of the *minjoong* democratisation movement of the 1980s and the 1990s to which the works of those *minjoong* artists have become the ultimate testimonies. The movement has undone the predominant notion of 'progress' in the modernisation process of South Korea, which is over-determined by the logic of vulgar materialist politico-economy. I argue the developmentalist and authoritarian technocrats of modern Korea have set the remembering of the past as the antithesis of 'progress', dismissing the consequences of the serious retrogression of the society and social malaise it caused. This *minjoong* movement in contrast brought out the issue of redemption of the suppressed as the central matter of 'progress', thereby construing as an alternative notion of 'progress'.

\* Note 1: The translation of all the Korean texts I use in this thesis is mine unless stated.

\* Note 2: All Korean names found in this thesis are written according to the Korean convention; the surname precedes the given name. For example, with the name Oh Yoon, 'Oh' is the surname and 'Yoon' is the given name. However, in the bibliography, for the sake of categorical consistency, commas are placed after the surname. For example, Oh, Yoon.

**Chapter 1**  
**Theorizing The Visual Culture of Haunting :**  
**Ethics and Aesthetics In Postcolonial Korea**  
**In the 1980s and 1990s**

*This combined interplay of deliberate forgetting within action that is also new origin reaches it full power of the idea of modernity.” -Paul de Man<sup>1</sup>*

We will look at some images from South Korea. Figure 1 is a painting by Lim Oksang, entitled ‘Earth 4’ (1980). Figure 2 is ‘*Abi*’, a print by Oh Yoon from 1983. Lim and Oh were exponents of the *민중 미술 운동 Minjoong Art Movement*, a subversive art movement during the period of Korean democratization in the 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>2</sup> Figure 3 is a painting by Kang Dukkyung, one of those known euphemistically in East Asia as ‘military comfort women’ during World War II. Kang came to light during the 1990s, when she testified about her past as a sexual slave. The painting is entitled ‘Lost Virginity’ (1995). Figure 4 is a still image taken from Byun Youngjoo’s second documentary film on the ‘Comfort Women’, ‘Habitual Sadness’(1996), which features Kang Dukkyung giving testimony about her kidnapping and enslavement as well as coping with life after the war. Figure 5 is a piece of autobiographical writing and a drawing by Kim Yunsim, another surviving ‘comfort woman’ who appeared in Byun’s third documentary on the women, ‘My Own Breathing’ (2000). Figure 6 is a still image from this film and represents a dialogue between two other surviving ‘comfort women’, Lee Yongsu and Sim Dalyeun, in which they talk about the misery and horror of the ‘comfort

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<sup>1</sup> Paul de Man, “Literary History and Literary Modernity,” *Daedalus* 99, *Journal of The American Academy of Art and Sciences*, Boston, No. 2, Spring, 1970:384-404. see p.389

<sup>2</sup> *민중 Minjoong* translates as mass or the people of the multitude, the term widely used to give a collective identity to the insurgent people in South Korea, in the 1980s and 1990s. This term refers to the people who produce the values for the society and are subsequently endowed with sovereign rights. During the period of 1980s and 1990s, they became radicalized and launched the struggle against the political and economic authority that governs, exploit and manipulates them. In my thesis, I extend the implications of this term to the wider context of postcolonial grass-roots in the world who have been suppressed, subjugated and whose sovereign right and potential have underestimated by the powers that rule them.



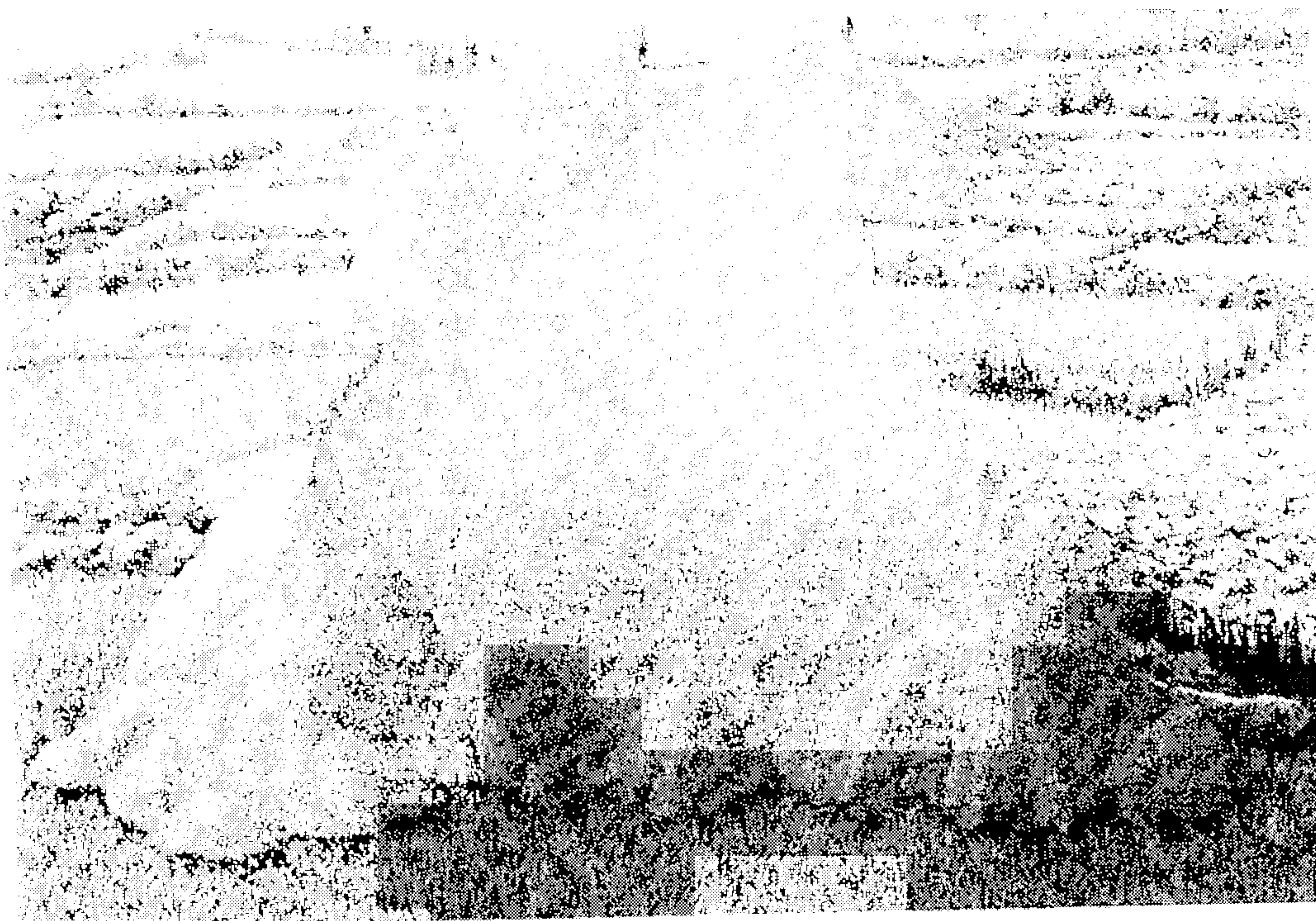


Figure 1. Lim Oksang, *Earth 4*, 1980. Oil on Canvas



Figure 2. Oh Yoon, *Abi*, 1983, Woodcut Print. c. Oh Yoon Foundation, Seoul.  
Woodcut Print



Figure 3. Kang Dukkyung, Lost Virginity. 1995. Water Color



Figure 4. Kang Dukkung, 1996. Still From film, Byun Youngjoo, Habitual Sadness, 1996



Figure 5. Kim Yung-sim and Her Daughter Yesuk. Still From film, Byun Youngjoo, My Own Breathing, 2000. Provided by Kim Yung-sim



Figure 6. The dialogue between Lee Yongsu and Sim Dal-yeun. Still From film, Byun Youngjoo, My Own Breathing, 2000

houses.’<sup>3</sup> These are the images which have haunted me for over seven years, including the formative period of my PhD project.

These images are the epitome of the emergent culture in South Korea in the 1980s and early 1990s. They witness and trans-substantiate the ‘transference’ and ‘haunting’ that appear to be the crucial modes of experience of the grassroots of the time. The antagonistic intellectuals, the discontented public, artists, and students converged in the historical struggle against power, empowered through incorporating the return of repressed memory and imagination of a new future.<sup>4</sup> To investigate the various practices of the emergent visual culture instigated by the people’s will to incorporate the spectral forces of the repressed memory, I decided to call my project as ‘The Visual Culture of Haunting.’ Clearly, my interest in the spectrality of the pressing matters and the incorporation process that I observe in the emergent culture is nothing to do with an endorsement of mysticism. Rather it is largely to do with my revised materialist position in reading the emergent culture. The materiality from which the emergent culture pulls out its source is the deep psycho-historical arena of *Han* (which translates a long accumulated and deep seated sense of grievance and anxiety) of Koreans.

My study of “visual culture of haunting” has been developed by a number of different motivations and aspirations. Firstly, as for the motivations, the reading of this psycho-historical materiality that has determined the *minjoong* resistance and emergence in combination with the dominant political and economic reality has been largely neglected by Korean radical intellectuals in the 1980s and 1990s. In this, the reading of these haunting images as they deserve is also lost. This study is also inspired by ongoing heterogeneous theoretical works of ‘haunting’ by other

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Comfort House’ was the name given to the facilities in Japanese military camps, scattered around China, Korea, and South East Asia, where kidnapped women were forced into sexual slavery and abused by Japanese soldiers.

<sup>4</sup> This period may be comparable with the period of between 1964 and 1978 in Germany and Italy where the question of the fascism and times of the post -1945 has been burgeoning in relation to the surging popular need of new future.

contemporary philosophers and visual culture theorists in the West. I encountered a useful term, 'Hauntology', which Derrida used in *Specters of Marx-the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*: 'Hauntology' is a neologism of Derrida which is a pun of 'ontology' in French, which is pronounced in the same way. It refers to the paradoxical state of spectre, which is neither being nor non-being. I also found useful theoretical insights in Lacan's psychoanalysis, the literature of Walter Benjamin, the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, and the work of Cathy Caruth which helped me to construct the theoretical argument of my study. While I was developing this study, I happened to hear lectures on 'spectres' and 'haunting', and read the works of visual culture theorists on such themes in London. These also inspired me and helped me to think the possibility of locating my work in the significant upcoming field of new theorisation in Visual Culture Studies. For instance, Michael Newman spoke about the specters as "traces of *difference*", reading through the phenomenology of Heidegger, Derrida and Levinas in a lecture called 'Visual Hauntology' which he delivered on 16, March, 1999 in Goldsmiths College(University of London). The philosophical overview of the discourse of 'spectrality' was useful but his lecture did not touch upon the issue of how visual practices can constitute a visual hauntology, which I was looking to hear. Irit Rogoff's article on the Canadian artist Vera Frenkel, "Body Missing: Uncanny Histories and Cultural Hauntings"<sup>5</sup> addresses the issue of cultural haunting in the context of "belonging" and "exclusion", "unbelonging". Nicholas Mirzoeff's lecture, "Ghetto Moderns, or, The Jewish Ghost"<sup>6</sup> in 2003 was a combination of autobiographical and critical narratives on the haunting images he encountered and recollected during his journey-whether actual or imaginary. He took the cultural objects he encountered as sources of philosophical contemplation of his experience and time that he developed into a critique of Enlightenment.

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<sup>5</sup> Irit Rogoff, "Body Missing: Uncanny Histories and Cultural Hauntings", in Sigrid Schade ed., *Kunst Als Beute*, Vienna, 2002

<sup>6</sup> The lecture is delivered in the Goldsmiths College, on 23 May 2003.

However, to take account of the ‘visual culture of haunting’ I have encountered, I had to develop my own model rather than adopting one of the existing theoretical models since the concerns and aspirations behind each theorisation were quite different. My project has taken a mission to account for how the contemporary artists from a geographically specific area take on the experience of haunting in a specific postcolonial space and time, in an overwhelming condition of social amnesia and political repression. I question how the visualising acts of the artists are involved in the creation of a realm of a new “subjective individuation” and “collective subjectivity” instigated by what haunts them.<sup>7</sup> Also I investigate how such visualising practices involve the production of new knowledge and new reality and emerge as a discursive and non-discursive space of new “antagonist political public sphere (Chantal Mouffe)”<sup>8</sup>, invalidating the dichotomy between the private and public, individual and collective, being and non-being.

To explain this future, the emergent culture in the 1980s and early 1990s in South Korea was born in the time and space wherein knowledge, subjectivity and vision are constituted through the combined interplay of social forgetting and selective remembering. Social forgetting has been an important part of the particular social reasoning process of Korean modernity that promoted the exclusion of its dissident voices, and which, as a result, plunged the mass population into a state of unease and alienation. It has created an uneasy subtext of Korean *minjoong* where their repressed matter and dreams are latent and turned into a resistant core. Here, the culture has come an entangled and explosive space where the participants actively deal with and communicate the return of their uncanny histories, transcendental imaginations in order to empower themselves in the newly unfolding space of resistance and liberation. The works of *minjoong* artists witness the consciousness and dreams of the participants.

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<sup>7</sup>Felix Guattari, Vivian Constantinopoulos tr., *On Machines: Complexity: rchitecture/Art/Philosophy*, London:Academy Editions, 1995

<sup>8</sup> Chantal Mouffe, “For An Agonistic Public Sphere”, in Okwui Enwezor et al. ed., *Democracy Unrealized. Documental 11-Platform 1*, 2002.

In other words, the emergent visual culture appears to be the witness of the 'sovereign sensibility' or 'sovereign forces' of the hitherto suppressed people in Korea. The culture is the reactivation of the suppressed sovereignty brought out by the artists, the subaltern,<sup>9</sup> and the viewers. Georges Bataille defined 'sovereign sensibility' as follows:

sovereign sensibility is placed above reason, which it recognized within the limit of goal-oriented activity, but which it transcends and subordinates. It is natural that it should at first appear in the form of sentimentality; in a sense, its first movement is the vain revolt of a sensibility that remains within the limits of reason.<sup>10</sup>

The notion of the 'sovereignty' is an under-discussed theme in postcolonial study. However, it can be discussed in parallel with the concepts of democracy, autonomy, self-determination, self-government which have been a widely treated theme in social theory as opposed to those of servitude, of subjugation, and of totalitarianism. The *minjoong* revolted and arose on a massive scale in Korea in the 1980s and 1990s against its tyrannical social authority with manifestation of their will for change and immense forces of transformation. The term, *minjoong*, is revived in the 1980s by the need of Korean people who organised the movement. The *Min* means the people whilst *Joong* means the multitude, therefore *minjoong* means 'people of multitude'. *Minjoong* was not used before the 1980s in such a politically inflated way. *Minjoong* can literally be translated as the governed mass. But the

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<sup>9</sup> 'The subaltern' is differentiated, exploited, suppressed, marginalized, silenced, subordinated subjects in the history's domination. Earlier A. Gramsci has used the term 'subaltern' interchangeably with 'subordinate' and 'instrumental' in his class analysis. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has been the foremost figure in developing the theme of the subaltern in postcolonial studies, dealing with the issues of Third World women, difference, and the relationship between the subaltern and intellectual in conversant with 'the subaltern studies' groups formed in India in the 1980s. Korean *minjoong* had been subalternised by the political, economic, and cultural authority which governed them, in which their lived experiences and sovereign visions had little impact on the dominant reality of the society. The desire and will of the subaltern subject is split from their utterance. Their subjectivity appears to be foreclosed and entrenched in the sensibility of *Han* (long-standing grievance and anxiety).

<sup>10</sup> Georges Bataille, "Concerning the Accounts Given by the Residents of Hiroshima", from Cathy Caruth ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, John Hopkins University Press, 1995, pp. 230-231.

way the word was used in the turbulent space of the 1980s emphasised their power of change; in this milieu, *Joong* of *Minjoong* was understood by those who activated the term, in a confusion with the homonym, *joong* which means the center; this translates the people as ‘the center’ so as to having the self-governing power. This resurrection of the grassroots manifested the ‘sovereign’ power of those who have been suppressed and subjugated throughout the history while they were capable of revolting against the oppressors in order to impose their own humanity. A recent theoretical contribution to the concept of the “sovereign” in postcolonial political and cultural discourse has been made by Antonio Negri and Michel Hardt. On discussing the heterogeneous forces of modernity, they explain the forces of ‘the sovereign’ as “the immanent forces of desire and association, the love of community” which are in conflict with “the strong hand of an overarching authority that imposed and enforces an order on the social field” at the center of modernity.<sup>11</sup> According to Negri and Hardt, it refers to the spontaneous self-organising power and autonomous expression of the creativity of the multitude, which modern politics and metaphysics have prevented from being to be realised by imposing order.<sup>12</sup> The ‘sovereign’ is the governing principle of the Korean *minjoong*, who manifested their power through the anti-hegemonic empowerment and through the alteration of their suppressed subjectivity to positive possibility. The *minjoong* demanded ‘democracy’ and engaged in the political and cultural revolts by breaking themselves from their bondage to the governing reasoning system and its power exercise that the modern elite imposed on them.

This subversive cultural milieu is, on the one hand, marked by the emergence of a group of dissident artists who called themselves ‘*Minjoong*’ or ‘Realist’ artists. The term, ‘*Minjoong* art’, epitomizes the political orientation of these artists, which led to their association with the life of suppressed people in the society who became

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<sup>11</sup> See Antonio Negri and Michel Hardt, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 2000, p. 69

<sup>12</sup> Negri and Hardt continue to say, for instance, in the history of modern politics, “‘the contract’ was the fundamental passage that transfers every autonomous power of the multitude to a sovereign power that stands above and rules it”. Ibid., p. 84



gradually opposed to State power. The term 'Realist art' addressed not only their particular aesthetic orientation to a figurative style but also more importantly their attitudes, whereby they tried to bring out the representation of the external and internal reality of *minjoong* in their art criticising the previous elitist modernist aestheticism which allegedly dismissed it: the Korean elitist modernism which endorsed an abstractionist modernism as their aesthetic norm dismissed the representation of *minjoong* reality, endorsing the idea of 'art for art's sake' and art as a 'pure' form.

Lim Oksang and Oh Yoon are among those realist artists, who attempted to bring the *minjoong* reality into the realm of representation. Lim and Oh's realism is in particular insightful in dealing with the complexity and the dynamics of memories and imaginations of the 'repressed' people in Korean society. Korea realists in the 1980s whose works constituted a mainstream realism in the 1980s endorsed the idea of "objective" casting of the "objective" reality: heavily centered on the idea of the representation of 'external' reality. In contrast to that, Lim and Oh's realism appear to have focused on the 'transference' of internal world of the *minjoong* which is long secluded and turned into a deeply complicated dimension to explore: the 'transference' in psychoanalysis means the reactivation of the repressed desire, and the multiple imaginations of the previously suppressed subjects.<sup>13</sup> Lim and Oh in this way appeared to have opened up a very different world of realism inspired by a different notion of the 'real' which is often 'symptomatic' and 'fragmented'. Lim and Oh's representation of the *minjoong* real is based on their deep compassion to the *minjoong* and their sense of belonging to the collective history of disasters imposed on the *minjoong*. Lim and Oh revisited the sites of memory and trauma of themselves and other *minjoong*, and sought to reactivate the concealed

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<sup>13</sup> The dominant realism of the 1980s in Korea subscribed to premises of the rationalist philosophy of idealism. The critics who promoted this realism often discredited other type of realism that emerged in the rich cultural and political environment of the 1980s and 1990s. For example, some critics accused the realism of Oh and Lim of being ambiguous: a lack of 'clarity' that tainted its revolutionary credentials. Many different styles and aspiration of the realism that blossomed in the 1980s and early 1990s were marginalized and underrepresented in this environment.

elements in the realm of representation. Their personal memory and trauma are more than often linked to that of others, which can be construed as the collective trauma of the disaster of the *minjoong*. Without providing any easy, ready-made answer to what is the ‘truth’ and the future of *minjoong*, Lim and Oh’s works make the viewers engage in the dialogue of the anxiety—which was very much suppressed and the public practice of it forbidden at that time—by invoking associations with the viewer’s own sense of loss and repressed dreams. Their works operate at the level of the latent consciousness and thoughts of the subalternised which were never-stimulated during the years of repression. Their pictures consistently invoke uncanny images of the long lost that surreptitiously appear beyond what the iconographic surfaces of these images describe. This instigates an opening of the foreclosed mind of the viewers, invokes the impossible wish images to be conspired behind the pictorial screen.

Their works of ‘transference’ challenged the dominant norm of ‘representation’ of that time which perpetuated apathy and amnesia. The predominant Korean elitist modern art promoted the idea of ‘sublimation’ of reality while endorsing ‘purity’ and ‘abstraction’ as the aesthetic norm and regarded any form of figurative expression or critical commentary on society by artists as alien to their vocation. In contrast to that, the realist artists regarded these claims of elitist modernist artists as not only merely conformist to the dominant political norm of ‘silence’ but also disguising it with their rhetorical aestheticism and mimicry of an ‘international’ modern style. They detested the aestheticism of the abstract modernists which they saw as being dismissive of the suffering of the society and as endorsing a logic devoid of any self-reflective, empirical philosophy of art.

On the other hand, the emergent culture was marked by the impressive testimonial speech of the women who began to break their long silence in the beginning of the 1990s, following the turbulent democratisation movement of the 1980s.<sup>14</sup> The so-

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<sup>14</sup> It was only during the 1990s that the surviving ‘Comfort Women’ found the space and occasions

called 'comfort women' were beguiled into sexual slavery by the Japanese military during World War II but were then forced to remain silent for almost 45 years due to the particular post-war geo-political and patriarchal environment in East Asia. An estimated ranges between 80,000 and 200,000 Asian women (80 percent of whom were Korean) were drafted during the war and forced into sexual slavery in military-run 'Comfort Houses'. Kim Haksun was the first Korean 'Comfort Women' to publicly testify, at the age of 67, about the horrors of wartime sexual slavery in 1991. By 1993 more than 70 women had provided their testimonies, including Kang Dukkyung, and other women.

The voices and activities of these women, which have been unseen and repressed for the unbelievably long period of time since the war, are the result of their active incorporation of the haunting imperatives of the past and future. The victims' desire for speech, redemption and reparation had been haunting them throughout their life in the shadow of muteness. By incorporating these ghosts of the past, they reveal their deep seated wounds and their antagonism towards the history that enforced their silence. These voices and activities have shocked both Korean and Japanese society and made many to be ashamed of such a lapse of history. Their testimonies are also prompted by their sovereign aspiration for the future of the community. This is apparent in particular when these women pronounced the need to tell their stories to the younger generations.(Kim Haksun and Kim Yunsim) Their speech for 'the other' is evidence of the ethical capacity of these victim women stemming from their 'sovereign sensibility' towards a community despite their devastating personal experiences which could have impoverished it. This indicates the fact that their will to speech is not simply about the reparation for their individual remorse

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for their speech. The emergence of these women's voices and artists marked a watershed moment in the course of the democratization movement in South Korea developed through the 1980s and 1990s. It must be said that in the 1980s, the culture of dominant vanguard political movement was still heavily entrenched in patriarchal ideas. Also the issue of women as the oppressed gender was regarded to have secondary importance in comparison to the issues of workers' liberation and national liberation. While the discourses of class politics and national liberation dominated and minoritised other voices, the conditions were not ripe for the voices of the women to emerge. As the voices of these women came out, it challenged the dominant politics of movement in the 1980s, registering the issue of gender as a central question of oppressive history of Korean modernity.

in which they are victims, but it is also a demand of reparation as an expression of duty towards other members of society and their future community in which they are a sovereign agent of action.

The deeply pressing spectral matters of history to which these women are the prime witness were also materialised through paintings made by Kang Dukkyung and Kim Sunduk, two of the surviving 'comfort women'. Those paintings were means of non-verbal expression, which complemented their verbal testimony. They powerfully conveyed the complicated states of the victims' minds beyond what language can convey. These paintings have become valuable resources that reveal the women's innermost world of often inaccessible memories and feelings such as grievance, anger and vengeance, and their reminiscences and wishes. They are also indeed products of a compassionate engagement of a young artist, Lee Kyongsin with the surviving 'comfort women'. Endowed with the spirit of the *minjoong* art of 1980s, she set up an art therapy workshop with these subaltern women in 1993. The paintings are the products of this workshop which established a space of inter-subject opening of foreclosure and the shared aspiration for the future among the participants which enabled and propelled the transference process of these women.

The ghosts of the past of these women, the struggle with present, and aspiration for the future is incorporated through the film-making process with Byun Youngjoo; 'Murmuring' (1995), 'Habitual Sadness' (1997) and 'My Own Breathing' (2000) are the three documentary films produced over the period of 10 years of engagement between the women and the director, Byun Youngjoo. She is one of many feminist artists and filmmakers who have engaged in conjuring the lives of these historically silenced women. With a desire to understand the women's extraordinary lives, Byun Youngjoo worked closely with them, that the films capture the voices and performances of the women in everyday context under and beyond the designation. They bring out an impressive scene of 'transference' of their repressed voices and will power. Her film-making process evolved through

the gradual opening of these women's deeply foreclosed and traumatised minds. As Byun wrote in her production notes, which were published shortly after the release of each film, her films endeavour to talk to and listen to the women, and enact their will to speech, in contrast to the practice of conventional documentary making, which is to capture the 'objective' truth of its subject in a detached position.<sup>15</sup> Questioning the very plausibility of capturing of 'objective' truth in such a way, Byun rather contemplated the meaning of the 'encounter' between herself and these women or the meaning of her 'engagement' with them. Rather than presupposing her own position as 'privileged' in order to represent the 'truth' on behalf of the subaltern women, she made her film-making as a trial to bridge the gap between generations held apart by the absence of truth and written history, and also by the lack of time (as many of the aging surviving women were dying).

These paintings and films are products of the relationship between the historical others in which a magical formation of desire to 'the other' and 'truth', and the haunting historical imperatives for the *rappochment*, have brought the two generations of women together. The attitude of these artists with the subaltern women was in many senses different from that of other artists engaged in the 'representation' of the repressed *minjoong* during the 1980s. Unlike those who were following presumptuous, rationalist and elitist assumption on themselves and the subaltern, as Byun Youngjoo mentioned in her production notes, she learnt to "unlearn" her assumptions on these women and the representation process. For example, she was refused by these women when she first approached then she learnt that she should establish grounds for trust and mutual communication between her and the 'women' first before she could film them.<sup>16</sup> This was the only possible way of enabling the women to speak through camera because of the specific conditions under which the women's mode of subjectivity was formed.

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<sup>15</sup> The Docufactory Vista/Boim-How The Camera Waits-Making of Murmuring, 1998, S Korea. p37.

<sup>16</sup> The Docufactory Vista/Boim *ibid.*, p. 38

That is, they were deeply affected by fear, a mistrust of others. They had little belief in their speech and the affect of 'the truth'. The women were deeply traumatised and devastated by, both the wartime atrocities and their post-war abandonment by Korean society as well as by their own families.

The desire or need for the *rapprochement* between the women victims and the artists was mutual. In other words, the mutual need of 'the other' haunted both the women and artists in equal measure, which as a result opened up the space of 'transference' that these paintings, films, testimonies materialise. The desire of the artists in seeking for lost truth in history needed to meet the women who are the prime witnesses of the history. The women accepted the approaches of these artists, imagining the possibility of redemption through them. This interaction is construed as mutually empowering forces for them to fulfil their respective desire in the emerging new cultural and political milieu.

How was the visual culture of haunting received, participated and re-created by the observers and participants of the movement in the 1980s and 1990s? This equates with the question of how transference, speech act and visualisation acts of participants of the *minjoong* movement became a 'culture'. The culture is to be created by affecting both the observers and participants and changing their attitude to the society and history and forming a new 'community' of discourse, shared feeling and actions. The conventional studies of 'representation' often neglect to ask this question of 'e/affect' in relation to the formation of new subjectivity and community. However, the study of 'culture' can not be possible without taking into consideration of these affects and formation of alternative subjectivity and community.

The aspirations of the emergent *minjoong*, artists and intellectuals come together in this new space of experiences. For instance, the effect of 'visual culture of haunting' in which the ghosts of Korean modernity, whether they are the

suppressed memory or utterance of the subaltern subjects, or “the angel of history” that refuses to be blown away by the “storm of progress”, or the compelling encounter with ‘the other’ that is artificially segregated through history, are drawn upon the impressive scene of “arrest”. Benjamin described the “arrest” in the context of the dialectic interplay between history and its ghosts, as “where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystallizes into a monad.”<sup>17</sup> “The arrest” is a shock effect that characterises the disruption of the shock defence system in tamed individual body on which the conventional modes of thinking and seeing are sustained. This stoppage causes a sensation at the threshold of a tamed vision and normalized receptive organ of the suppressed subjects, then foregrounds the basis for a new knowledge and new vision. At this moment, an unusual encounter with the unforeseen ghosts can also be accelerated, which leads the subject to encounter previously dissociated self and other histories. The multiple and ‘altering’ arrests can thereafter become critical forces on the dominant norm of the society.

Indeed, the “arrest” took place in both the conservative elitist audiences (the observers) and the dissident *minjoong* audiences (participants) in the emergent space of the 1980s and 1990s. For instance, the conservative art audiences and critics who subscribe to the modernist aestheticism, were repulsed by what the realist works convey. According to them, this work engages itself with deeply traumatic matters and abject realities in such “unrefined”, “rough” and “direct” manners instead of pursuing pure aesthetic value and “higher” values of life. They refused to recognise them as “art” but regarded them as “propaganda” or a “political” statement. But many *minjoong* audiences identified themselves with these works that reveal the previously unseen reality of themselves. These works allow them to see themselves in the pictures. However, not every *minjoong* responded in a positive, welcoming way without hesitation and fear. Some

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<sup>17</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Thesis On the Philosophy of History” in *Illuminations*, Pimlico, 1999. p 254

responded with denial, recognising that such representations are taboo. The experience of 'arrest' is quickly denied by the function of defensive consciousness and fails to be crystalised into the "monad".

While the visual culture of haunting brought out multiple instances of "arrest" throughout the *minjoong* society, it creates a communicative community of the *minjoong*, *minjoong* intellectuals and *minjoong* artists by enabling them to reflect their personalised remorse and sentiment of resistance with each others. Where the Korean modernity has suffocated the individual *minjoong* with the omnipotent logic of national economic growth, integrity and segregated them into atomised production and living cell, the artists and their viewers converged in the 1980s and 1990s have brought out the opening of traumatic foreclosure, dialogue, compassion, and alliance. In this community, the intellectuals, artists and subalterns equally identify themselves with one another rather than have anyone proclaim a privilege in the production of knowledge and a future community. The compelling imperative that binds them together is the sovereign sensibility of *한 Han* which resides in the personal and collective history of Korean *minjoong*. *Han* refers to the unique sentiment of Korean people who have endured and witnessed the suffering and injustice against themselves in the history. The community of *Han* commemorates the unspoken matters, sufferings and the inexorable experience of haunting of repressed people.<sup>18</sup> That is to say, Oh and Lim's works generate the ghosts of *han*, which haunt the viewers and cause a cessation in their perceptual consistency, which was previously in line with the "goal-oriented activity" of the economy centered social imperative, that perpetuate the forgetting, apathy, and

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<sup>18</sup> George Ogle, the author of *South Korea: Dissent Within The Economic Miracle*, Zed Books, London, 1990, defines *Han* as follows. "There is a word in Korea which has a profound meaning. The word is *Han*. This expresses the accumulated suffering and sorrow in the *Minjok*(Korean people) or the individual. It is a moaning of human spirit of those who strive for the liberation from the repression." Nancy Abelmann wrote that *Han* is "an anger and grievance" in *Echoes of Past, Epics of Dissent: A South Korean Social Movement*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. John Lie likened *Han* to the French word, *ressentiment*, in *Han Unbound: The Political Economy of South Korea*, Stanford University Press, 1998. see, foot note 2 in Goo Hagen, *The Korean Workers: The Culture And Politics of Class Formation* published by Cornell University Press, 2001 p. 201



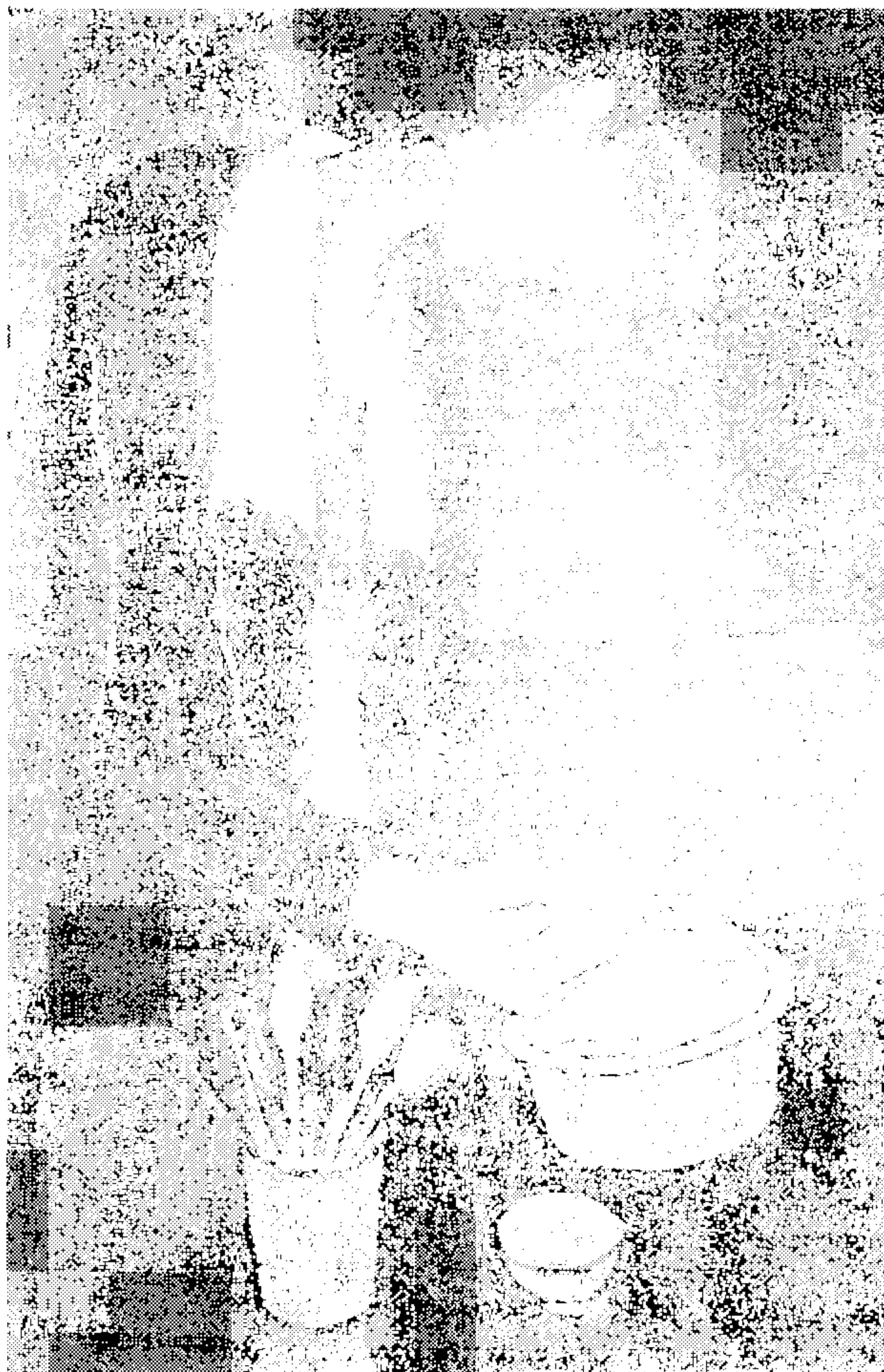


Figure 7. Hong Sungdam, *Ramyun Meal*, 1979. Oil on Wood

conformity. Then this sensation draws the viewers into the realm of ‘the forgotten familiar’, and the remembrance in the ‘plane of the consistency’<sup>19</sup> of *Han*.

What the *minjoong* and the *minjoong* artists reveal through their works is the state of anxiety in their mind, which can be translated as a by-product of the negativity of *han*, but one observes that this was transformed into a feeling of joy and liberation in the emerging culture. It became possible by creating “a passage and rapid movement of ‘communicating vessels’”.<sup>20</sup> The specific structure of ‘rationality’ that had hitherto limited the sovereign ‘expression’ of the *minjoong* was taken over by the proliferation of this excitable transference and communication among the *minjoong*. A festive subversion of the *minjoong* and the *minjoong* artist in the mode of transference proliferated into the streets, galleries, artists’ studios, cafes, bars, open square, universities, and parks. It was the time that the public display of any transgressive expression meant prosecution by the state authorities, which was followed by the torture, and imprisonment of the subjects engaged in such actions, and the confiscation of those works.<sup>21</sup> But the subversive joy, or what psychoanalysts call *juissance*<sup>22</sup>, continued to be entertained by these

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<sup>19</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari use the concepts of “immanence” and “the plane of consistency” to explain ‘the body without organ’ which defines as “the field of immanence of desire, the plane of consistency specific to desire (with desire defined as a process of production without reference to any exterior agency, whether it be a lack that hollows it out or a pleasure that fills it.” P 154 ; they also say that ‘plane’ is “always inferred”. “It can only be inferred from the forms it develops and the subjects it forms, since it is for these forms and these subjects”. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus-Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minnesota, 1987, P 266. Borrowing their terms, it can be said that the visual culture of haunting constitute a plane of *Han* traced in the visual forms and the subject who has involved in constructing the form.

<sup>20</sup> Bataille, *ibid.*, p. 231 Bataille explains this concept in the contexts of Buddhist and Christian meditation. However, this requires too much of elaboration of religious concepts. I must note my adaptation of this term is more closely related to the notion of ‘the emphatic vessel’ which is widely used in the context of art psychotherapy. Kim Jinsuk, “What Is Art Therapy”, *ArtWorld*, October, Seoul, 1995

<sup>21</sup> For example, Lim Oksang’s work *Earth 4*, in figure 1 was confiscated in the exhibition in 1981. Another realist artist Hong Sungdam is recorded as one of many imprisoned artists in S. Korea during the 1980s. Amnesty International has conducted an international campaign to urge the Korean government to release the artist in the 1980s. see Figure. 7. Hong Sungdam, *Ramyun Meal*, 1979

<sup>22</sup> “This is a French term (once used in a related but obsolete sense in English) employed in psychoanalytic theory by Jacques Lacan and poststructuralist Roland Barthes and others to denote an extreme, unsettling experience of enjoyment, delight, or jubilation. In French, the term, from

*minjoong* returned from the shadows into the scene of history despite the continuous threat of punishment by the political authority.

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In South Korea, the 1980s and early 1990s marked a popular movement of ‘anti-dictatorship and democratisation’, which was named as 민족 민중 운동 *Minjok Minjoong Undong*. The word *Minjok* translates Korean people as an ethnic group, who are understood to share the same language, culture, history, but whose definition is not delimited to the narrowly defined notion of the citizen within a national territory.<sup>23</sup> As I said earlier, the word *Minjoong* translates as ‘grass roots’. *Undong* translates as ‘movement’. This movement emerged as oppositional or an alternative to the political authority which drove the economic growth-centered modernization process. A massive number of people who had previously been exploited, repressed and subalternised participated in this movement and demanded the change and reform, by expressing their discomfort about the celebratory nationalist rhetoric of the ‘economic miracle’ and ‘progress’, combined with the authoritarian politics.

In the course of the *minjoong* movement, there was a convergence of people of diverse social backgrounds such as students, industrial workers, peasants, teachers, intellectuals as well as a wide range of white collar workers. Historically, it is said that in the 1980s the movement developed on a larger scale than ever before as it succeeded the student-led anti-dictatorship, the anti-US imperialism movement and workers’ struggles since the 1970s. It is also well known that the 1980s marked a further growth in industrial strike and the labour movement.

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*jouir*, has the sense of ownership as in “enjoying a right”, of playfulness, and is associated with sexual orgasm....” Peter Brooker, *A Concise Glossary of Cultural Theory*, Arnold, London/Sydney/Auckland, 1999. P. 124

<sup>23</sup> *Minjok* is used by the dissident people to distinguish their common identity from the political authority’s designation of people as organic components of their governing institutes and territory.

The *Minjoong* in the 1980s conveyed their antagonist voices, in an unprecedented radical way, on the deprivation and exploitation of workers by industrialists. The voices and rights of the industrialists were always prioritized and protected by the regime over those of the workers ever since the regime set up the national development plan in the 1960s. As the anti-democratic policies and violence of the tyrannical power intensified and reached their highest extent, the *minjoong* had no choice but to release their antagonism accumulated for decades. They were enraged by the perpetual discrepancy between the reality and the ideology of a better future operated by the development regime. In this milieu, the Kwangju uprising at the beginning of the 1980s became a watershed event in its development by transforming the movement which had been led by minor radical groups of students, workers, and civil dissidents into a popular resistance. At Kwangju, there was a massive civil demonstration against the national martial law which the regime used to arrest and sentence to death many adversarial figures. This instigated an armed struggle of the Kwangju citizens against the regime's repression. This uprising was brutally crushed by the regime, which sent paratroopers to the city to shoot at civilians in May 1980. This unspeakable revelation of the brutality of modern power radicalized the democracy-seeking population further and triggered off a popular proliferation of antagonism against the repressive politics of the regime. Although the severe repression of speech and participation of *minjoong* in this movement continues, the movement intensified, and developed further with the involvement of critical intellectuals after Kwangju. As the spirit of 'reform' spread to diverse sectors of society, the participants in *Minjoong* movement became increasingly diverse. Migrants, *Chulgeymin* (the urban poor who made illegal dwellings in the city and who were then threatened by government's crackdown on their homes), and the pro-reform middle class joined in the anti-government movement and the radicalized forces finally culminated in massive "June 29" civil demonstration of 1987 (the 6.29 uprising). The civil demonstrators questioned the legitimacy of the anti-democratic government and demanded constitutional change for a directly elected president. But the uprising of

1987 ended bitterly when a new presidential candidate from the party of the military regime, Rho Taewoo, intervened. He succeeded in calming the antagonized public into a negotiation, or rather a pseudo-resolution. This struggle of the people against the anti-democratic military regime continued until 1992 when the first civil president, Kim Youngsam, was elected and formally ended the rule of military power.<sup>24</sup>

The *minjoong* movement also brought out a fresh criticism of the roles of foreign economic and military powers in Korea. *Minjoong* recognized that these are important factors that constitute the repressive and anti-democratic features of Korean modern society; it is a well known fact that US supported the military regime's crackdown of *minjoong* in Kwangju in 1980 by granting military aid. The demand for 'unification' of the two Koreas was another significant voice of the *minjoong* movement and it revealed a public aspiration for progress that addressed unresolved conflicts. It was recognised that the division of Korea into two was against the *minjoong*'s wishes.

The growth of critical intellectuals in South Korea was inevitable in the authoritarian modern society, that is to say, the suffocating power structure and the anxious public sphere was a hotbed for the critical intellectuals. They not only participated in the movement but also engaged in directing the movement with their ideology. In detail, the intellectuals elaborated the political philosophy of "change" and "revolution" that is captured by the word "*Jinbo*(which roughly translates as progress)" based on the reinterpretation of history. They historicised and authenticated the *minjoong* voices, through their intellectual work, which also provides a vision to justify, sustain and develop this popular insurgence into a more radical, constructive end. For example, new critical historians attempted an active reverse reading of Korean modern history in which the *minjoong* are envisioned as

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<sup>24</sup> Korean History Research academy ed., *Korean History Lecture*, Hanul Press, Seoul, 1989, pp.389-399

a central force in history. Those works focus on writing “history from below” and they envision the history as evolving through centrifugal, sub-stemmic forces of the *minjoong*. This new historiography clearly aspired to challenge the dominant historiography that was serving the needs of the authorities. For example, the book, *Korean History Lecture* by the Korean History Research Academy is one of the outcomes of such new historical research groups born in the spirit of this new historiography. According to the introduction, the book aims to put the people’s struggle for self-government at the center of historical progress, and envisions the struggle of *minjoong* as creating the will for human emancipation and the consolidation of their sovereign power.

With this line of intention, this new historiographical work restores the repressed narratives in history that deeply matter to the *minjoong*’s sense of progress in history and sovereignty. It is a characteristic phenomenon at the transition in history that the intellectual involves the resurrection of the repressed and positivization of memory of the repressed. New historiographical work provides a “historical” perspective of the *minjoong* struggle which has been formed through criticism of the unjust repression of power. It solicits the histories and events related to the missing, imprisoned, and detained people: it reveals the horrific consequences of the violence of the regime against individuals, the truth of which was swept under the carpet by naming them a “mystery” or “accident”. These experiences were previously impossible to record or explore under censorship. Also, by transgressing taboos in South Korean society, it provides a new perspective on the role of the US in Korea by considering it in the context of neo-colonial capitalism and its network of peace ideology that had expanded globally. It challenged the predominant public perception that was formed based on a belief that the US is the benevolent savior of Korea after the Korean War. The division of Korea is accounted for as an unwanted product of the power game, which is the cold-war rivalry between the US led West and the Communist East, recognizing the geopolitical factor that Korea is located at the center of the global tension where

things can progress against her will. The wishes for the “unification” of the Korean *minjoong* would be accomplished only through a change in this global power system and order that had been established around the Korean peninsula and little changed since the Korean War. It reverses another public perception of the war, the belief that South Korea and the US fought together as “moral” and “peace-loving” allies against the “violent” “immoral” invasion of the North and its Communist backers. It attributed the cause of the war to the Cold War rivalry politics, where the aggressive policy of US backed Lee Sungman regime in South Korea had intended to invade the North in the 1960s (the fact was not much publicized by the state historians).<sup>25</sup>

Along these works of critical intellectuals, it was observed that the individual *minjoong* have gradually engaged in a critical assessment and creative re-interpretation of their memory. *The minjoong* were transforming the memory of the negative (assigned by the agent of power) into a positive and creative possibility. Individual *minjoong*'s innate wish- images and vision along with that of the critical intellectuals was gradually developed into a collective arena during this movement. The development of the collective arena in turn affected the individual process.

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As a way to deepen the understanding of the *minjoong* movement, I propose an analytical model to discuss the cultural, psychic, political and historical factors of this movement. This also explains what are the determining factors of the visual culture of haunting I'm discussing here. This model takes account of the specific state of subjectivity of the grassroots under the social amnesia and repression and oppressed intellectual and artists under the same structure of power, as well as the methods of 'alteration' that these subjects brought out and in which they converged in, while they pursued the incorporation of the return<sup>26</sup> of the repressed.

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<sup>25</sup> Korean History Research Academy ed., *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> The 'return' is an experience of the repetition of the repressed elements in subject and history. 'The postcolonial' has been observing this compelling mode of experience of postcolonial subjects

With this model, I aim to critically and creatively intervene into the present Korean scholarship which marginalises and appropriates the remembering of the legacy of this political and cultural movement as being deeply affected by prevalent neo-conservative politics deployed after 1993. I also aim to construct this theoretical model, posing a critical relationship with a particular theoretical tendency of 'postcolonialism' that I argue often valorises the 'past' and 'return of the repressed' in 'postcolonial subject' through the narrow scope of 'traditionalist' and 'nativist' longings. (I will explain later how this dimension of 'the return' is misunderstood and misinterpreted within some tendencies of postcolonial discourse. This has prevented us from studying and envisioning such a 'return' in a fairly constructive manner.) Bearing these historical and theoretical predicaments in mind, I introduce the themes of the 'return', 'power', 'subjectivity', 'duration', 'specificity', 'the modus operandi: de-sublimatory alteration', and 'the virtual universality' in order to analytically read the complexity of this emerging culture. I will further develop this analysis later in this thesis by examining individual cases and dealing with the

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(of once colonized) who are attached to its own history. But 'the postcolonial' often failed to comprehend the rich implications of it in relation to the alternative politics and culture when it is transformed to act. But the previous postcolonial study often attributed its appearance and modality to the language of essentialism. Rereading Freud's work, 'Remembering, Repeating, and Working – Through', Lacan argues that "repetition[the return] is related to the remembering. The subject in himself, the recalling of his biography, all this goes only to a certain limit, which is known as real". Jacques Lacan, Alan Sheridan tr., *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, Penguin, 1977, P 49. Lacan continues to say, Freud's conception of repetition points out "the relation between thought and the real". Lacan, *Ibid.*, p 49 Lacan continues, in this experience, "the subject encounters limits which are "non-conviction, resistance, non-cure". Lacan, *Ibid.*, p 40 While Lacan states that the substance of the repetition is difficult to be "grasped, destroyed, or burnt, except in a symbolic way". Lacan, *ibid.*, p 50. He has also observed that the return, the repetition, the remembering shapes "the *resistance of the subject*, which becomes at that moment repetition in act." Lacan, *ibid.*, 51. This means that the return can be formulated into resistant forces against the reality but also can turn out to be empty events, when it is not constituted as an act "which has element of structure (Lacan later suggests that this structure is the network of signifier)". Lacan, *ibid.*, p50. I take accounts of the function of this 'return' which is unbound in nature at the core of the subversive culture in the 1980s and 1990s , that encompasses the linguistic, non-linguistic, visual practices within the limit of reason.



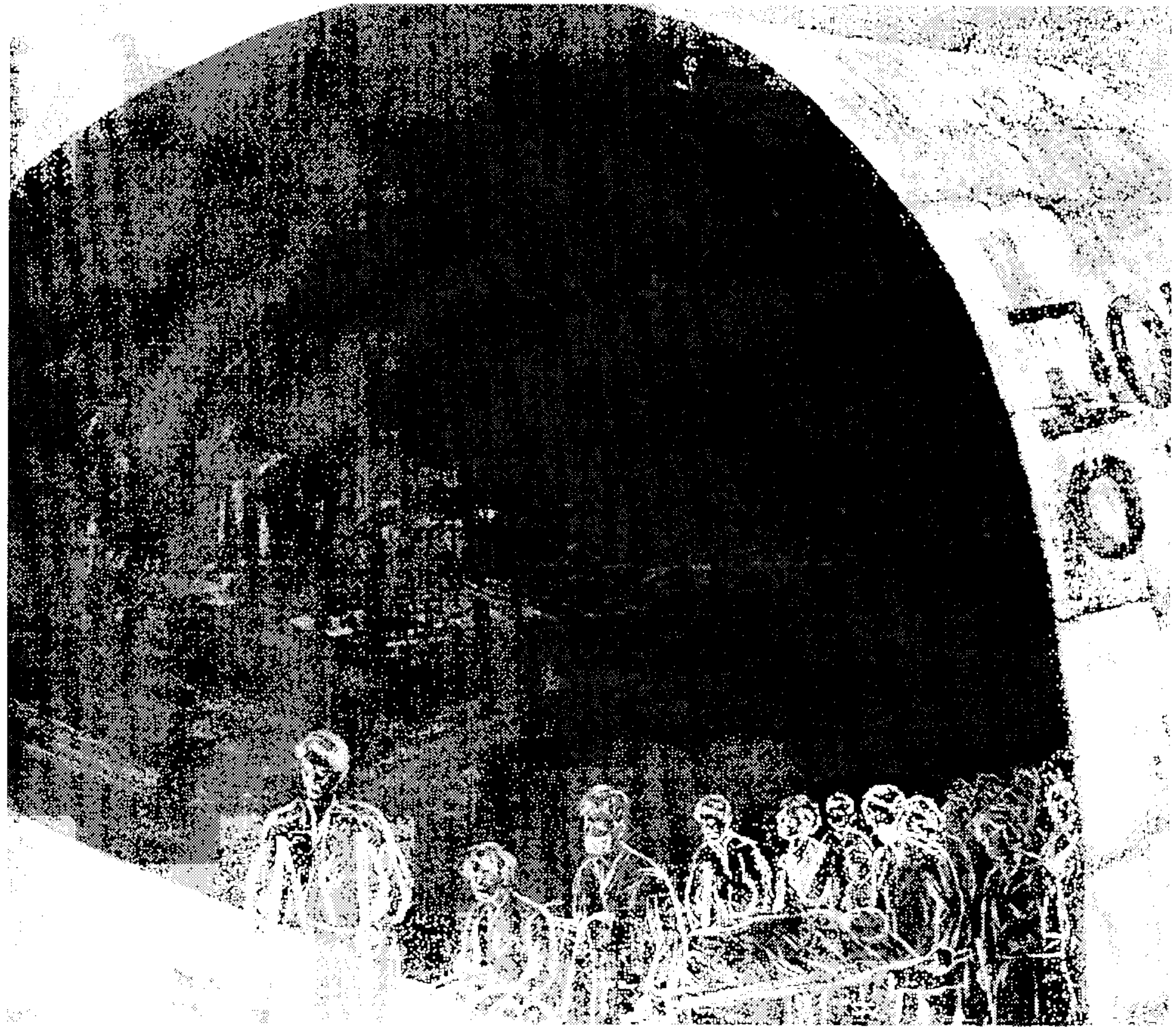


Figure 8. Lim Oksang, The Scenery of Our Times: The Dawn of Industrial Nation or A Developing Country, 1990. (Part), Acrylic on Canvas

rich empirical materials such as visual arts, spoken and written memoirs and interviews.

### **The Return**

The emergent culture witnesses the ‘return’ of a deep-rooted and repressed counter-modern spirit which has foregrounded the public insurgence in the 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>27</sup> The life of the *minjoong* was deeply agonised by the combined interplay of forgetting and repression driven by the developmentalist political authority, who had perpetuated the logic of economic growth, and individual sacrifice throughout the modernisation period.\*<sup>28</sup> The voices of these exploited, suppressed, silenced *minjoong* have created an anxious subtext in the society.

That is to say, this anxious subtext is the product of the forgetting society which derives from what I call “the repressive modernity” in South Korea. Korea’s modernity has been particularly celebrated and also envied by the international community because of its rapid achievement of industrial and technological development, which accompanied high GDP in comparison to other post-independent countries, and a steady economic growth rate sustained over the last few decades.<sup>29</sup> However, the cultural legacy of very repressive and regressive dimensions of Korean modernity that the developmentalist authoritarian regime and its technocrats endorsed, have seldom been discussed in depth by Korean intellectuals until the 1980s. The western scholars, on the other hand, working in

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<sup>27</sup> During the 1980s, the public began to demand democratic reform and the end of tyrannical rule, often 30 years of military dictatorship. The *minjoong* struggles of 1980s had brought the end of military dictatorship in 1992, when the first civil president Kim Youngsam was elected. The 1990s marked the gradual democratic transformation of different sectors of Korean society. This democratisation process has been sustained, propelled and settled by the victory of the People’s Democratic Party in the General Elections of 1997, when Kim Daejung, the veteran leader of the anti-dictatorship struggle and opposition Democratic party, was elected as a president.

<sup>28</sup> See Figure 8. Lim Oksang, ‘The Scenery of Our Time: The Dawn of Industrial Society or A Developing Country(part), 1990

<sup>29</sup> The fast developing post-independent nations in Asia after the Second World War are called the “Four Asian Tigers”. This refers to South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan. Hongkong is an exceptional case since it was under British colonial rule until 1999.

the field of Korean studies, were interested in taking account of South Korea's fast economic progress but often dismissed this dimension.

Going back the issue of the 'return', the 'return' of the repressed, according to Michel de Certeau, is anticipated in the psychic "mechanism" intercepted by the mechanism of time and memory. Certeau says,

The process upon which psychoanalysis is based lies at the heart of Freud's discoveries-the return of the repressed. This "mechanism" is linked to a certain conception of time and memory, according to which consciousness is both the deceptive mask and the operative trace of events that organizes the present. If the past (that which took place during, and took the form of, a decisive moment in the course of a crisis) is repressed, it returns in the present from which it was excluded, but does so surreptitiously.<sup>30</sup>

Although the historical, political and moral authority of 'the present' constrains individuals from seeing the meaning of this return of the repressed, the deeply suppressed people in the politics of the present accelerated in the particular modernity are often thrown into the anachronism of what can be said to be the "taking place of the past", or remembering. This 'event' reveals the multi-chronic features of the subjectivity of the *minjoong* where their repressed time and memory approach to mark themselves at the time of present.

In psychoanalysis, it is said that the contingent unity of pre-memory and counter-memory sustains the event of the activation of the repressed "past". The Freudian notion of "memory-traces" takes account of how some memories are constituted in a realm of "delay". That is to say, some memories are integrated to constitute the

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<sup>30</sup> Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, Manchester University Press, 1986, see p3

protective shield of the consciousness that allows the subject to adapt to reality, but some are submerged into the subterranean realm of mind to construct the topos of the “unconscious” and become a “deferral”. The point is that the memories never disappear although they are repressed while somehow the protective shields of the conscious “stands opposed to the unconscious and preconscious as systems of mnemonic traces.”<sup>31</sup> That is to say, “the past” returns or takes place here in the convergence of pre-consciousness and unconsciousness rather than returns as the passed completed time or matter, or events in a presumptive linear time. Here the past is an image of present with strong regard to the self-constitutive future; at the instance of return, the “future” is also to be conceived in a different way. The “future” is not what will arrive after the present in a linear sequence beyond the individual will but is a spatial-temporally divergent imaginative content, or the form of the will or wishes with regard to the desire’s constructive development. To explain more on this ‘past’ as non-past, it can be explained in the context of what Derrida called “deferral” in the system of *différance*. Derrida once wrote, “the unconscious is a structure of delay (*Nachträglichkeit*)” which means that it is “woven of *différance* itself somewhere and with even less chance it might become conscious.” It is a virtual or masked consciousness. He continued on to say, “radical altering as concerns every possible mode of presence is marked by the irreducibility of the after effects, the delay.”<sup>32</sup>

The ‘return’ can be said to be a function in which the “dissociated self” and the “site of disintegration” reappear in a society of oppressive homogenisation and the uneven ground of postcolonial representation in order to claim their place in history.<sup>33</sup> This ‘return’ is generically related to the individual projection and

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<sup>31</sup> J. Laplanche et., al., *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, Karnac, London, 1973, P.84

<sup>32</sup> Jacques Derrida, Jacques Derrida, Alan Bass tr., “*Différance*”, in *Margins of Philosophy*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982p 121

<sup>33</sup> This expression is taken from Foucault’s text, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”, in Paul Rabinow ed., *The Foucault Reader*, Penguin Books, 1984 , p 83. Foucault said,

“the body is the inscribed surface of events traced by language and dissolved by ideas. The locus of a dissociated self(adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in

introjection of wish images, of those who wish the liberation of themselves beyond the repression. Through an active incorporation of the return, the subject allows him/herself to subvert his/her oppressed body as well as the repressive condition. He/she sees the possibility of emancipation by gradually liberating their potency from the social norm by incorporating the self-reflective values, and partaking in a counter-language. The return affects the reactivation of the latent capacity of becoming in the subject, and is to be transformed into the critical and oppositional forces against the dominant political, cultural power and its reasoning process. The return of delayed and temporal unity between the delayed and preconsciousness constructs a resisting yoke in the previously repressed *minjoong* mind.

However it can be said that one often encounters difficulties in taking account of this formation of critical bodies affected by the return, within a certain theoretical tendency of postcolonialism. The study of 'the return' has been often confused with 'nationalist' and 'nativist' longings which is at large understood as the problematic 'essentialist' longings. The cause of 'return' is often thought to be traces of untouched originality or essence that exclusively belong to the pre-colonial era of the once colonised nation. Likewise, the modern elitist critics in Korea also often simplified the problem of 'the return' as an attachment to inherently regressive reminiscences of a 'lost language' or 'lost land' of the pre-modern period.

The modernist elites have dismissed the significant meaning of 'the rerun' that *minjoong* artists dealt with, under the illusion of 'universal time' in modernism. Precisely, the modernist elites advocate 'the modern' as a supreme value which is experienced and manifested through abstract forms—believed to be the foremost international modern style, not through the outdated aesthetics like realism. A universalist perspective remained even in the vanguard realist critics. For example, some vanguard critics of *minjoing* art movement in the 1980s have dismissed the

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perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history and the process of history's destruction of the body."

value of some of Lim and Oh's works which operate a 'vernacularism' and the reason behind their symptomatic realism. Although vernacularism was part of their method that bring out a new way of aesthetic communications with the *minjoong* long lost in Korean modern art, the critics denounced them as involving regressive styles and sentiments which invoke unrevolutionary reminiscence. Meanwhile, they endorsed the idea that the vision for an 'objective' future of the *minjoong* will be manifested through 'objective' socialist realism (whether it is the State realism of Socialist bloc or European tradition of realism of 19<sup>th</sup> century). Sharing the desire to identify the form of the Korean art with an internationally recognisable 'modern' style, the frame of mind of the elitist modernists and vanguard critics of the 1980s is contiguous. Under the fantasy of this 'ultimate' and 'universal' form and vision, they could not see the value of anything that reminded them of "indigenous" value and past of Korea, believing that would be counter productive for them to attain the universal and "objective" form of art.

To explain further about what is matter of dispute around Oh and Lim's vernacularism, far from the allegation of being traditionalist by the above mentioned critics, the vernacular aesthetic of Lim and Oh is nothing but a reflection of their concern for the empowerment of *minjoong* who had been long repressed. They wanted to make their arts a tool to activate the transference and communication between the repressed *minjoong* and their empowerment for the alternative community of the future. The disagreement is based on the completely different view of Oh and Lim on the history and potency of the *minjoong* to that of the elitist modernist and vanguard anti-modernist. The elitists perceived the condition of the *minjoong*'s suffering, the structure of their negative feelings, as regressive signs reflecting upon their supreme goal and universal language of the modern. They therefore were to be eradicated from the aesthetic screen and replaced with a form where all the sufferings are sublimated rather than being exposed. But for Oh and Lim, communication of suffering in different modalities was important and the 'vernacular' language was significant in order to penetrate

into the *minjoong* mind, which is coded in their own vernacular use of language, vernacular motifs and metaphors. This vernacular language is designated to a horizontal, compassionate communication between *minjoong* and artists while the logic of abstract modernist is often top-down and didactic.

This valorisation of the 'return' and the effort of those who attempted to find a way to incorporate and communicate it as regressive tendency in some postcolonial theorisations and Korean critics reveals the poverty of the philosophy and historical perspective. Many critics already have expressed their concerns on this. For example, Hall points out that the "anti-essentialist emphasis in post-colonial discourse sometimes seems to define any attempt to recover or inscribe a communal past as a form of idealization, despite its significance as a site of resistance and collective identity."<sup>34</sup> Likewise, the ongoing confusion and misconception on the value of the 'return' of repressed in Korean critics, that is to form constructive future forces, derives from the lack of insight on the history and potency of *minjoong*.

The 'return' instigates the formation of the resistant subject - which is evident in the visual culture of hauntings. But the study of this has been difficult in a particular tendency of the postcolonial whose theorisation is very much indebted to the post-structuralism. Generally speaking, poststructuralism detests the discourse of opposition in culture and politics, but is interested in discussing undecidability. For example, the theory points out the concept of 'opposition' between individuals and groups as heavily loaded with an idealist assumption. Some 'postcolonial' theorisations have adopted the conceptual imperative of the dissolution of binary oppositions in a rather uncritical manner that made some critics say that 'postcolonial study' is no longer interested in presenting the relationship between the coloniser and colonised as conflictual or oppositional. For example, Homi Bhabha's definition of 'the postcolonial', is centered on his rejection of the concept

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<sup>34</sup> Stuart Hall, *ibid*, p. 251

of a binary opposition, in order to say the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is more complex. He states:

The term postcolonial is increasingly used to describe that form of social criticism that bears witness to those unequal and uneven processes of representation by which the historical experience of the once-colonised Third World comes to be framed in the West. The postcolonial perspective, as it has been more recently developed by cultural and social historians and theorists, departs from the tradition of the sociology of underdevelopment or dependency theory. As a mode of analysis, it disavows any nationalist and nativist pedagogy that sets up the relations of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition, recognising that social boundaries between the First and Third world are far more complex.<sup>35</sup>

Many postcolonial intellectuals have already expressed their concern that this emphasis on the “dissolution of binaries” causes political ambiguity since it blurs the clear-cut distinctions between the colonisers and the colonised. It is said this has the effect of creating “a-historical and universalising displacements” and has “depoliticising implications” for actual heterogeneous postcolonial reality. Hall introduces Ella Shohat’s views on this:

The postcolonial she [Shohat] argues, is politically ambivalent because it blurs the clear-cut distinctions between colonisers and colonised hitherto associated with the paradigms of ‘colonialism’, ‘neo-colonialism’ and ‘Third Worldism’ which it aims to supplant. It dissolves the politics of resistance because it posits no clear domination and calls for no clear opposition. Like the other ‘posts’ with which it is aligned, it collapses

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<sup>35</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, Philomena Mariani ed. *Post Colonial Fictions-The Politics of Imaginative Writing*. Baypress: Seattle, 1991, pp 63-64



different histories, temporalities, and racial formations into the same universalising category.<sup>36</sup>

However, one also needs to accept a certain validity in post-structuralism's critique of the notions of "opposition" and "resistance" regarding the predication in the previous social theory which conceived the concept of 'resistance' within heavy idealist premises. It carried strong essentialist connotations and the mythification of the antagonist subject and antagonism. Here my standpoint is more revisionist than a radical refusal. Moving away from both extremes, that is 'mystification' nor 'refusal', one must not dismiss the emergence of resistant subjects in ongoing "democratic political public sphere"<sup>37</sup> observed everywhere as well as in the space of 1980s and 1990s in Korea. Beyond a superficial complacency with current apoliticising trends in the global and local politics and cultural critiques, one needs to think how to recount the arena and modes of "resistance" of the repressed people.

That is to say, the 'return' has created the 'potency' of resistance in *minjoong*, but it is never transferable with the metaphysical, rationalist notion of subject of resistance. The return anticipates the formation of discontented subjectivity against the society. The visual culture which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s witnessed how this was happening. The 'return' does not immediately transfer into a power to posit a fundamental binary opposition with existing power: it is not a return of 'absolute' adversity. But it constantly signals the sovereign core in the subject that there is something which refuses to be appropriated by the external power while calling for one's own bodily history.

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<sup>36</sup> Stuart Hall cites Ella Shohat who he introduces as an exemplary for critical scholars and who has taken it to task for a variety of conceptual sins. He also introduces the parallel critical view on "the postcolonial" of Anne McLintock. According to Hall, McLintock criticises the concept for "its linearity" and "its entranced suspension of history". S. Hall, *ibid.*, see p 242

<sup>37</sup> Chantal Mouffe, "For An Agonistic Public Sphere", in Okwui Enwezor et al. ed., *Democracy Unrealized. Documental 11-Platform 1*, 2002. pp 87-96

## **Power**

Historically, the Korean *minjoong* have been to a significant degree dominated and controlled by hegemonic foreign and domestic powers that assert their own reasoning process over the people. The social movement of the 1980s and early 1990s has revealed the double structure of power that imposed the repression over the people. The one layer of the power is the local anti-democratic developmental regime that produced its own reasoning process through which it oppressed, punished, manipulated and controlled the *minjoong*. Another is the foreign super powers that have imposed their own reasoning process, which often disabled the sovereignty and self determination of the nation and the *minjoong*. The Korean regime was complicit with these foreign powers through which it secured its own power to control its people. The combined interplay of these two powers is often experienced as one.

One of the most characteristic features of both powers' reasoning process is centered on the ideology of 'modernisation', and 'progress'. Although Korea has achieved the rapid economic growth-the progress-and modernisation under the programme and control of these powers, the repression imposed on the individual by these powers in order to pursue the collective social ideal, has caused a great unease and grievance in the society. That is to say, this marks the "repressive modernity" which takes account of the views of those who have been repressed and exploited across the world in the process of modernisation and its political and cultural retrogression as part of the paradoxical consequences of the idealist imperatives.

The history of 'repressive modernity' can be traced back to the history of 'colonial modernization' which is the way in which the most of the third world has experienced their modernity. This 'colonial modernity' was first imposed on Korea by Japan, which has been described as the "most significant non-western imperial

power.”<sup>38</sup> Japan imposed “modernisation” as a part of their colonial readjustment of Korea and other Asian countries in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Japan typically deployed economic, political and cultural exploitation and manipulation of the people of the colony in ways which were not entirely different to the colonial technology the West operated. Japan tried to obtain justification of their conquest, exploitation and rule over other sovereign countries by imposing its own reasoning process, boasting the ethnocentric assumption of ‘the enlightened subject’ in which they are the enlightened ones and advanced in ‘the progressive historical stage’.

In detail, the Japanese colonial authorities and the complacent Korean elite promised that the industrialisation and the injunction of the modern social order would bring a better life and end the poverty caused by the old corrupted Korean Feudal Power, provided that Korean *minjoong* cooperated with their policy, and tolerated resulting sacrifices. Japan conducted the industrialization of Korea and other Asia continues and through the rhetoric of “progress”, which goes “to be modern and catch up with world”, Japan shall create “대동아공영(roughly translates as ‘the greater co-prosperity’s sphere in Asia Pacific’)”: This slogan still haunts and horrifies the colonial generations in Korea. Japan justified their invasion as an “annexation” rather than colonisation boasting the logic of “modernizing” the “backward” Korea. Under this ideology, Japan embarked on the colonial structural adjustment which is first industrialisation, to make it easy to exploit Korea’s raw material and human resources. This adjustment had dissolved the old feudal economic and political system in Korea, which in fact paved the way for a modern political economic system.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Robert Young, *Postcolonialism-An Historical Introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, 2001, p6

<sup>39</sup> Korean History Research Academy ed, *Korean History Lecture*, Hanul Press, Seoul, 1989. see section 3) the establishment of the economic structure for the exploitation. Japan conducted the ‘land survey’ through which it made Korea supplier of agricultural products to satisfy the needs of Japan which had a fundamental problem in agriculture to supply the provisions and obtain the workers in the urban factory by forcing the farmers to leave the countryside whose land is taken by colonial government. pp.287-290

However, this process of modernisation for 45 years has caused deep retrogression and vast unspoken grievance in the society as it dispensed of the political and cultural sovereignty of *minjoong*. While mobilising Korean *minjoong* for the production to feed Japan and to serve the Japan's war, the colonial, industrial, and political power conducted a 'brain-washing' and enslavement of the people. For example, they promoted the idea of ethnic inferiority-an anthropological fiction in which Japanese was described as more civilised to Korean- and Korea's historical backward-ness was posited as an attempt to justify their mastery over the Korean.<sup>40</sup> This left a deep psychic legacy in the people and has remained a long lasting negative effect in terms of their sense of sovereignty and authenticity. Japan, in every aspect, severely forbade, oppressed and punished any anti-colonial and anti-Japanese opposition by Koreans, accusing them of being against 'progress' (it also banned Koreans from using Korean in public place and forced them to change their names to Japanese forms as a part of impoverishing the sovereign culture of Korean).

In a global context, the deployment of such 'modernity' impoverished sovereign 'civil' society and the sovereign civil subject of freedom and equality that finds a commonplace in the development of other third worlds in Africa, South Asia and South America which were directly affected by the colonial project of Europeans. Robert Young has described the global scale of the historical shift of "modernization" in relation to the history of "colonialisation" that "presupposes that the history of European expansion and the occupation of most of the global land-mass between 1492 and 1945" in 'Postcolonialism-An Historical Introduction (2001)'.<sup>41</sup> Young further discussed how this colonialism is sustained by the singular idea of a universal history that is central to the Eurocentric notion of civilization and the progressive stages of history. Young mentions the

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<sup>40</sup> Korean History Research Academy ed., *ibid.*, The colonial education was conducted under the slogan of 'civilization education' and 'integration'. This characterises the Japanisation process which was related to the colonial aim of Japan through which it tried to extinguish the sense of sovereignty and independence in Korean people. see p 285

<sup>41</sup> See, Young, *ibid.*, p 5, in the chapter, 'On the history of legacy of western colonialism'.

“ethnocentric” premises of colonialism embedded in the idea of history and civilisation, that views the Europeans as the most advanced race in history, and thereby assures that the rest of the world must follow.<sup>42</sup>

At the end of Second World War, the US super power replaced Japan in East Asia. The super power imposed its political supervision as well as extending aid to the needy post-independent Asian nations. The US continued the modernisation ideology without resolving the prevalent anxiety of Korean *minjoong* under the devastating human legacy that Japanese colonialism had left behind. The US came to Korea allegedly in order to assist it in the removal of the vestiges of Japanese colonialism and to help Koreans to construct an independent nation. But it soon asserted itself as a superior power over Koreans, and started to shape their political and economic fate by imposing its own national interests on to the regional politics. The politics of East Asia including Korea and Japan and others are directly absorbed into the project of US foreign policy of the Cold War period.<sup>43</sup>

The US achieved its hegemony across the East Asian region by instigating a “US progressivism” while managing the changing post-war power balance in the region and extending its military defence system.<sup>44</sup> The US offered a significant sum of

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<sup>42</sup> See, Young, *ibid.*, P 53.

<sup>43</sup> The US ‘Super power’ hegemony in Post-1945 extends not only to Asia but globally. Negri and Hardt’s book, *Empire*, conveys rich historical and analytic resources on what is mode of the global reach of its power and the effects. For example, they wrote on US ‘New Deal’ legislation which itself, along with the constitution of a comparable warfare system in Western Europe might be the case posited as a response to the threat conjured up by the Soviet experiences, that is, to the increasing power of workers’ movements both at home and abroad. The cold war ideology gave rise to the most exaggerated forms of Manichean division, and as result, some of central elements they have defined modern European sovereignty reappeared in the United States. Negri and Hardt also wrote, “It became increasingly evident during this phase, and throughout the course of twentieth century, that the United State, far from being the singular and democratic nation its founders imagined it to be an Empire of Liberty, was the author of direct and brutal imperialist projects, both domestically and abroad”. See Michel Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 2000. Pp. 176-177

<sup>44</sup> On “US progressivism”. See Michel Hardt and Antonio Negri, *ibid*, pp 174-176. For example, they survey the development of this conception in US history through examining the proposals of Roosevelt and Wilson. They write,

two proposal on US progressivism(an utopianism) were proposed by Theordore Roosevelt,

economic aid to a still impoverished S Korea, and also helped Japan to reconstruct its country after the destruction of two cities by its nuclear bombs. The most powerful capitalist progressivism was introduced in this way to this region, and it accelerated the economic success of both countries over the next decades. In particular, South Korean dictatorial regimes utilised US economic aid as well as technical transference from Japan, the nation which was already in an advanced stage of industrial development. The South Korean export economy has been sustained firstly by the US and secondly by Japan, and this backing has made one of the world's fastest economic miracles possible.

But the political authority which drove the whole economic growth and modernisation of the nations did not welcome the sovereign voice and power of *minjoong* to emerge but repressed its emergence in every respect. The South Korean dictatorial regimes, complacent with the US and Japan's line of progress, also echoed the logic of 'progress' (economic growth) as a supreme value in order

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the second by Woodrow Wilson: "the first exercised a completely traditional European -style imperialist ideology, and second adopted an international ideology of peace as an expansion of the constitutional conception of network power. p. 174

since an internal solution (class antagonism to be placated )to the closing of space was impossible, the progressivism of American ideology had to be realized with reference to the outside. P.174

Roosevelt's solution of limit of space involved abandoning the original features of US model and instead following goals and methods similar to the populist colonial imperialism of a Cecil Rhodes and the progressive imperialism of the French Third Republic. The imperialist path led to the colonialist experience of the united states in the Philippines. "It is our duty toward the people living in barbarism", Roosevelt proclaimed, "to see that they are freed from their chains." Any concession to liberation struggles that allow uncivilized populations like the Filipinos to govern themselves would thus be "an international crime." P.175

Roosevelt, along with generations of European ideologues before him, relied on the notion of "civilization" as an adequate justification for imperialist conquest and domination. P .175

Wilson is more utopian..foresight for the American imperialism.. of based international extension of network power is shown in his interpretation of American ideology in Treaty of Versailles,. But it was not appreciated in US, and never got past the veto power of Congress.. But his concept of world order based on the extension of the U.S. constitutional project, the idea of peace as product of a new network powers, was a powerful and long lasting proposal. The proposal corresponded to the original logic of the U.S. Constitution and its idea of expansive Empire. P.175

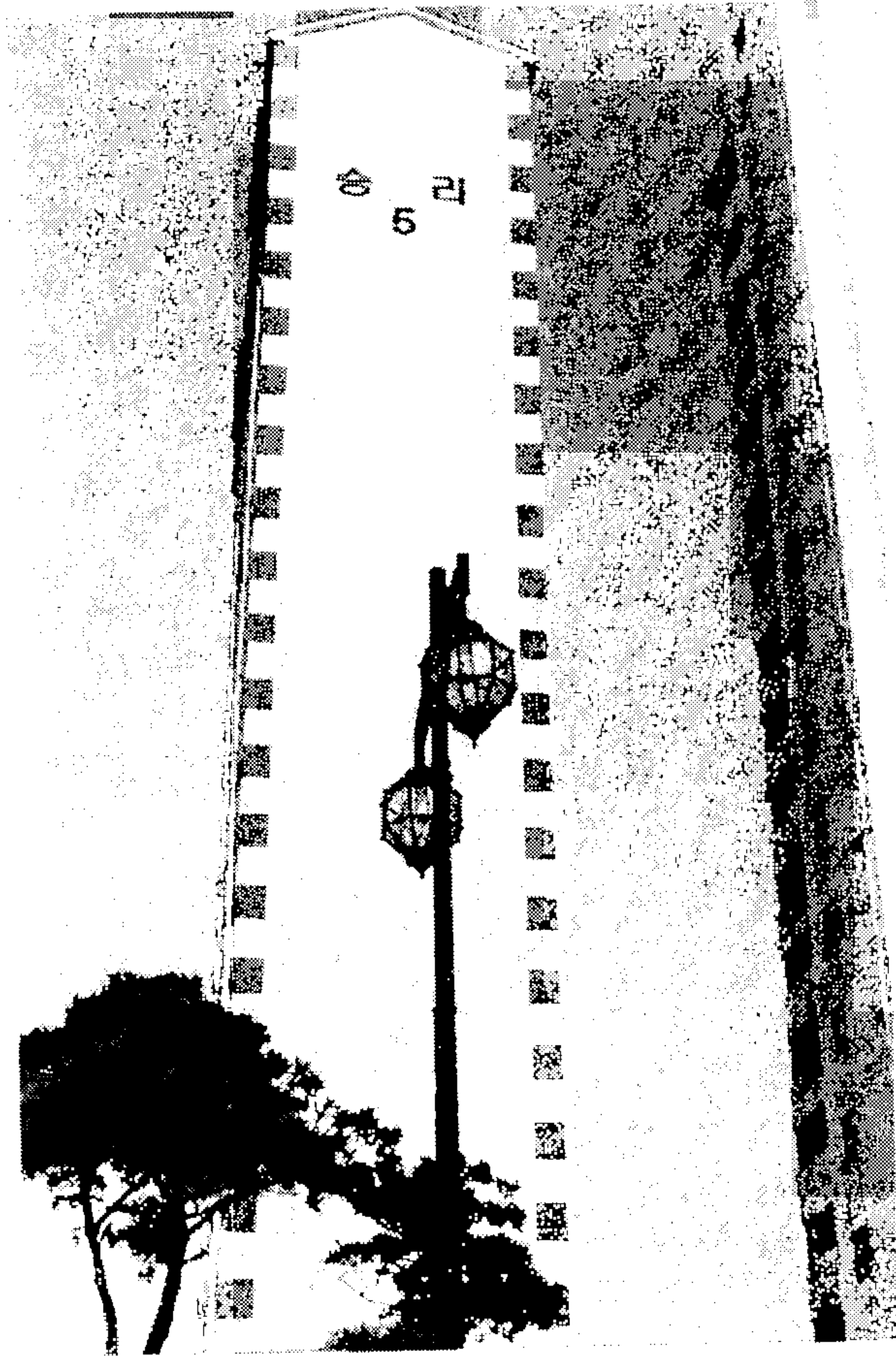


Figure 9. Soyang Park, The Victory, 1999. Photograph

to justify its oppressive politics.\*<sup>45</sup> The anti-democratic Korean regimes (which were often illegitimately elected through coups or corrupted elections) assigned themselves as agents to end the poverty and misery of the people by bringing “economic prosperity”. “Reconstruction of the nation through integrity” was the slogan that the developmentalist dictatorial regime often used after the Korean War: this has been replaced by the slogan of “integrity” for the age of “globalization” by the first civilian president, Kim Youngsam, after 1993. By spelling out “modernization and progress” as a matter of great urgency and also as a moral statement, it absolutised its power by exalting its status as the only agent who conducted the supreme mission of “national economic development”. It boasted the logic that any counter-argument against its leadership should be disqualified since the economic success that was achieved proves an undisputable credential of its leadership.

The anti-democratic politics of East Asian developmental states had also been perpetuated by what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri called, the “international ideology of peace” as developed by US.<sup>46</sup> The ideology of peace is the “new imperialist idea” of the US, which secures its hegemony in this region by the expansion of the constitutional conception of “network power”<sup>47</sup>. How the reasoning process is informed by US hegemony during the Cold War era was exemplified by the case of the US led UN *신탁통치* (Trustee politics) that came to Korea after its independence from Japan in 1945. A huge opposition arose within from the Korean public against this. The *minjoong* were suspicious of further colonial control of Korea by a powerful foreign state. The anti-supervision group longed to elect its own independent government based on the principle of national self-determination. However, the US insisted that the UN supervision state would

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<sup>45</sup> See Figure 9. Soyang Park, Victory, 1999. It is a quite mundane high apartment bloc in the south east city of Pohang that can be seen everywhere in S. Korea. This often comes from the 1970s during dictatorship and the upright style and with the word written, *Seungli*, it is surmised to deliver the sense of time of progress entrenched in strong military sentiment.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *ibid.*, pp. 174-176

<sup>47</sup> M. Hardt and A. Negri. *ibid.*, P174



take control of Korea and be led by itself. It is well known fact that US was interested in obtaining a military and political stronghold to prevent the expansion of communism in East Asia in the coming cold war order.<sup>48</sup> It insisted that Korea has no capacity for the implementation of democratic government and self-defence.

However, it is little-known fact that a Korean inquiry into the crimes and damage caused by Japan during the Second World War was disabled by US intervention in the post-war settlement process in East Asia. For instance, the issue of the Korean sex slaves has been buried by the US-led "Tokyo Trial" of 1945-48. This trial turned out to be a political show based on the political deal between US and Japan. The US hosted the Tokyo War tribunal and made huge political concessions to Japan as the US needed Japan to be an ally in its post war project in East Asia.<sup>49</sup> In return for the promise of cooperation from Japan, the US acquitted the Japanese emperor, who was the prime war criminal. Through this trial, Japan was exempted from taking responsibility for the war and from reparations for the Asian victims.

The Korean developmentalist regimes were complicit with this thwarting of justice that has submitted East Asian politics and culture to a great retrogression. The Korean dictatorial regimes by their complicity with the US, secured economic aid and political support from the US. The US also gave often unjustifiable political support to the anti-democratic regime which cooperated with its Asian Pacific policy. Because of this, US intervention in Korea has always been problematic and controversial in the post-war history. During the Korean War (1950 -1953), the US sent troops to help South Korea to fight North Korea and its communist allies. Since then, their presence continues today since the war is, technically speaking, in 'pause' rather than having ended. Approximately 37,000 US troops are currently stationed in South Korea in 2003, regulated by the Status Of Forces Agreement

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<sup>48</sup> Bruce Cummings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, W. W. Norton & Company, 1997

<sup>49</sup> see Tanaka Kenyichi's essay, "Japan's Post-War Reparation And The Historical Consciousness" in the book, *Memory and Amnesia – German and Japan, the Two Post-War Era*, Tanaka Hiroshi et., al. Sam-in Press, South Korea, 1994. .

(SOFA). Their overwhelming presence in Korea has been justified as defending South Korea from a potential communist invasion. Meanwhile numerous crimes committed by US soldiers and misconduct by the military against Korean civilians have been a cause of Korean antagonism against their presence. Koreans have generally been unable to prosecute those criminals because they have little political and diplomatic power to ask for justice against the US citizen. The controversy over the SOFA regulations that have perpetuated unfair juridical process on the crimes continues today.<sup>50</sup> Also, it is well known that the US military supported the Korean military regime in the Kwangju uprising in 1980 when the regime shot a thousand democracy-seeking civilians dead in the streets of Kwangju.<sup>51</sup> This has marked as an event that reveals the nature of the US involvement in S. Korea.

Robert Young wrote that the expansion of US economic power combined with their military intelligence, global networks and cultural power forms an undeniable contemporary imperial power. He says “the imperialism is characterized by the exercise of power either through direct conquest or (latterly) through political and economic influence that affectively amounts to a similar form of domination: both involve the practice of power through facilitating institutions and ideologies.” He continues: “typically, it(imperialism) is the deliberate production of a political machine that rules from the center, and extends its control to the furthest reaches of the peripheries: think of the Pentagon and the CIA in Washington, with their global strategy of controlling events in independent states all over the world that is perpetually slipping from its grasp.”<sup>52</sup> Antonio Negri and Michel Hardt also call this as “US progressivism” in *Empire* that is the most invincible contemporary “imperial ideology”.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> To see what is the issues, debates, the most recently revised version of SOFA in 2001, visit the website, <http://usacrime.or.kr/eng/sofa> (in Korea and English).

<sup>51</sup> Jae Eui Lee, et al, *Kwangju Diary: Beyond Death, Beyond the Darkness of the Age*, UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series, 1999

<sup>52</sup> Young, Ibid., p.27

<sup>53</sup> A Negri et al. *ibid.*, pp. 174-176

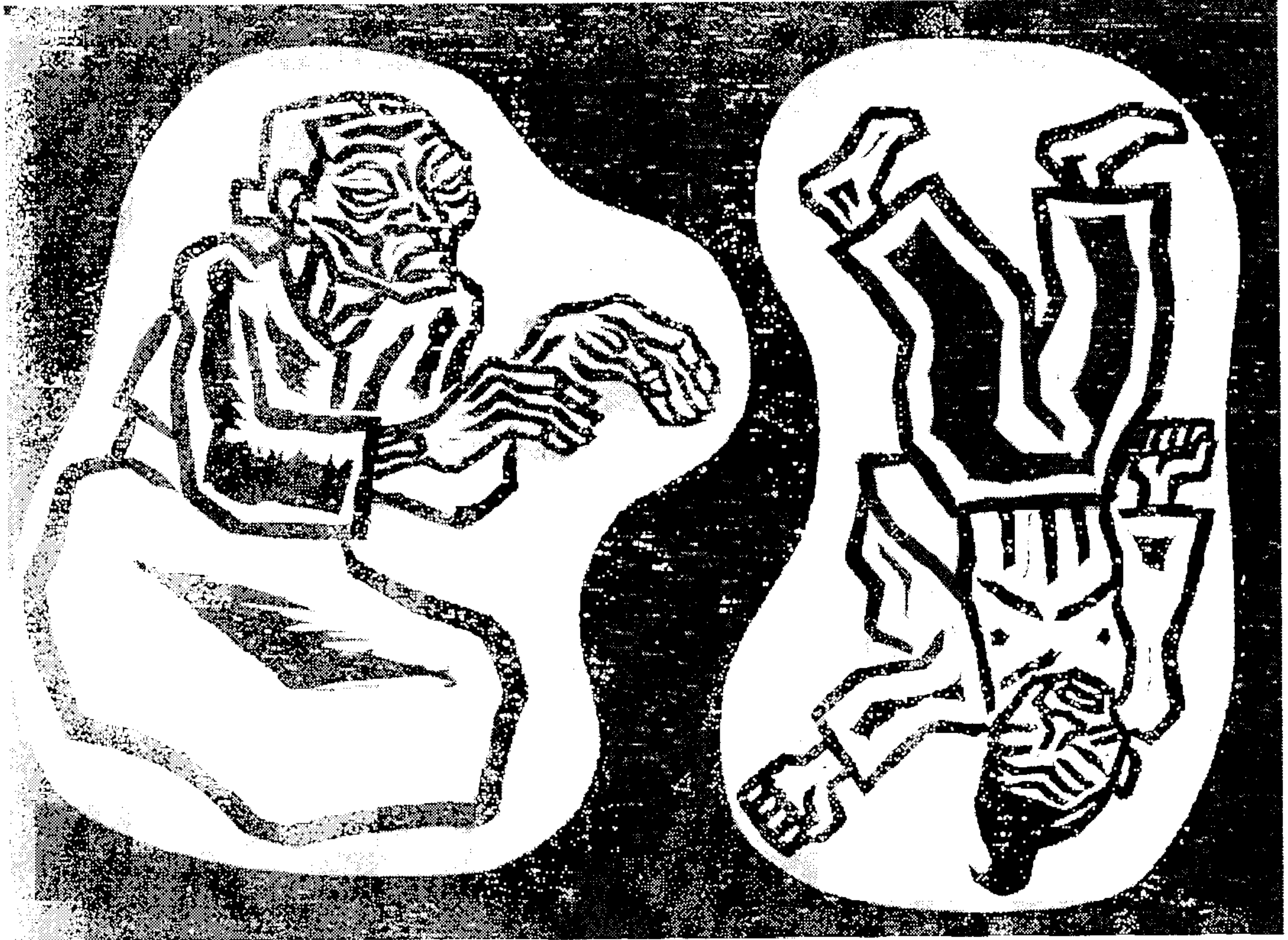


Figure 10. Oh Yoon, *Han*, 1985. Woodcut Print and Color,



Figure 11. Oh Yoon, Coming To The City, 1984. Woodcut Print and Color

## Subjectivity

Despite the persistent existence of these repressive powers, the emerging culture witnessed the democracy seeking *minjoong* emerge from the shadows, who gradually dissociate themselves from the intentionality of power. The subjects increasingly empower themselves by activating the remembering of the body and desires which remained suppressed. The emerging community of *minjoong* and *minjoong* intellectuals and *minjoong* artists engendered poetic and political spaces which continued to activate the *minjoong* expression.

The works of Oh and Lim witness the animating agency of *minjoong* that was resurrected from the realm of trauma and anxiety. For example, Lim Oksang staged the traumatic inner landscape and its immeasurable potency of explosion in the individual and collective *minjoong* inflicted by the violence of modernity through the Earth series. 'Earth 4' is, as Lim says, to remember the ghosts of the dead of Kwangju uprising and bring them to the present tense of the powerful painting. Oh Yoon crystallises this in his portrait of anonymous *minjoong* who endured and resisted the repression. In the work, *Han*, Oh portrays a figure who is segregated from her beloved one, who seems to exist as a ghost. But because of the strong wishes expressed in the figure and the virtual connectedness to the ghosts, the demarcation seems to be tragically absurd.\*<sup>54</sup>. A *minjoong* in Oh's work, *Coming To The City*, is restrained within a certain repressive boundary, but somehow the space inside the boundary is saturated with the emotional tension emanating from the figures.\*<sup>55</sup> Kang Dukkyung's painting, 'Lost virginity', is striking yet humbling since her unveiling of the horrific past memory demonstrates her gesture to overcome her personal shame and traumatic foreclosure. It not only shows her will to cure her personal remorse and recover her dignity but also marks her sovereign contribution for the next generation who need the truth. The former sexual slave women that Byun Yongjoo's documentaries captured seem to gradually overcome

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<sup>54</sup> See Figure 10. Oh Yoon, *Han*, 1985

<sup>55</sup> See Figure 11. Oh Yoon, *Coming to the City*, 1984

their invisibility and silence and come closer step by step, to the viewer, in order to speak to the unknown viewers of the society. They are not seen as mere victims of history in this emergence but seem to be active performers who 'foremark' their redemptive procedure through various self-affirmative acts such as engaging in demonstration, political speech, and writing and painting.

The *minjoong* that the emergent culture witnesses are the subject of a split whose subjectivities are torn between his/her desire to be attached to his/her history and a goal oriented rationality attached to social imperative. The modernity that Korean *minjoong* experienced is a "deliberate forgetting in action"<sup>56</sup> which the modern technocracy devised and exercised in order to accomplish its social aim, but which seriously disabled the democratic development of *minjoong* and integrity of their mind and the place they reside in. This power exercise has disabled the capacity of the *minjoong* to maintain their sovereign unity as individuals. The *minjoong* were disciplined to conform to the idea of strong social integrity and efficiency for the national economic growth rather than questioning the anti-democratic social institutions and unfair return they got on that growth. By the moralised imperative of integrity and efficiency and often sacrifice, power wove the individual into the politics of fear and terrorised the dissident. It is possible because the existence of North Korea as a threat to national security; national defence though unity and integrity have been the supreme social imperatives, specific to this ideologically divided nation.<sup>57</sup> While these norms and order were regarded as superior to the value of the individual's freedom of speech and the pursuit of individual happiness, the split in the individual has been deepening. The self-censorship and self-denial was the norm in the *minjoong* and the subalternised-so was that of intellectuals and

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<sup>56</sup> Paul de Man, Op cit.

<sup>57</sup> Cold War ideology has not been dissolved on the Korean peninsular as it is technically still at war. The two Koreas only signed the ceasefire and 'paused' the war at 1963 and ideological war between North and South Korea that is sustained by the backing power of capitalist, US and Communist Soviet Union, China was continuing throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Any individual who made a criticism of authority was regarded as a figure who intended to subvert the security of the nation in favour of North Korea or the Communists. Many democracy-seeking adversarial figures were oppressed and imprisoned by being unjustly assigned to the subversive and the communist.

artists-as the everyday paradoxes of the modern agent, the unceasing desire to be a free agent turned into a “schizophrenia” in the individual.

To extend the discussion of “split” further, we can look at Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalysis. The analysis demonstrates that “the split” in the subject is manifested as a state of anxiety. It also explains the ways in which the ‘repression’ works in the realm of subject, that is to say by “split”. Lacan formulated this Freudian account of ‘repression’ as split, by explaining that the repression is the repression of “*the representative representation*”. What is repressed is not a signification, a meaning but is the repression of the “representative of the representation” which means the repression of the affective state of one’s desire.<sup>58</sup>

This account of ‘the split’ allows us to see differently how the power brings the subject to the state of repression, away from the conventional understanding of repression. In conventional social theory, ‘repression’ has often been understood as a repression of “authentic idea” or an ‘authentic subject’. This assumes that repression is the process wherein the ‘subject’ or ‘the idea’- each one regarded as a totality-is wholly repressed. For example, when Franz Fanon interpreted the neurosis as a “complex syndrome” in his black patient, he attributed this to a lack of “consciousness” or an “idea” in them that makes them feel inadequate in the world. But what this psychoanalytic theory indicates that the repression is caused not by the disabling of the subject as a whole or her/his ideas as a whole but by splitting the “idea” from “affect”. Likewise, if one looks at the neurosis and complex of the postcolonial subject as caused by ‘the split’, one is also able to see that the problem is not about the lack of ‘authentic’ substance. It is about displacement. It can be said that the social agents of white supremacy have split Fanon’s black patient’s idea from its affective place, and then incapacitates the

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<sup>58</sup> Lacan says, “...So I insisted on the fact that what is repressed is not the represented of desire, the signification, but the representative(*le représentant*)-I translate literally-of the representation(*de la représentation*).”<sup>58</sup> See Jacques Lacan, Alan Sheridan tr. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Penguin Books, 1994, p.217

subject from imagining their own constructive and wishful presence in the place they live. This incapability and displacement defines the “problem” of the subject as an invisible, enduring effect, who has come through a colonial repression. In this, what I suggest that Fanon must have done for these subjects is not to lament the lack of authentic ideas and authentic subject-hood as he did, but to offer a proposal for a programme that is to unite the split through which this subject can develop a capacity to authenticate their idea and history within the space they live. I will explain this more later in the ‘desubliminary alteration’ section.

To redress this ‘split’, the *minjoong* arose in the 1980s, and tried to recover the space to authorise their ideas where they can unite their aspiration and reality; the anti-democratic modernity which causes the ‘split’. The “self-speech”, or “self-representation”, or “self-writing” of the postcolonial subject that many post-colonial theorists have been discussing can be attained through the gradual redressing of this split. The split had been a traumatic process for the *minjoong*, subalternised artists, and the repressed intellectuals since it deprived their self-reflexive, cultural and political desire and ideas of the affective place. It accompanies the withering of the capacity of comprehending the meaning of one’s experiences and to invent constructive life space for themselves. In this, the *minjoong* realist artists in the 1980s have provided an affective space where the memory of the *minjoong* and a sovereign expression of *minjoong* can be united in the level of virtuality. It provides a virtual space for the signification practice that allows *minjoong* to speculate and contemplate their past, present and future. Here, the *minjoong* sought to overcome the state of split between their idea and affect, or their memory and the history by increasingly embodying this image of “the real”.

Lacan explained how “the real” of the repressed subject experience a certain revolutionary ‘centrality’ while actively remembering and approaching the core of their own ‘the real’. He describes the subject’s approach to “the real” by “dividing himself into a certain number of agencies and release itself from any unity of the



psyche of the supposed totalising, synthesizing psyche”. Then “the remembering is gradually substituted for itself and approaches ever nearer to the sort of focus, or centre, in which every event seems to be under an obligation to yield itself.”<sup>59</sup> This ‘centrality’ is the effect of virtual unity that the *minjoong* artists tried to provide in the 1980s and 1990s.

The culture as a project of the haunted subjects who brought their forgotten ‘real’ to an imaginary and practical territory is an ever evolving process aligned with the process of transference of *minjoong* and communication among the *minjoong* themselves. It progresses by marking and foremarking their past and future in the very heart of the lack of representation. The *minjoong* who participated in the emergent culture in the 1980s and 1990s are not the autocratic subjects. Nor can their subjectivity be understood in terms of the repressed/liberated which previous social theory has constructed. Within this logic, the *minjoong* subject would have been understood either in terms of total subjugation or in terms of ideal revolutionary subject. None of this is relevant to discuss the subjectivity we witness here. It can never be rendered in any monologic entity or completed identity deduced from a logic of the origin or a finality.

### **Duration**

The emergent culture appeared to be a constant process of the transference, transformation and “becoming” of the hitherto repressed *minjoong* who constantly transform themselves in relation to their others and the world. My postcolonial study aims to further develop a critique of this duration and becoming, which allows us to detect the *minjoong* in transformation whilst struggling to resurrect and mark their constructive presence in history, in a more empirical and hyper-empirical manner.

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<sup>59</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p.52

'Duration' is the ground of the return, of repetition and refers to the potency for this becoming of the postcolonial *minjoong* in history. Power has deliberately constituted discontinuity in the *minjoong* subject and their history. It attempted to integrate them with a singular rational aim through the coercive and hegemonic exercise of power. It forced conformity to the norm, which was to impoverish the *minjoong's* sovereignty. The *minjoong* had not been allowed to be what they wanted to be. Forgetting themselves became the norm for them as members of society. The vision of the individual *minjoong* evolved in passivity, subsequently submitting itself to the vision which was given by the social technocrats. Also, such a society erects representational institutions of sublime forgetting. Such a society of forgetting turns the art and text into a blind screen or a blank text which blocks the fluent circulation of interactive social meanings. It masks the heterogeneous reality from public sight. It fixes the population to the normative way of seeing and writing rather than letting it live in its own right. This institution of normative representation only allows a subservient act of seeing and writing that serves and confirms the unity, integrity of society, and the "good" public sentiment. The blindness and blankness in the realm of representational institutions signify an impoverishment of the sovereign cultural power of the *minjoong* in the society.

By contrast, the politics of duration that the emergent culture I believe operated restores the continuity of the *minjoong* memory and sovereignty in the field of signification and history. The *minjoong* and *minjoong* artists have worked through their desire for truth in history that would led them to form a historical vision of the redemptive future beyond the disrupting power of history. Lim Oksang talks about how the memories of the dead of "the Kwangju Uprising" have continued to affect him as the ghosts of the dead. It is the ghost which is latent in the *durée* of *minjoong* history. This compelled him to work on 'Earth 4'. The former Sexual Slave women who kept their silence for more than 43 years talk about how their traumatic past superstitiously returned to them, since their memory is as alive as it was yesterday and compels them to act. Although the women tried hard to forget

about the past, it comes back to them and tears the shield of defensive consciousness from within them. The subject is haunted by the imperative of the *durée* which urges her to do something regarding the disdainful sentiment. Oh Yoon's *Wonguido* visualises the unacknowledged enduring time of suffering and commemoration of Korean *minjoong* under the history of disaster. The work testifies to the continuity of suffering and resistance of the *minjoong* under the continuity of repression within the changing and diverging power. The suffering is caused in the delay of the redemption of the suffered and the victimised *minjoong*. Not only the suffering but also the duration of the will of *minjoong*, who are attached to their own history, are materialised despite the society's forgetting.

The work of haunting is a significant part of the politics of the duration that the *minjoong* and *minjoong* artists have activated. Through this, they have grown as a counterpart to the politics of forgetting constructed in the successive years of repressive Korean modern history. The reactualisation of the immanence of duration should be continued in our postcolonial time. However, the discourse of 'the postcolonial' often creates the illusions of the discontinuity of time. The "postcolonial" alludes to the end of the colonial, and suggests that it does not need to consider what is left over from the exercise of colonial power any more, but promotes rather the idea that one should deal with new phenomena unique to the "discontinued" postcolonial time. For instance, Rey Chow observed that this emphasis on the discontinuity in the "postcolonial" constitutes a theoretical violence against the lived experience of the *minjoong* in the world today. She raised the question, "is the 'post' in 'post-colonialism' simply a matter of chronological time, or does it not include a notion of time that is not linear but constant, marked by events that may be technically finished but that can be fully understood only with consideration of the devastation that they left behind?"<sup>60</sup> She emphasised the importance of considering events that are aligned in the mode of *duration*, but from which we often mistakenly take the illusionary image of discontinuous time. She

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<sup>60</sup> Rey Chow, *Ethics after Idealism*, Indiana University Press, 1998, p.151

successfully discusses how such an illusion of the discontinuity of the “postcolonial” disturbed the study of the historicity and materiality of the postcolonial culture and subject which can not be understood without looking at it through the continuity of the colonial power. As an alternative to the facile periodisation of ‘post-colonial’ discourse, Chow suggests a rethinking of the meaning of ‘post’ of ‘the postcolonial’. She says that since ‘post’ means ‘after’ or ‘having gone through, it effectively means the continuity of ‘colonial’ rather than any discontinuity.<sup>61</sup>

The *minjoong* and *minjoong* artists in the 1980s conducted a visual actualisation of the duration of *minjoong* memory and its dormant will as aligned to redemptive future which were made inadequate in history. Bergson as quoted by Benjamin wrote that his “philosophy” should be “the actualization of the *durée* (duration) which rids man's soul of obsession of time”. Benjamin states that Bergson’s interest in the actualisation of *durée* is parallel to the novelist Marcel Proust’s life long desire “to bring the light on the past things with reminiscences that had work their way into his pores during his sojourn in the unconscious.”<sup>62</sup> In this sense, Benjamin wrote that Bergson’s philosophy embodies a “poetic reason” since “the philosophy indicates all the things that may be expected from a visual actualization of the uninterrupted stream of becoming”.<sup>63</sup> The “visualization” is Bergson's idea of the task of philosophy. Benjamin says in the visualisation “the inadequate becomes an actuality.”<sup>64</sup> The stream of becoming, visualised by the artists and subalterns becomes the song for a *Hantology*. The emergent visual work bears witness to the process of how the art becomes the technological machine that mediates the emerging *minjoong* subjects who come along to overcome the negative sentiment and activate the positive desire in the long *durée* of *Han*.

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<sup>61</sup> Chow, *ibid.*, p.151

<sup>62</sup> W. Benjamin, “On Some Motifs on Baudelaire”, in *Illuminations*, Pimlico, 1999 p.176

<sup>63</sup> Benjamin, *ibid.*, p.176

<sup>64</sup> Benjamin quoted Bergson. “We can let out day to day existence be permeated with such a visualization and thus, thanks to philosophy, enjoy a satisfaction similar to that of art ; but this satisfaction would be more frequent, more regular, and more easily accessible to ordinary mortals”. W. Benjamin, “Some Motifs on Baudelaire”, in *Illumination*. See Foot note 13. p.196

## Specificity

To understand the function of the return of the repressed, subject in split, and re-emergence in the emergent culture as unveiled through the emergent culture in the 1980s and 1990s in South Korea requires insight into its specificity and the reality of its subject condition. The terms I use in this thesis such as *Han* and *Minjoong* (I also use the terms, *Doccabi*, *Wongui*, which are the names of ghosts in Korean folk tales which Oh Yoon resurrected in his works. Also, I bring in terms of *Haewon* and *Sansaeng*, which are vernacular philosophical ideals of the resolution of anxiety or the fulfilment of wishes and a reciprocal community) come out of this concern of specificity. These words are difficult to translate into other languages whilst signifying the specific and historical materiality and aspirations of the emergent people in Korea during the period of struggling for sovereignty. To repeat, the term, *minjoong*, emerged in the 1980s from the need of the Korean people who organised the movement, to bring their own long over-shadowed history into the domain of public struggle. *Minjoong* can literally be translated as the governed mass. But the way the word was used in the turbulent space of 1980s emphasised the power of change of the mass. *Han* is a term which was used by the Korean *minjoong* for hundreds of years, to express their emotional condition, living through their history of repression and unease and also by those who recognised their suffering. Politicians and artists in Korea forever would refer to this term in an attempt to justify their cause. However, it is impossible for anyone, to completely comprehend the historicity of this term, *han* which is resonant of many complicated emotions and unacknowledged consciousness.

Any pursuit to apply a universal theory to explain specific local realities often prove a failure. I have discussed earlier how the vanguard critics in the 1980s and 1990s failed to comprehend some of the most compelling forms of *minjoong* realism that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, as their oeuvre are problematically tainted and limited by a political reductionism and aesthetical universalism like the elitist modernists who they detested.

The endorsement of universalism often results in the dismissal of knowledge of specificity and is still a problematic issue in some aspects of the theoretical enterprise and consumption of 'the postcolonialism'. It has been widely discussed that postcolonial critics have mistakenly tried to apply a 'postcolonial' theory produced in a specific geopolitical and historical time to every post-colonial empirical world.<sup>65</sup> For example, the theories of 'hybridity' and 'multiculturalism' have been believed to be applicable to other postcolonial regions. This has caused anxiety for those who observe what has been deferred in theoretical consideration. These theories mainly serve the need of a philosophy and politics of inclusion in the Western metropolis, by critiquing the cultural essentialist exclusion that is endorsed by the privileged host society (of white, male, middle-class, Christian, and English speaking citizens). Also, it is said that one of the central political aspirations of the theory of 'multiculturalism' is to address the withering adversarial politics of 'today'. So does the theory of 'hybridity'. This view mostly reflects the new political environment of the metropolis. This theoretical premise and its political affiliations is criticised by many postcolonial critics, both metropolitan critics and critics from other postcolonial regions. In detail, the metropolitan critics have expressed their concern that this theory has relied on and served the norm of the administrative needs of the metropolitan governments but ironically has assisted in the disqualification and dissolution of the motives for struggle and antagonism of politically and culturally marginalised others.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, postcolonial critics from the ex-colonies have discerned that their view

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<sup>65</sup> G. C. Spivak once pointed out the situated-ness of postcolonial knowledge in addressing the fact that current postcolonial discourse has mainly been contributed by the metropolitan post-colonialist in the 'Post-Colonial Critic' G. C. Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic*, Routledge, 1990.

<sup>66</sup> Many of metropolitan postcolonial critics have written about the problematic effects of this discourse. To name a few Sarat Maharaj, "Perfidious Fidelity: The Untransaltibility of the Other", In *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in The Visual Arts*, Jean Fisher ed., Kala Press, London, 1984, pp28-35; Rey Chow, "Where All Natives Gone?", in *Writing Diaspora-Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*, Indiana, University Press, Bloomsbury and Indianapolis, 1993, p.35; Jean Fisher, "The Syncretic Turn: Cross-Cultural Practices in The Age of Multiculturalism", in *New Histories*, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, 1996, pp32-38, see p36

is deeply problematic when they try to take account of the problem in the culture and politics in their region. The metropolitan postcolonialism does not answer to the need of a project of de-postcolonisation for the *minjoong* and *minjoong* critics, which is a programme of becoming sovereign, and an emancipation process of the *minjoong* from their own material and psychic condition.

Rey Chow, for instance, provides us with a useful example of how ironically metropolitan postcolonial theories have superseded the reality and sovereign perspective of the critics of contemporary colonies in Asia. She explains how the sovereign perspective is suppressed in the theoretical fashion that is popularised by metropolitan postcolonial discourses in which the critics in the world try to ‘test out’ the theory’s view over the local’s specific reality. In the article, “Anomaly In Postcolonial Era”, in her book, *Ethics After Idealism*, Chow talks about Hongkong.<sup>67</sup> She said, that “in the context of Hongkong, the apologists of the postcolonial hybridity would withdraw their criticism of British colonialism within the manner of international openness. But it would criticize Chinese nationalism for its native conservatism. This is problematic as it obliterates and blurs the complex history of the rise of modern Chinese nationalism as an over-determined response to the western imperialism of the past few centuries”.<sup>68</sup> She added here “the inevitable tendency toward nativism as a form of resistance against the dominance of western colonial culture”, although it is important to note that there is “struggle between the dominant and subdominant within the native culture.”<sup>69</sup>

The ghosts return whenever one tries to appropriate the difference and de-realise the condition of anxiety through the practice of language and politics. Any theorist is involved in universalisation and to a certain degree valorises specificity whilst trying to render its findings in a previously known pattern of explanation. Likewise, theory is often perceived as a universal and untimely tool within which to

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<sup>67</sup> Rey Chow, *ibid.*, p. 149

<sup>68</sup> Rey Chow, *ibid.*, p. 156

<sup>69</sup> Rey chow, *ibid.*, p. 156

understand a given reality. Beyond universalism, thinking the specificity means thinking the parallax of the vision in different postcolonial regions. The parallax of vision is circumscribed by the authors' location in the different geographical and time zones of the 'postcolonial' arenas. From the metropolitan regions to the ex-colonies, the differing postcolonial realities bring about different concerns and needs. This requires sovereign theoretical practices by postcolonial theorists from each region in response to its own concerns and needs rather than pursuing the possibility of universal solutions by one brilliant theory.

The reason why I feel obliged to bring the concepts of *Minjoong* and *Han* and other vernacular terms to the center of my thesis derives from the concerns that some most fashionable theoretical mode of postcolonialism (which has been in part subsumed to a discourse of subjectivity and of identity politics) and of post-1968 European postmodern social theories (which do not see the possibility of collective insurgence) have limited the conceptual possibilities to explain the sovereign empowering process of grassroots out from their negative state of being (as being suppressed and subalternised) that the *minjoong* movement in Korea has manifested in a collective scale. The concepts of *Minjoong* and *Han* need to re-emerge in the text in order to witness the actual materiality and vision these terms deliver as exploded in the postcolonial space of South Korea in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Likewise, the recall of disappeared terms from the history texts seems to have been observed in a very lively fashion in recent theoretical practice in Europe. For instance, Julia Kristeva's recall of *chora* (meaning the "receptacle of narcissism" which serves to correlate that "not yet" ego with an "object" in order to establish both of them, as taken from Plato), Lacan's *tuche* (meaning encounter with "the real", as taken from Aristotle), Z. Bauman's *Agora* (meaning the intermediate space which bound the private and the public together, taken from Greek) have caught my attention in this regard. This revival demonstrates the author's response to the call for transubstantiating the meaning which can not be translated into the immediately available conceptual tradition. The authors conjure a new conceptual milieu in response to the empirical or the vision of virtualities with which they are concerned by reviving the once disappeared language and thinking tradition; Julia Kristeva, Leon S. Roudiez tr. *Powers of Horror: An Essay On Abjection*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1982, see p.14; Lacan, *ibid*, p 53; Zygmunt Bauman, *In Search of Politics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 87.



### **The Modus Operandi : desublimatory *alteration***

The *minjoong* and the *minjoong* artists who participated in the emergent culture detest the “sublimation” which had been the aesthetic and political norm of Korean modernity. Psychoanalysis defines “sublimation” as the psychic function whereby the subject of desire modifies and transposes its original desire to something else that is a socially more acceptable form, which means actually the “giving up” of the original end. Korean elitist modern politics and aesthetics endorsed the ‘sublimation’ by refusing to acknowledge the suffering and sacrifice of the *minjoong* from its representational arena. Through this sublimation, the social agents tried to focus the *minjoong*’s attention to their unified social end (the national economic growth), which intoxicates the public with a promise that the devotion to this will bring a better life for all in the end. It preaches all to “substitute the un-signifiable desire into a civilized end.”<sup>71</sup>

We can find the “politics of sublimation” in the leftist anti-imperialist intellectual tradition while intellectuals try to provide an interpretation and the solution for the problem of postcolonial subjects. For example, in some aspects of Fanon’s politics as seen in his key texts, one can find a good example of how a politics of sublimation is in operation, which then renders the process of liberation of the once colonised subject in a scheme of an implausible sublimation of the past and transcendence.<sup>72</sup> In detail, in ‘Black Skin and White Masks’, he diagnosed black men’s complex psychosis caused by the repression in a world entrenched in racial prejudice, and discerned their incapacity to represent their self-esteem within the colonial ontological scheme. Fanon says,

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<sup>71</sup> Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, An October Book, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 1995. He summarizes the Freudian conception of sublimation. p 110

<sup>72</sup> Fanon’s works delve into the pathology of the subalternized under the world entrenched in racial prejudice, and also the relationship between psychosis and colonialism. In the book, *Black Skin and White Masks*, Pluto Press, 1986, (first published in 1952 in France), he analyzes the complex of black man and women that is inflicted by racial bias. In the *Wretched of the Earth* (first published in 1961 in France), he further develops his critique of the economic and psychic degradation of African *minjoong* inflicted by colonisation.

As long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others. The instance of the Gaze and eye metaphor dramatises the moment of “being for others,” in the phase of recognition of which Hegel speaks, but every aspect of being is made unattainable in a colonised...it would seem that this fact has not been given sufficient attention by those who have discussed the question.<sup>73</sup>

Then later in his work, he exhorted black subjects to go “beyond” the historical determination, radically canceling the past and to stop demanding reparation, conveyed in the intoxicating tone of the idealism. He says,

There is no white world, there is no white ethic, any more than there is a white intelligence. I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world through which I travel, I’m endlessly creating myself. I am a part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it.<sup>74</sup>

The disaster of the man of color lies in the fact that he was enslaved...but I as a man of color, to the extent that it becomes possible for me to exist absolutely, do not have the right to lock myself into a world of retroactive reparations.<sup>75</sup>

How does “going beyond” and the invention of being for the formerly colonised become possible, given that formerly colonised subjects still suffer a lack of self-esteem? How is the realm of “existing absolutely” attainable without the historical, reciprocal reparation if not retroactive reparation?<sup>76</sup> What is the uneasy feeling in

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<sup>73</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin and White Masks*, *ibid*, p109

<sup>74</sup> Franz Fanon, *ibid.*, p 229

<sup>75</sup> Fanon, *ibid.*, p. 231

<sup>76</sup> Slavery is abolished in France in 1848 without reparation for the enslaved and Fanon writes this

this intoxicating tone of “beyond” transcendence from the negative being to positive invention? What is missing here?

One can read a strong Hegelian influence in Fanon’s pronouncement of “beings who exist absolutely”. Fanon here seems to imagine the ideal being through Hegel’s model of philosophy of mind. In the ‘Philosophy of Mind’, Hegel advocates the embodiment of absolute consciousness as that which is “manifested” in history. The manifestation of the ideal is found in the subject who risks “death” instead of pursuing “life” as seen in his ‘master and slavery’ metaphor.<sup>77</sup> The problematic colonial premises in the account of Hegelian master slavery metaphors are totally unproblematised by Fanon. Hegel’s ontology is complacent about the normalisation process of the history of slavery which is far from discussing the fair ground of struggle between those who became master(white men) and those who became the enslaved(the black men) that Hegel fictionalises. Under the influence of this unproblematised idealism, Fanon does not mediate the transcendence of the colonised being and self-invention through any alternative explanation of the process except by repeating ‘beyond’ to an ideal subject.

This seemingly idealist and eloquent conception of the ‘transcendence’ of the subject in ‘Black Skin and White Masks’ has developed into an optimistic prognosis in his later work, ‘The Wretched of the Earth’(1961), where he transposes the black problem to the need of a “beyond” and radical transition to a revolutionary subject in armed struggle. Prescribing the ideal image of a revolutionary subject to the colonised subject, Fanon believes that subjugated humankind can cancel their negative past in an instant and leap into history. He imagined that their past and present, inflicted on them by colonial exploitation and racism, can be swiftly removed by the political revolution.

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book in 1952.

<sup>77</sup> see Hegel, Hegel’s *Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford University Press, 1971(originally published in 1894). For the manifestation of absolute spirit, see pp 16-17 For ‘master and slavery’ see pp.173-174

As manifested in Fanon's utterance that I have previously quoted, he pronounces the refusal of any inquiry into the slave past. This belief proves to be inherently problematic, regarding the plausible process in which the once colonised can be liberated from the past. Fanon dissipates the validity of the movement to seek the reparation and efforts to restore black traditions by accusing them of an attachment to a romanticized and fossilized past.<sup>78</sup> Fanon seems to think that a demand for reparation is merely reactionary and a pursuit of "life", but that an armed struggle would be the only true action for freedom which risks "death" (a true struggle in Hegelian sense). Fanon does not see a connection between the reinvention of being and the reparation which is inseparable in a psychic, social, and cultural de-postcolonisation process. As Stuart Hall has pointed out, Fanon did not consider the fact that "the past would revenge the present and would betray the optimism which neglected that memory"<sup>79</sup>

In today's reading of Fanon, it is doubtful if the "reinvention of being" can be attained without taking into consideration reparation, and if such a cancellation of the past (means the sublimation) is possible, if one agrees that the "reinvention" of being can not be a question of choice of this or that being. Such an invention or the

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<sup>78</sup> Franz Fanon, *ibid.*, Fanon said, "In no way should I derive my basic purpose from the past of the peoples of color. In no way should I dedicate myself to the revival of any unjustly recognised Negro civilisation. I will not make myself the man of any past. I do not want to exalt the past at the expenses of my present and of my future" Fanon, *ibid.*, p 226 He was also discontented with the futility (so he claimed) of "the discovery of the existence of a Negro civilisation of the fifteenth century" which "confers no patent of humanity on me" and "revival of an unjustly recognised Negro civilisation" in this book. See p 225

He consistently keeps his aversion of the black past, in the conclusion chapter of this book by quoting Marx on social revolution without past,

The social revolution... can not draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped itself of all its superstitions concerning the past. Earlier revolutions relied on memories out of world history in order to drug themselves against their own content. In order to find their own content, the revolutions of the nineteenth century have to let the dead bury the dead. Before, the expression exceeded the content; now, the content exceeds the expression

– quote from Karl Marx, the Eighteenth Brumaire, Fanon *Ibid.*, p 224

<sup>79</sup> Stuart Hall, in Issac Julian's film, *Black Skin and White Masks*, Issac Julian, Franz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, Channel 2 Broadcast, 1995.

transcendence of the repressed is possible only through the transference through which to empower one from the past from within themselves. Not the radical cancellation of the past but through reparation, one is inclined to “repair” the colonial, racial, repressive ontology and epistemology that those in power have fabricated. The reparation is the process where the previously repressed subjects “alter” their memory of suffering into a positive possibility, liberating the heterogeneous energies, by consolidating the reciprocal and historical process of reparation. What is suppressed and delayed here recovers its power of becoming and is incorporated into a reinvention of new ethical, political and cultural socius. Reparation is subject to the need of a present and future of the repressed. In other words, by repairing the historical and ontological structure which encapsulates the other of the society as subaltern and their idea as insignificant, the previously repressed subject overcome this condition and enter into an extraordinary formulation of new vision of a themselves and their future. This is the process in which the previously repressed subjects create a context of emancipation - finding a historical place freed from its mundane marginalisation and suffocating alienation.

The elitist modernist artists in Korea were deeply entrenched in the idea of “sublimation” which they claimed would be an aesthetic solution for all the anxiety and problems caused by the actual world. In contrast, the *minjoong* and *minjoong* artists defied such an idea in order to enable the transference of repressed desire and their own culture to flourish. They have done this by the desublimation of the dominant aesthetic norm as well as the political norm. Let me explain ‘desublimation’ further using Hal Foster’s term, “de-sublimatory alteration”.<sup>80</sup> According to him, the ‘desublimatory alteration’ refers to Georges Bataille’s reverse reading of “representation”. Bataille, as Foster cited, said that the “representation” is driven not by “an imperative of resemblance but by a play of *alteration*”, by which he (Bataille) means the formation of an image is “its *deformation*, or the deformation of its model”. For Bataille, “the representation is

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<sup>80</sup> I borrow this term from Hal Foster, *ibid.*, p. 113

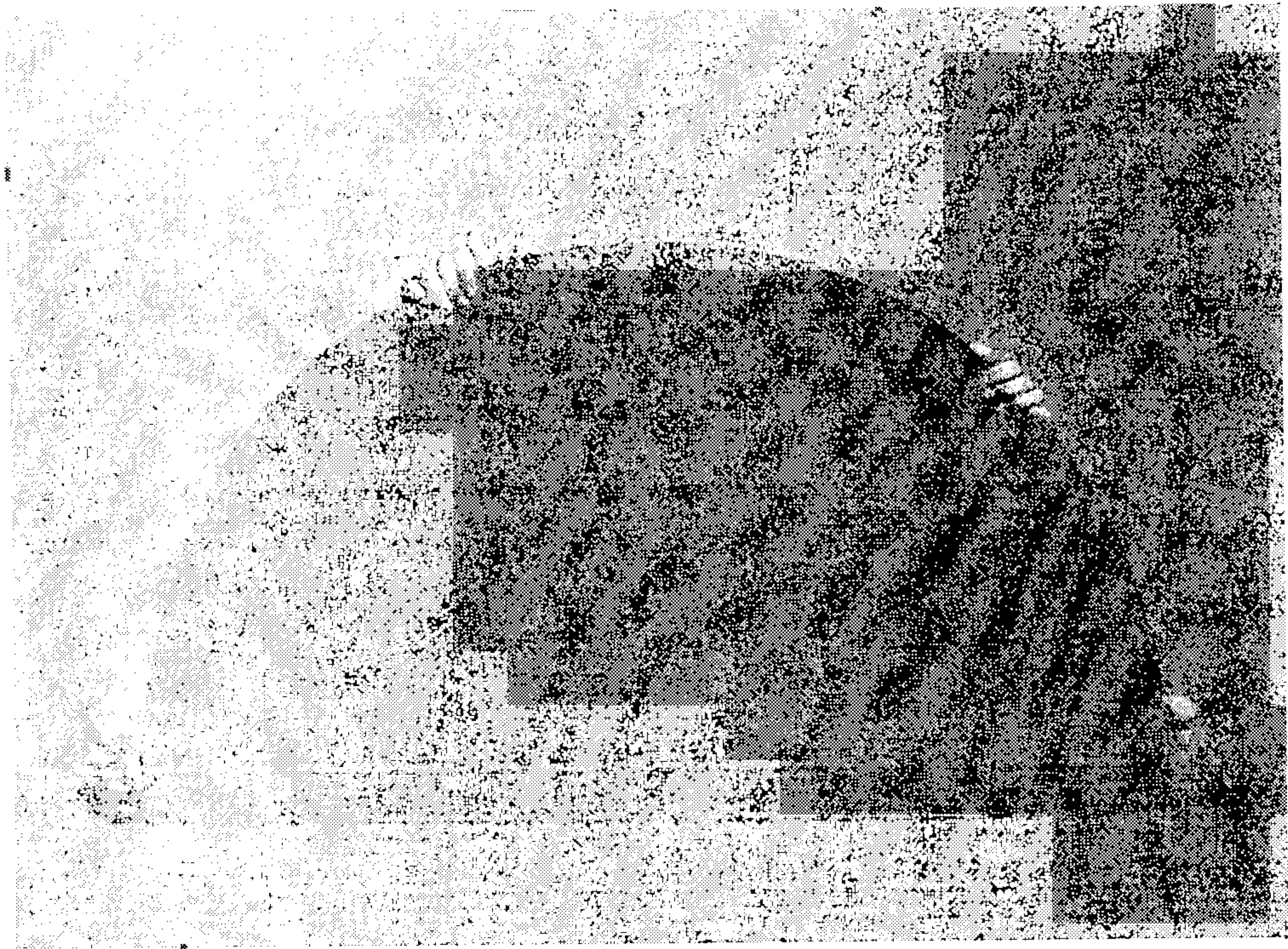


Figure 12. Lim Oksang, Gesture, 1976. Oil On Canvas

less about formal sublimation than about instinctual release.” Foster went on to quote Bataille, “art ..proceeds in this way by successive destructions... to the extent that it liberates libidinal instincts...”. Bataille obviously attempts to redefine the dominant notion of “representation”, and hints to us that ‘art’ or ‘representation’ is not related to the subliminary process to reach the ultimate ideal form, the existence of which Bataille knowingly regard as a myth, but related to a process of the deformation of existing form through releasing the repressed energy of the subject who are subalternised by this myth of form. As Foster quoted, Bataille continued to talk about the “alteration” as “the mutilation of the altered images” which is also an “automutilation”. The ‘alteration’ signifies both a “partial decomposition analogous to that of cadavers” and “passage to a perfectly heterogeneous state related to the sacred and the spectral”. It is the image of the body “after” subjecthood which is absolutely delimited, and also “before” subjecthood, and given over to its “heterogeneous energies”.<sup>81</sup>

Likewise, the artists and subalterns who emerged in the 1980s and 1990s denounced the sublimation, the aesthetic norm of such a radical cancellation and universal aesthetics. For instance, Lim Oksang’s work, ‘Gesture’(1976)\*<sup>82</sup> is an exemplary work that captures the transitory moment of desublimatory dissociation and alteration the *minjoong* artists enterprised. In ‘Gesture’, a figure emerges from an abstract blue half moon. This painting seems to signify the transitory moment of his philosophy of art from being determined by abstractionist modernism to a realist who attempts to revive the life of the *minjoong* from where it is excluded. This work visualises how “the real” emerges through the desublimation of the mask of the sublime object of ideology that is used to substitute it. The unforeseen aesthetic and political energy of the artists and subalterns in the 1980s and 1990s are construed as altering forces of both themselves and the cultural, political reality. They converged together in opening a community of transference where the

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<sup>81</sup> I paraphrase Hal Foster, *ibid.*, The original citation of the author regarding his reference to Bataille is omitted. See p. 113

<sup>82</sup> See figure 12. Lim Oksang, *Gesture*, 1976.

foreclosed individuation is to be overcome in a pool of “heterogeneous energies” of the hitherto silenced. Here each and together the *minjoong*, *minjoong* artists, *minjoong* intellectuals experienced the positive alteration of their mask and potency, and breathed the air of a new community.

**The Virtual Universality: The haunting of the postcolonial matrix of memory and trauma**

Having highlighted the importance of the study of specificity earlier, however, a differential conception of ‘the universal’ can be thought of in the study of the visual culture of haunting in terms of the universality of haunting, crossing the empirical zone of the postcolonial world. The study of the visual culture of haunting in postcolonial Korea does not fall into an ‘Area Study’, but aims to situate the question of this specific experience and emergent culture in a worldly context beyond its regional outlook. I do imagine the possibility that the implication of this study can be considered by scholars from other societies across the postcolonial world. I in particular imagine this possibility through, what I term the *post-colonial matrix of memory and trauma and haunting*. This postcolonial matrix of memory would be identified by those, who lived through history under repressive colonial and political power. Repressive modernity as I have discussed in the context of the Korean *minjoong* experience is comparable, although different in detail, to that of other Third World *minjoong*. Their experience of economic, political life, and the impoverishment of the sovereign culture in the modernisation process can bring about a sympathetic response to this theorisation.

But the elitist modern critics in Korea who have uncritically subscribed to the American/Eurocentric logic of humanity and history, have seen Euro-American born knowledge as the only authentic source of their knowledge production, and so they have not been able to see the value of contemplating such a possibility. ‘The Euro-American West’ has been the “ego-ideal” of the modernist elite in which they



“constitute [themselves] in one’s own imagery reality.”<sup>83</sup> They mistakenly imagine that the western modernity has been achieved without a paradox and significant counter-modern challenge when they read western history. The modern elites before 1980s also willingly refused to recognise the negative side of western history, that is, the history of exploitation of other parts of the world through slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. While they imagine that Korean modernity follows the steps of Europe and America successfully, they also refuse to recognize its paradox and the significant counter modern challenge emerging within their own society.

The emergent culture I’m discussing now points to a virtual universality of the postcolonial matrix of memory where a communicative community among the postcolonial *minjoong* is possible. In this imaginary community, postcolonial *minjoong* segregated in the world can open a dialogue which can lead to a mutual empowerment and political and cultural alliance among them. For example, my interest in Korean sexual slaves during the Second World War has led me to set up an investigation into the history of slavery in the world and the case for reparation. This has brought me to an understanding of how such an immoral system was deliberately justified and is still justified as a ‘necessary evil’ in the modern world with the relegation of the reparation process. Fanon found that the status of Jews in Europe and the racial discrimination against them was comparable to Black experience so that he wanted to develop his study on the emancipation of Black men based on his observation of their case. I have learnt that the African slavery reparation movement group has been referring to the development of the Korean Sex Slave Women’s struggle.<sup>84</sup> These are only a few examples of how the contiguity between the unjustly repressed *minjoong* in the world forms chains of

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<sup>83</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p 143

<sup>84</sup> see the website of the Africa Reparations Movement(ARM), May, 2000. in particular the article written by professor Chinweizu, *The Reparations and a New Global Order: A Comparative Overview*, <http://www.arm.arc.co.uk/NewGlobalorder.html>, p. 4



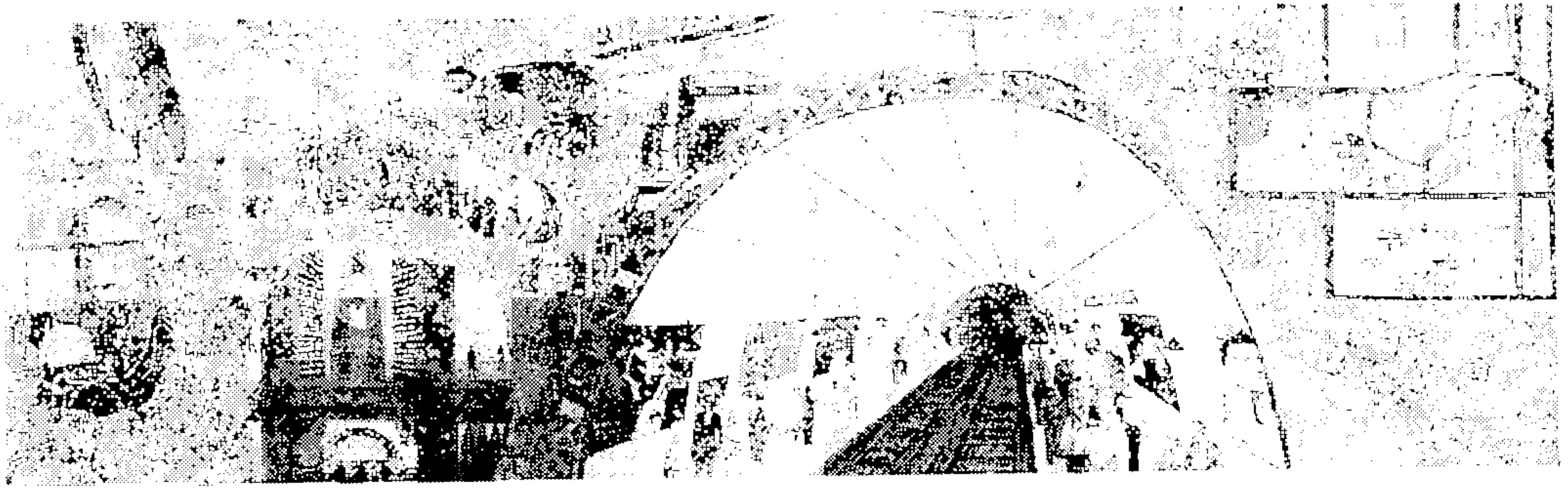


Figure 13. Lim Oksang, *Modern History of Africa* 1 (1984-5), 2 (1984-5),  
3 (1986-7), Acrylic

inspiration, which is the defining point wherein the postcolonial matrix of memory and trauma can emerge beyond the geographical and racial difference.

The postcolonial matrix of memory and trauma gives way to the global networking of *minjoong* groups, artists and organisations in struggles against the powers of domination. The *minjoong* in *Maehyang-ri*, a small coastal town in S. Korea where an American military air base is located and whose ceaseless air drills have caused serious damages to the villagers over last 50 years, are making alliances with the *minjoong* in Okinawa, Japan; the air drill in *Maehyang-ri* had destroyed the land and lives of the villagers. The US has been refusing to recognise the victims who have endured the damages, injury and loss of life. The *minjoong* in *Okinawa*, had endured the same atrocities and grievances to those in *Maehyang-ri*, inflicted by the frequent crimes committed by US soldiers from a US military base implanted there against their will since the Second World War. They formed a solidarity in 2000 against American military procedures in East Asia, and the world. Puerto Ricans also joined in this alliance to protest against threats to the sovereignty of their *minjoong*. The *minjoong* in struggle I introduce here are aligned in the contiguous line of anxiety, resistance, needs of struggle against the local order of the global power. Their networks and struggles beyond geographical distance are necessary, otherwise there will be only a sense of segregated protests which can be easily destroyed and trivialized by both the local and global allegiances of power.

The emergent culture in the 1980s and 1990s remembers the Lim Oksang's epic work, 'Modern History of Africa 1, 2, 3'\*<sup>85</sup>. This work is aligned in this virtual realm of this "postcolonial matrix of memory, trauma, haunting". Lim's painting, the 'Modern History of Africa I, 2, 3(1984-1987)' depicts the different phases of African modern history. In its cinematic juxtaposition, it depicts the history of Christian intervention into Africa, the exploitation of African people and land, the

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<sup>85</sup> See Figure 13. Lim Oksang, Modern History of Africa 1 (1984-5), 2 (1984-5), 3 (1986-7)

subsequent colonial modernisation, the African wars of liberation, the displacement of African immigrants in the European metropolis, and the emancipation movement that exploded in North America in the 1960s. Lim started this work during his stay in the small French town Anglaim (1984-86). Lim had initially tried to draw a Korean Modern History there but found difficulties in communicating his intention to European audiences, since the history of Korea is so little known to them. Then he saw the mirror image of Korean *minjoong* inflicted by colonialism and the neo-colonial world order in the African descendants in Europe. He said, "I thought I could represent the history of exploitation and displacement of the Korean people through African modern history. The story would mean the same if one replaces Africans with Koreans."<sup>86</sup> In this way, this painting embodies a significant shift of cultural and political views on the possibility of comparative, reciprocal, and compassionate identification between postcolonial worlds, given a universality of the post-colonial condition which lies under the universality of the experience of displacement and trauma. In this way, this work challenges the common-sensical notion of what "Korean realism" is, or should be contextualising the matter within that of other postcolonial worlds. It as a result defies the essentialisation of the matters as confined in a national historical boundary. He introduced a new postcolonial "Third-Worldism". However many critics entrenched in the Euro-American centric modes of identification prevalent in the institutionalised art world and the institutionalised Korean academic circle failed to identify the significant beginning this work initiated.<sup>87</sup>

The emergent culture also remembers Oh's '*Gimageon*'<sup>88</sup>\*(Horse Riding To War, 1974) which refers to the Mexican artist Posada's work of his *minjoong*. *Gimajeon*,

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<sup>86</sup> My interview with Oksang Lim was conducted in the artist studio, in Pyungchang-dong, Jongro-gu, Seoul, South Korea, 14 & 23 August, 2000

<sup>87</sup> The unwelcoming responses of the elitist critics in Korea on these paintings varied. Some asked, "why is African modern history important at all for Korean artists?" Another said, "well, although one realist could try to deal with it, it is an African history, he does not know enough of the "reality" of them. So is this comparison relevant at all?"

<sup>88</sup> See Figure 14. Oh Yoon, *Gimajeon* (Horse Riding To War), 1974

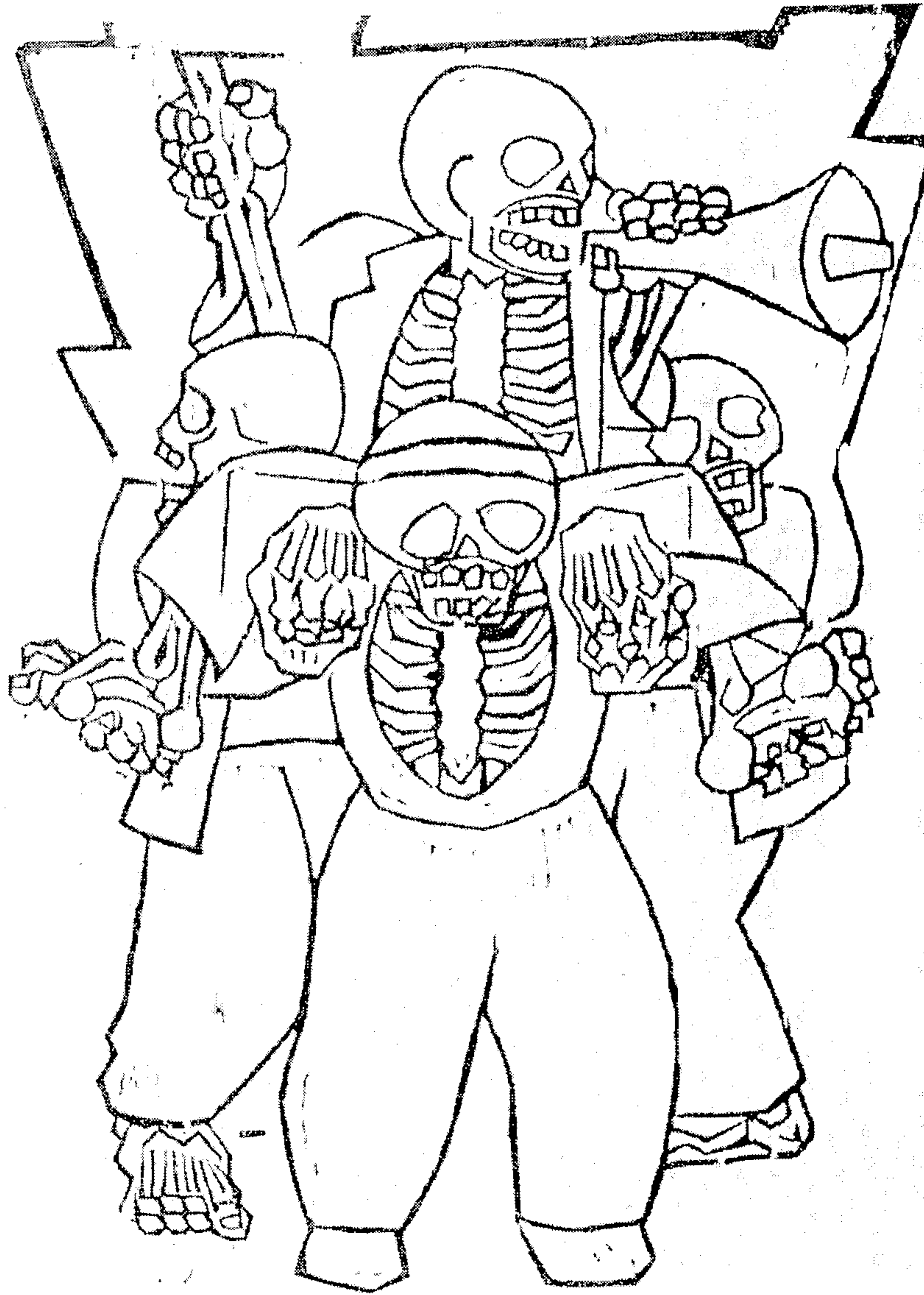


Figure 14. Oh Yoon, *Gimajeon* (Horse Riding To War), 1974, Woodcut Print.

exemplifies how aesthetic empowerment is possible through an inter-visual encounter between the postcolonial cultures hitherto unrelated, but now mediated through the universal structure of trauma and haunting. Under the strong influence of Posada, *Gimajeon* is alleged to be Oh's adaptation of the typical skeleton motifs of Posada. *Gimageon* is a popular game in Korea, played between groups of people, but here it is played by skeletons. This invokes uncanny and horrifying feelings in viewers since it has a strong implication of the death and disaster of *minjoong* history as well as their returns and immortality. Posada was regarded as an experience of "native and popular modernist art in Mexico", whose work was beyond the elitist avant-gardism, since it opened the possibility of "vernacular modernism" where the populace finds the full meaningful expression and signification of their lived history.<sup>89</sup> So does Oh in Korea. Both postcolonial artists, Oh and Posada, were endowed with the mission to reactivate sovereign sensibility and the lost narrative structure of the *minjoong* to go beyond the split inflicted by the modern process. To conclude, Lim and Oh's aspiration to conjure up the site of *minjoong* experience and imagination do not stay in a nationally and culturally, essentially enclosed space. Oh and Lim's art "pulls up" the untold narrative and unexpressed emotion from the deep abyss of the repressive history and at the same time "expands" its world of political and aesthetic imagination and scope to other worlds by identifying their historico-psychic site of experience and imagination in a worldly context.

By writing and visualising their repressed memories and sites of grievance, the *minjoong* in the postcolonial World connectively and continuously undermine the domination of the Euro-American centric order of representation and the representational norm. That is to say this connected and mutually reinforcing

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<sup>89</sup> In this perspective, an art historian, Peter Wollen wrote that Posada was seen in the context of development of Mexican modern art history by reviving "a repository of popular wisdom" and "insight" which is a necessary form for the rejuvenation or even completion of art", in this way, he sees Posada as a figure "who points the way towards a specially Mexican Modernism" J. C. Posada, *Posada: Messenger of mortality [engravings and etchings by J.G. Posada]*, Julian Rothenstein edited and designed, Redstone Press in Association with the South Bank Centre. 1989. p 18

practice of the signification of their memory, history, visions, and struggle have the effect of deterritorialising the singularized space of euro-centric representation and the world order. The writing of world history is informed by the Euro-American imaginary that selects, filters and appropriates the memories and memoirs that support its self-interest. For example, the history of slavery downplays and dismisses the moral legacy and material implication that black slavery has left to its civilization. Past imperial murder is still written as an inevitability for the age of prosperity whilst the historical and human consequences are only partially treated, so that today we are still horrified by the shadow that this historical justification can draw in our present and future. This Euro-American centric hegemonic power and hegemonic signification system should be and will be deterritorialised and surpassed from everywhere by the new, repetitive, expressive practice of deconstructive and constructive memory work of the postcolonial *minjoong*, *minjoong* intellectuals and *minjoong* artists.



## Chapter 2

### The Haunting of The “Real”: The Works of Lim Oksang and Oh Yoon

The question of what is “the real” flourished in the Korean cultural and political scene of the 1980s and 1990s, especially through the *Minjoong Art and Culture Movement*. The artists who emerged in this space claimed to represent the “real” of the *minjoong* (or grass-roots) which had hitherto been under-represented. These artists called themselves “realists”, a term which was used synonymously with “*minjoong* artists” at that time. For the first time in Korean cultural history the artists had actively dealt with the unforeseen inner reality of the *minjoong* - the kernel of their anxiety, resistance, and aspirations for the future.

Despite the achievements of the *minjoong* artists, since the mid 1990s their efforts have been met with an uneasy and invalidating consensus. This consensus was fostered by the new civil government’s neo-conservative cultural politics and was also reinforced by a reductionist reading of the artists’ works, prevalent after 1993. For instance, the apologists of the newly introduced post-modernism provided a reading that associated this movement with a passion for an outmoded figurative aesthetics, which was seen as out of place in international aesthetics. Some suggested that the work simply functioned as a political tool rather than being pure art. Further problems arose from the fact that the only remaining readings of the movement were expressed in the languages of Marxist critics, and therefore could only offer an imperfect conceptual metaphor for conveying the rich dimension of *minjoong* realism. These critics readily rendered the emerging art in relation to theories of Marxist realism that have already been established, such as critical realism or Socialist State realism.<sup>1</sup>

Given this predicament, rereading the works of two *minjoong* artists, namely Lim Oksang and Oh Yoon, allows us to explore the rich visions and aspirations of a realist art movement which goes beyond what can be captured by theories

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<sup>1</sup> This includes State Realism of The Soviet Union, The Democratic Republics of China and North Korea, and some East European states.

of realism available today. The *minjoong* realism is not a simple illustration of *minjoong* suffering nor does it just optimistically propose an image of a utopian future. Their realism explores a unique method of what Julia Kristeva has called “negative diagnosis”, by which she means the uncovering of the root problem, the root of malaise, and the seeking out of the cause of discontent.<sup>2</sup> Lim and Oh look at their own trauma and experience, and in so doing create art which instigates the dialogue of negativity forbidden in society. The approach of Lim and Oh, rather than suggesting the sublimation of pain or asserting the “objective” future of the *minjoong*, establishes a visual arena that psychoanalysts call “the talking cure”.

In this chapter, I begin by introducing some of the haunting visual works of Lim and Oh that show how the suppressed and marginalised memories of the artists and the *minjoong* are transformed into a haunting imagery emerging from the shadowy background of historical amnesia. Secondly, I explain the importance of rereading the ‘realism’ of Lim and Oh today, especially in relation to the conservative politics of time deployed in the latter half of the 1990s. I also demonstrate how the work of Lim and Oh constitute a significant “work of mourning” that actively deals with the habitual repetition of negative psychic resonance. My re-reading, which is itself a work of mourning, then links the realism of Lim and Oh to Derrida’s notions of ‘work’ tied to deconstruction and the radicalisation of *differance*. Thirdly, I map out what I term “the symptomatology” that Lim and Oh’s works establish as their ethico-aesthetic project, detecting the real as emerging at the moment of the breakdown of social rationality, as well as constructing a speculative space of a fragmented ‘real’ (or

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<sup>2</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Talking Liberties: Julia Kristeva*, Wall to Wall TV, 1992, Video Cassette. UK. (Broadcasted in Channel 4 in 1992). Kristeva talks about negative diagnosis as a way of self-examining the previous orientation of left wing political philosophy, namely, utopian optimism. She calls this orientation the “optimistic prognosis.” However, I do not agree with her when she introduces this notion to emphasise that “the time of militancy is over” although I agree with her subsequent remark that “we are living in a therapeutic age”. The disparity here derives from the fact that there is a difference in the subjective and objective condition existing between Korea and Europe. Universalising the different histories would be dangerous because although I grant the necessity of the militancy central in the movement in the 1980s and 1990s in South Korea, I do not believe in homogenising the political beliefs their associates endorsed; such as utopian optimism, activism supremacy, etc. (I read Lim and Oh’s works in the context of multiple politics or multiple cultural politics that Korean vanguard intellectuals in the 1990’s failed to address.) Furthermore, in the context of the West, although the culture of militancy has generally been weakened, it is still expected to return at a certain moment of political impasse as we observed in the anti-globalisation protests in Northern America and Europe after 1999.

'real-s'). Finally, I discuss how Oh and Lim's realism, in its interface with the viewers, engenders a zone of what Susan Buck Morss calls "the corporeal sensorium"<sup>3</sup>, a zone where an alternative realm of perceptive faculty of previously repressed *minjoong* can grow.

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Looking at Lim's work, 'Earth 4'(1980)\*<sup>4</sup>, we are arrested by the imagery of prevalent post-traumatic symptoms, which suggests a scream or the artist's broken testimony in the historical impasse. This is a monumental and exemplary painting of the era. It is understood in the context of the repetition of a traumatic memory and the intensity of the anger that Lim and the Korean people have experienced. This highly controversial and acclaimed work was done immediately after Lim witnessed the Kwangju uprising of the 1980s, wherein a thousand civilians protesting against the regime's abusive treatment of antagonistic figures were shot dead by the troops of the military regime in Kwangju (a city in south-western South Korea) in the summer of 1980. While many works related to this historical and traumatic event are descriptive and rationalized, this work appeals to a broken rationality and a justice that was never acknowledged by the state. The earth incarnates the totally wounded, victimized, bleeding bodies of the dead filed in Kwangju; it restages the shock of events rather than explains it.

The painting depicts the earth, which is literally 'dug up and bleeding'. Lim retrospectively wrote of this painting, "Kwangju did not allow any word."<sup>5</sup> This picture conveys the sensation of Kwangju while acknowledging the fact that the dead of Kwangju have been murdered twice. The first was their physical death and the second was the manipulation of the regime of their physical death: their voices would never be heard openly for the next decade: The regime denied that this affair had taken place and forbade any publicisation of this event outside

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<sup>3</sup> Susan Buck Morss, "Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered-Aesthetics and Anaesthetics", *October* 62, 1992:3-41, see p. 13

<sup>4</sup> Figure 1 Lim Ok Sang, Earth 4, 1980

<sup>5</sup> Lim Oksang, *A Gallery Without Wall-Towards The Art Where The People And Life Are Alive*, Saengak Y Namu, Seoul, 2000

Kwangju city by operating a strict censorship. The event was a 'secret' in modern Korean history until very recently.<sup>6</sup>

Lim told me that the image has repeatedly come back to him, invoking an incommensurable sense of anxiety and shame.<sup>7</sup> This bleeding earth is the image that hit him with horror and unease under the state of artificial forgetting that the political regime imposed on everyone. Like the artist himself, who was a resident in Kwangju City when the incident occurred, the survivors and the witnesses of the event were suffocated by the heavy burden of this suppression. But by breaking through his self-censoring perception and unease, transgressing the norm, Lim attempted to approach the truth of this trauma. As is well known, the repetition of a repressed past and its effects on the present have been a central theme of psychoanalytic study. Lacanian psychoanalysis has delved into what is behind this "repetition"- to rephrase, the repetition of the "unknown real". Trauma is a state wherein the subject is locked behind a psychic foreclosure and non-communication. In the state of impasse, the repetition is, as Lacan said, "an act of homage to the missed reality - the reality that can no longer produce itself except by repeating itself endlessly, in some never attained awakening."<sup>8</sup> He goes on to say, "as missed, 'the real' cannot be represented: it can only be repeated, indeed it must be repeated".<sup>9</sup> In other words, the repetition is caused by some unknown source of mind in tension with the external power of appropriation. The pictorial scene Lim staged is the revelation of the resistant core of an unknown source of mind which returns repeatedly to him and perhaps to others who suffer from the perpetuating shame.

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<sup>6</sup> A very limited amount of information of Kwangju affair was allowed to be publicised after election of the first civil Kim Youngsam government in 1993 and then much more was released after 1997 when Kim Daejoong was elected as a president. The entire story still has not completely unveiled

<sup>7</sup> My interview with Oksang Lim. The interview is conducted in the artist studio, in Pyunchang-dong, Seoul, South Korea 14 August, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p. 58

<sup>9</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p. 58

<sup>11</sup> Freud describes this thus- "*Dass das Kind an seinem Bette steht, that the child is near his bed, ihn am arme fasst, takes him by the arm and whispers to him reproachfully, und ihm vorwurfsvoll zuraunt: Vater, siehst du denn nicht, Father, can't you see dass ich verbrenne, that I'm burning?*". Lacan, *ibid.*, p.58

This picture haunts and shocks the viewers, whose mind had been saturated in deep remorse and shame, as in Freud's famous metaphor of the dead child haunting his father, in which the dead child wakes his sleeping father, crying, "father, can't you see that I'm burning!"<sup>11</sup> Lim's earth is presented as if the bleeding bodies of the dead of Kwangju suddenly return to us and say "can't you hear me?" or "can't you see me? ...I'm bleeding". About this psychological scene of 'return', Lacan asks, "[What] is it that wakes the sleeper?" Lacan's answer considers it an effect of the "missed reality" that these voices are heard and awake the sleeper who endures a deep remorse.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, the picture awakes the viewers to the "missed reality" of Kwangju; they were incapable of preventing such an event and were further stuck in a condition in which they can not assign responsibility for these innocent deaths to anyone. A deep sense of remorse and shame perpetuates in this condition, which anticipates a sudden return of the missed reality as a ghost.

Through the making of this picture and the act of looking at it, both artist and viewers drill a virtual encounter with the missed reality, which in turn alleviates the surging tension inside due to intense remorse and shame. Psychoanalysis explains repetition as the state wherein "the ego releases the signal of anxiety to avoid being overwhelmed by the surge of anxiety." Through repetition, which is a pseudo-representation of a "dream like reality", the subject protects him/herself from superfluous excitation in his/her inner self. By transforming the images of repetition into pictures, into the form of phantoms, Lim not only provides the space for the release of inner tension but also provides a form of protective scheme for unsolved and unrepresentable matters. Lacan notes that the phantoms "support", "shape" and "protect" 'the real', which is central in this traumatic experience.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>He asks, "is not the missed reality that caused the death of the child expressed in these words?" And he goes on to say, "...perhaps these words perpetuate the remorse felt by the father that the man he has put at his son's bedside to watch over him may not be up to his task". Lacan continues to quote Freud in German, "*die Besorgnia dass der grease Wächter seiner Aufgabe nicht gewachsen sein dürfte*, he may not be up to his job, in fact, he has gone to sleep. Lacan, *ibid.*, p.58

<sup>14</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p.40 also see "The place of real, which stretches from trauma to the phantasm..." see. Lacan, *ibid.*, P. 60

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The pictures which make people re-encounter the suppressed event and awake to the “missed reality” offer the viewers a very special kind of aesthetic experience. This experience is difficult to rationalize, but I will term it for now the ‘sublime traumatic.’ This effect has very little in common with “sublimation”, which, in psychoanalysis, means the transposition of the original desire to a more socially acceptable form. Instead, Lim’s picture presents the traumatic experience as sublime, rather than sublimating it. This ‘sublime’ effect is by no means a comforting experience. Through this ‘sublime effect’, Lim brings the viewers into a temporal ‘opening’ of the foreclosure where the bodies of the viewers, suppressed under a society’s politics of forgetting, are brought back to the primary and original moment of the shock of the event, the core of the trauma which was never resolved in them.

Kant discussed the “sublime” as a significant aesthetic experience which is different from the category of the “beautiful”. The “beautiful” is, according to him, determined by the estimate of the semblance of the representation to a particular standard regulated by our cognitive faculties. In contrast to this, the “sublime” is an experience of the “formless sense of greatness” which affects our reflective judgment, fixing itself to "a key that is final in respect of cognition generally, a delight in an extension affecting the imagination itself."<sup>15</sup> Looking at this picture, the viewers experience a disruption in the perception, while a mixture of shock and pleasure overwhelms them and the core of this bold exposition of trauma breaks through their repressed and numbed perception. This affects their cognitive faculty and extends their imagination beyond repression. However, this effect does not invoke an utterly bright, powerful light creating the illusion of a resolution, but turns the light onto the body of consistent grievance and anxiety that the word *Han* (the long endured grievance) preserves and witnesses. This is a state of mind like smouldering embers in an apparently extinguished fire. The “problematic beauty”<sup>19</sup> of this

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<sup>15</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, translated by James Creed Meredith, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 19\*\*), p 96

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin talks about the “problematic beauty” that art invokes unveiling of essential nature while the beauty is conventionally defined in its relationship to nature that “remains true to its essential nature only when veiled”. According to him this unveiling is irreducibly ‘reproducing



Figure 15. Oh Yoon, *Echoing Boy*, 1984. Woodcut Print

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aspect' of the work of art. Explaining this also through the concept of "*correspondences*", he says "the correspondences constitute the court of judgment before which the object of art is found to be a faithful reproduction-which, to be sure, make it entirely problematic." Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", in *Illuminations*, (London: Pimlico, 1999), p.195



Figure 16. Oh Yoon, Echoing Boy, 1984. Woodcut Print.



Figure 17. Oh Yoon, Echoing boy, 1984. Woodcut Print.



picture has been celebrated by the *minjoong* audience since it surpasses the norm of secrecy of a society which forbids people to see and to speak about such utterly affective matters. The gazes of the artist and spectators meet together in this temporal zone of inexorable commemoration and *juissance* through this picture, side by side with the gaze of the authority, which watches over this scene of inflammatory festival with a sense of threat to it.<sup>20</sup>

Oh's portraits of the anonymous *minjoong* of the time also offer a haunting encounter with a never contemplated experience of their own, arresting the viewers into a certain mode of contemplation of the endurance of the eluded time. For example, in one of the series of Oh's works, 'Echoing Boy (1984),'<sup>\*21</sup> a boy is listening to his father's anxious late night talk with his mother. The imagery as a whole seems to be frozen, refrained in an atmosphere filled with tension and anguish in silence. But this at the same time evokes a kind of uncanny feeling in the viewers. The mother, the father, the boy - everyone is implicated in anonymity while each of them has the common prototypical faces of the Korean *minjoong* of that time, who have lived through an impoverishing period of history under disaster and repression.

It can be surmised that the motifs of 'Echoing Boy' are derived from Oh's autobiographical memories of his childhood which have taken a speculative return later in his life. But since the anonymity of these portraits is eminent, it is left to the viewer to decide whether these are autobiographical images or just images intended to mirror the viewers themselves. But in either case, the element of 'self' in this presentation is something which can not be separated from the others who are implicated in the collective history of disaster. Through this series, it can be surmised that Oh restages the most lingering moments in his childhood memories, which have left an unknown but continuing impact

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<sup>20</sup> Lim recalls in the interview of the 14 August 2000 that was in the summer of 1980 when he started this painting in an empty class room in Kwangju university (which had been closed down). Only professors were allowed to remain in the university, and Lim was professor of the art department in Kwangju University. On finding him making this painting, his colleagues in the university were concerned with the possible censorship of the picture by the authorities and warned him that the painting can be regarded as problematic to authority. And it really was. This work was confiscated in the exhibition, 'December' in 1982 for precisely the reason his colleagues worried about—it was interpreted as a representation of Kwangju. Lim recovered it in 1988.

<sup>21</sup> See Figure 15. Oh Yoon, Echoing Boy, 1984



Figure 18. Oh Yoon, *Arario*, 1985. Lubber Print and Colour.



Figure 19. Oh Yoon, Sword Song, 1985, Woodcut Print and Color



Figure 20. Oh Yoon, Mother And Child, 1979, Woodcut Print

throughout his life, triggering a certain element of “the real”. The entire ‘Echoing Boy’ series seems to be devoted to this dimension of remembering and the “return”. Oh pictures a boy and his acquaintances throughout the series. The boy is accompanied by people assumed to be his parents, his sister, friends, etc. The motifs are simplified but symbolically nuanced. In one print, the boy in a black school uniform falls into deep thinking about something which we do not know.<sup>\*22</sup> In another print, he depicts the boy standing next to his little sister, shouting to someone.<sup>\*24</sup> In another one, the boy and a girl are standing with their backs towards the viewer and listening to or looking at something. Their extremely small features in the picture in comparison to the huge tree and village elucidate the typical character of childhood memory where everything else except oneself is enormous.

The title, ‘Echoing boy’, illuminates what is at stake for Oh in the restaging of this childhood memory. This boy - presumably the artist himself - was growing up absorbing “the atmosphere” of the crisis, catastrophe, anxiety, absurdity, and the sighs of the ordinary yet dissident people surrounding him. The echoes of these experiences and the memories have constituted essential parts of him as he remembers and lives with them. He has become a witness to a particular historical time in this process. However, through the inheritance of these sensibilities filled with air of disaster, Oh’s innocence as a child, for better or worse, has not been protected. The image of a boy who is awakened by and listens to his parents’ late night talk while half-asleep alludes to the fact that the boy will remember it and pay the price for the echoes of this act of witnessing later on in his life. Oh probably has developed his aspiration in art later in his life in correspondence with this witnessing of crisis and anxiety among his family and contemporaries.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See Figure 16. Oh Yoon, Echoing Boy, 1984

<sup>24</sup> See Figure 17. Oh Yoon, Echoing boy, 1984

<sup>25</sup> This echoes Benjamin’s statement, “the earlier in life one makes a wish, the greater one’s chances that it will be fulfilled. The further a wish reaches out in time, the greater the hopes for its fulfillment.” W. Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire”, *ibid.*, p. 175

Another haunting character Oh captures through his portraits of the anonymous *minjoong* is “fright”. As one can see in the father and mother in ‘Echoing boy’, their faces are entrenched in a tensed moment of “fright”, which perhaps derives from the state of pervasive shock, repression and silence that they had to endure. The strong impression of fright in the characters is in particular conveyed in the typical character of their anxious eyes and their hard, half-opened, mouths. This is

repeated in characters in Oh’s other works such as ‘*Arario*’ (1985)\*<sup>27</sup> where an old lady is dancing in her loosened top and skirt, and that of a male dancer in ‘Sword Song’ (1985)\*<sup>28</sup>. Both have such an expression of fright on their faces while their bodies are also grasped in a tensed transitory movement. The static, yet tensed movement of these figures evokes a gesture of liberation, as if tearing out the realm of repression. This tensed dynamic associated with the figure of anxiety is also observed in other works like ‘Mother and Child’ (1979)\*<sup>29</sup>. This picture depicts a woman breastfeeding her baby. While she holds and feeds her baby, her eyes are not warmly drawn to the baby lying on her arm, as we would expect in the conventional artistic depiction of such a subject. She is staring at something else with a tensed expression of fright in her eyes and gesture. Her gaze is displaced, tensed, and alerted to ‘something else’ as if she is frightened by some kind of imminent danger to her and her baby.

Benjamin has discussed the experience of “fright” in relation to what he saw as central to the experience of modernity, which is essentially related to the state of ‘shock’ as captured in Baudelaire’s lyrical poems. He sees the experience of the fright as “the subterranean shock,” (Rivière), the “failure of shock defence,” (Freud), borrowing the terms from his contemporaries. The ‘shock’ experience that Benjamin described was what “the passer-by in the city has in the crowd” and which also corresponds to what “the worker experiences at his machine”.<sup>30</sup> Benjamin explains how the “shock defence” becomes a significant matter in modern man’s life.

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<sup>27</sup> See Figure 18. Oh Yoon, *Arario*, 1985

<sup>28</sup> See Figure 19. Oh Yoon, *Sword Song*, 1985

<sup>29</sup> See Figure 20. Oh Yoon, *Mother and Child*, 1979

<sup>30</sup> Benjamin, *ibid.*, p173

The greater the share of the shock factor in particular impressions, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli: the more efficiently it does so, the less do these impressions enter experience, tending to remain in the sphere of a certain hour in one's life.... Perhaps the special achievement of shock defence may be seen in its function of assigning to an incident a precise point in time in consciousness at the cost of the integrity of its contents. This would be a peak achievement of intellect.....

He continues to state how a failure of "shock defence" is experienced in 'fright'.

Without reflection there would be nothing but the sudden start, usually the sensation of fright, which, according to Freud, confirms the failure of shock defence. He speaks of a duel in which the artist, just before being beaten, screams in fright, this duel is the creative process itself.<sup>31</sup>

Benjamin's contemplation of experiences of shock and fright is useful to discuss the state of the body of the anonymous *minjong* figures in Oh Yoon's works. Oh's works capture the ordinary Korean people who release their subterranean energy, a release signalled through their facial expressions, unlocking themselves from their constrained body and from the protective shield of their defensive consciousness. The social rationality of forgetting and conformity that used to lead the *minjoong* to succeed to form a defensive system fails here, and as Benjamin says, the sense of "fright" triggers off the "sudden start".

Such dimensions of "sudden start" and their momentum, which create the illusion of a gradual liberation of the *minjoong* from the mummification of their living bodies under repression, provoke the audience in a deeply affective way. The impressions of fright remind the viewers of themselves enduring disaster and repression. And the impending movement of the figures resonate in the

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<sup>31</sup> Benjamin, *ibid.*, p.159

viewer's mind with the desire for escape and liberation from the state of repression. As a result, Oh's pictures allow the audience to participate in a dialogue about anxiety and matters of concern, a dialogue which was never possible previously in Korean modern art.

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To recall Lim and Oh's *minjoong* realism is to re-evaluate the forgotten core of the realist movement of the 1980s and 1990s that deals with the difficult question of "the real" in the cultural history of South Korea. The creative energy and the ardent gestures of *the Realist Art and Cultural Movement*, which began in 1979, appeared to decline after 1993. Since then the protagonists of this movement have experienced a great difficulty in openly appreciating and evaluating realism without taking the burdensome risk of condemnation for being anachronistic. What perpetuates this uneasy consensus that prevents us from contemplating the legacy of this art movement? I explore this question through the politics of time which developed since the early 1990s in South Korea, and which caused a discontinuity of the realist spirit in Korean modern art history.

The particular mode of this politics of time after 1993 can be discussed in relation to the impact of discourses of "the end of history" and "postmodernism". Both discourses have promoted the idea of "shift" of an era or a "new" era. They functioned as a forgetting machine, commanding people to consider that the time of the struggle (that of 1980s) was over. That is to say, in the early 1990s these discourses were used as tools to implement the politics that subalternises dissident individuals and groups, which continued to be active after the 1980s.

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<sup>34</sup> This left the *minjoong*, who welcomed the inauguration of the first civil president in Korean history, and who they believed would bring more democracy, with a sense of frustration and deception.

For example, the discourse of “the end of history” gave weight and credential to Kim Yungsam regime’s neo-conservative policies, emphasising the end of the “revolutionary era” and popular antagonism in Korea, in order for it to enter into a new era. Kim’s government - the first civil government elected in the 1992 after a long period of military rule - had formulated and prescribed the slogan of the ‘globalization of Korea’ to the people, through which he promoted a strong work ethics and competitiveness in order to cope with changes in the global economic structure, rather than democracy. In this way Kim and the state technocrats, who led the Korean apologists of “the end of history”, justified their repression of the Korean people, who demanded the extension of democratic rights and institutions, in order to propel the national economic project. All forms of political and cultural antagonism were regarded as obstacles to the “progress” of Korea in the new “age of globalisation”. Those social technocrats, by nullifying the resistant core of the “real” of the *minjoong*, reversed the history to the state of pre-1980s. The emancipation project of the oppressed that began, evolved and matured through the 1980s was to be submerged again by such manoeuvres.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, on the counter-positive effects of “postmodernism,” an art critic, Choi Taeman, has pointed out that “the post-modern discourse has been circulated as a new paradigm which is meant to replace the new art movement [the *minjok minjoong* art movement] and polemic of the 1980s, so that it resulted in a discontinuation of the identity question in Korean art”<sup>35</sup>. This “discontinuation of the identity question in Korean art” means the discontinuation of the question of “the real” in Korean art and politics in equal measure. The question of the “real” for Korean *minjoong* is, as I have addressed, related to the desire of sovereignty and democracy in *minjoong*, liberating themselves from the state of oppression. This discontinuity of this, for Korean *minjoong*, means subjugation to the state of repressive technocratic modernity again.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> “Pluralism’s Aura: Understanding and Misunderstanding of Postmodernism”, *Korean Modern Art History Institute* 3, 1999, P.65

<sup>36</sup> However some other suggested that postmodern discourse has an effect to inspire the activation of heterogeneous culture since it also promotes a cultural and political plurality in opposition to authoritarian politics. This view is somehow agreeable but my major negation



While the repressive social technocrats ceaselessly try to disrupt the recollections of ‘the real’ in individual *minjoong*, Oh and Lim’s works still haunt the frustrated *minjoong* in the 1990s whose wish for democracy is yet to dissolve. The works distil their sovereign sensibility and disrupt the illusions of a “new” era in which everyone is driven to self-deceptive oblivion. The reason why the realism of Lim Oksang and Oh Yoon remains persistently powerful today, while many other realists’ works seem to have quickly exhausted in the shift of the political landscape throughout the 1990s, is complex. The reasons for the forgetting of some realist artists can be traced to the internal weakness in their vision of *minjoong* realism. In detail, it is a question of the weakness of the sovereign thinking of “the real” in the doctrinaire Marxist realist artists and critics. Their thinking and vision were not firmly based in the materiality of Korean *minjoong* experience and history which was rooted in the cultural specificity. Instead, the artists and critics’ vision was deeply entrenched in what I call ‘leftist universalism’, in which they often tried to identify Korean realism with that of the European realist classics or the Socialist State Realism. This indeed prevented them from embodying a genuine realist attitude and method. For that reason, these doctrinaire Marxist artists and critics were helplessly affected by the shift of time that was informed by the fall of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc in the early 1990s, being unable to produce an alternative self-affirmative realist aesthetics in this changing historical and political environment.

In contrast to them, the *minjoong* realism that Lim and Oh cultivated does not trace its sources from the already established formalistic art historical tradition and aesthetic theory but explored the “real” that derives from the history that the Korean *minjoong* had lived through, experienced and imagined. Furthermore, their realism does not trace the insular psychosis of the *minjoong* but envisions how the contemplation and vision of “the real” led to a subversive and social end. Their treatment of *minjoong* trauma and disaster triggered off the commemoration of long suffering of the *minjoong* and the spirit of their resistance.

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against the effect of discourse derives from its attribute to illusionment of the continuity of people’s democratization movement.

Oh and Lim's realism constitutes-what Derrida called "the work of mourning" of the lost values and the lost aspirations of the *minjoong* in the modern politics and art history in Korea, which must continue to prosper and develop for today and the future. Derrida's concept of "mourning" is inseparable from the notion of "work". "The mourning" becomes a "work" since it involves a great critical and inventive momentum rather than being a regressive reminiscence for the things of the past. According to him, the "mourning" always involves "spectral spiritualization", in which the mourning become involved in the dimension of spectral "production". He says

Mourning always follows a trauma. I have tried to show elsewhere that the work of mourning is not one kind of work among others. It is work itself, work in general. The trait by means of which one ought perhaps to reconsider the very concept of production - in what links it to trauma, to mourning to the idealising iterability of exappropriation, thus to the spectral spiritualization that is at work in any *tekhne*-.<sup>37</sup>

The "real" always already is recognised in one's perception of the "elided present" and the "here". By pushing the process of mourning for this "real", one is led to defy the very institution of the present and finds oneself in an uneasy relationship with the dominant social, cultural and historical realities. This uneasy sentiment leads one to conduct the search for the loss in their present as a way to overcome the state of his/her uneasy existence. In pushing this quest for the lost "real", Oh and Lim's realism, which gives expression to the elided reality of the *minjoong*, engenders a critical power to dismantle the present by questioning its very normality. Their visual works bring the viewers to the forbidden ritual of commemoration of the disaster and the loss. In this way, Lim and Oh's work of the *minjoong* 'real' is the spectral spiritualization of the memory of *minjoong* that had been made inadequate in history. Their works enact the counter-memory and spiritualise counter-forces where the artists and

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<sup>37</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx-the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, translated Peggy Kamuf, Routledge, New York & London, 1994 p.79

*minjoong* together are provided the opportunity to re-encounter the “missed” reality of their lived experience.

Likewise, my re-consideration of Lim and Oh’s works is also a “work of mourning” since I’m wary of the disappearance of the legacy of their works before us despite the fact that they can enlighten us in terms of new aesthetico-politics in this era of confusion and discontinuity.<sup>39</sup> My work of mourning involves three aspects of ‘work’, which are the witnessing, deconstruction and “radical” work of *différence*. Firstly, Derrida pointed out, mourning involves witnessing by which he means “to inherit”. He says that witnessing requires a commitment of those who witness. To quote Derrida again, he calls the witnesses the “heirs” who inherit the very thing that allows them to bear witness to. He says,

That we are heirs does not mean that we have or that we receive this or that, some inheritance enriches us one day with this or that, but that the being of what we are is first of all inheritance, whether we like it or know it or not. .... To bear witness would be to bear witness to what we are insofar as we inherit, and that here is the circle, here is the chance, or the finitude - we inherit the very thing that allows us to bear witness to it.<sup>40</sup>

To inherit means to “live out” the legacy. The work that involves the witnessing of the legacy of Lim and Oh’s realism involves both automatic forces (it comes to you) but should be proactive (you must do something with it). Derrida continues to say on the imperative of haunting, “that which gives one the most to think about-and to do, let us insist and spell things out for it to do and to make come about as well as to let come (about).”<sup>41</sup> It can be said that the

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<sup>39</sup> The sudden withering of this movement in the end of 1993 in Korea gave an important lesson for the cultural activist like myself as well as an enormous frustration because of not knowing why the unfinished project had to be discontinued.

<sup>40</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p.54

<sup>41</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p.98

haunting of Lim and Oh's works today informs us the connectivity of the 'real' of the *minjoong* Lim and Oh have grasped to this present day, in a newly unfolding conservative cultural politics. It is their penetrating insight into the lived experience of Korean *minjoong* the reason why their realism continues to haunt us today.

Derrida also says that the "work of mourning" often involves the work of 'deconstruction'. Derrida states that 'deconstruction' involves the 'work' of 'exappropriation' of the economies organising language, politics, art, and science. Recapitulating his project of "deconstruction" as tied to the concept of *différance*, he also states that this project is to "radicalise" the differential rather than anything else. He wrote,

Deconstruction has never had any sense or interest....except as a radicalization...the deconstruction in which some have noted, a certain economic concept of the differential economy and of exappropriation, or even of the gift, plays an organising role, as does the concept of work tied to *différance* and to the work of mourning in general.<sup>43</sup>

There have been deferred meanings of Oh and Lim's realism in the theories of realism of the Marxist vanguard art critics in the 1980s. To make the deferred and heterogeneous meanings of their realism come about requires the deconstruction of the pre-existing language of realism. A Korean poet, Kim Chiha, talks about Oh's works in this context. He points out that the heterogeneous meanings in Oh's realism can be understood by deconstructing the homogeneous singular denominator of the "realism" of the 1980s. In a dialogue with the Marxist art critic Sim Kwanghyun, Kim says,

What I want to emphasize is that they [the 80s Marxist vanguard critics] should have not hastily categorized him [Oh] as a representative of *minjoong* realist artist [without knowing the significant difference of Oh's realism]. Rather we had to see him as

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<sup>43</sup> J. Derrida, *Ibid.*, p. 92

another possibility parallel to the flow of its general mode. We can gain an understanding not only about the visual language but also the hint of method to tackle the fundamental and complicated problem [on the withering of ‘realism’ in humanities and politics] we are facing today only when we penetrate the gap between the denominator with “the realist art” and also strong heterogeneous elements to it presented in Oh Yoon’s works.<sup>44</sup>

The diverse theories of realism that the vanguard Marxist critics have formulated and through which they attempted to delineate the ideal realist practice were born out of the radical political environment of the 1980s. Theories such as “socialist realism”(which was regarded as representation of the future of the working class and peasants but is often fathomed by elitist *minjoong* artists), “critical realism”(that was regarded as practice of exclusively elitist *minjoong* artists that criticises Korean bourgeois society and power), and “*minjok* realism”(that was regarded as the representation of Korean people under persistent neo-colonial and oppressive political power and also their vision of liberating community; this, however, was often condemned by the artists and critics who accused other realisms of being ambiguous and their tastes as a kind of traditionalism) were conceived as ideals of “*minjoong* realism”.<sup>45</sup> I cannot discuss the entire horizon of these realist theories in this thesis, but one penetrating problem in the realist theorisation is that these Marxist vanguard critics hastily tried to transpose the symptomatic, unknown core of “the real” and the vision of the future of the *minjoong* to a perfectly knowable political economic meaning in their own way. Driven by radical circumstances, they repeated the same problematic trajectory that the European Marxist critics have gone through, that is a hasty “optimistic prognosis”.<sup>46</sup> They presumed that “the real” could be totally explicated into an unbroken meaning. Under this assumption of transparency and certainty, the artists were often

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<sup>44</sup> Kim, Chiha, Dialogue between Chiha and Sim Kwanghyun, in Oh Yoon, *Oh Yoon’s Woodcut Print Work, People in the Village and People in the World*, Hakgojae, 1996. Seoul, P. 172

<sup>45</sup> Yoo Hyeungjun, ‘The Realism and *Minjok* Art’, in Kim, Jungheun, et.al., *The Historical Condition and The Discourse of Art*, Hangerae Press, 1986; Won, Dongsuk, *The Logics and Vision of Minjok Art*, Pulbicht Book Press, Seoul, 1985; Lee, Taeho, *Our Time and Our Art: Lee Taeho Art Criticism Collection*, Pulbicht Book Press, Seoul, 1991

<sup>46</sup> Kristeva, *ibid.*

asked to be mere draughtsmen of the explanatory schema of class consciousness, revolutionary subject, and the doctrine of national liberation that the political camp endorsed.

What they have dismissed was the enduring task of the “negative diagnosis”<sup>47</sup>, which in turn can describe the course that Oh and Lim took, positing an independent direction from other realist artists. Lim and Oh’s approach to “the real” denounced an idealist assumption of the transparency, certainty, totality and universality of ‘the real’. They grasped negative emotional forces of the “real” in their body’s own encounter so as to approach an understanding of deeply affective matters of themselves and the *minjoong*. Their realism materialises the various symptoms and modalities of the “real” as they are caught in the artist’s vision emerging from the sites of broken rationality and shattered existence, yet is also attuned with an inexorable sense of resistance and future. Their imagery does not allow our easy contemplation of a singular origin, and the aesthetic structure of their realism is not easy for us to take account of from any point of certainty.

However, as far as deconstruction is concerned, we can find some residues of a future insight in the fragmented languages of 1980s’ vanguard critics of Oh and Lim’s works. As I said earlier, critics who endorsed “socialist” and “critical” realism as a realist ideal often criticised Lim and Oh’s works as “ambiguous” or even “mystic”. Meanwhile, some designated their work as “*minjok* realism” (as I said earlier, *minjok* roughly translates Korean people as ethnic group who share same language, history, and memory of disaster); this is said in a quite complimentary way. Why their realism of “negative diagnosis” was seen as ambiguous and also mystic by the critics is an interesting subject. But more interestingly, the full account of the world of *minjok* realism, which is the denominator that they believed Lim and Oh’s works deserve and is the reason why they believed that Lim and Oh stood out from other realists, have not been given to us. However, their fragmented signifiers that were thrown to us indicates the fact that the different and appealing modes of realism in operation

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<sup>47</sup> Kristeva, *ibid.*

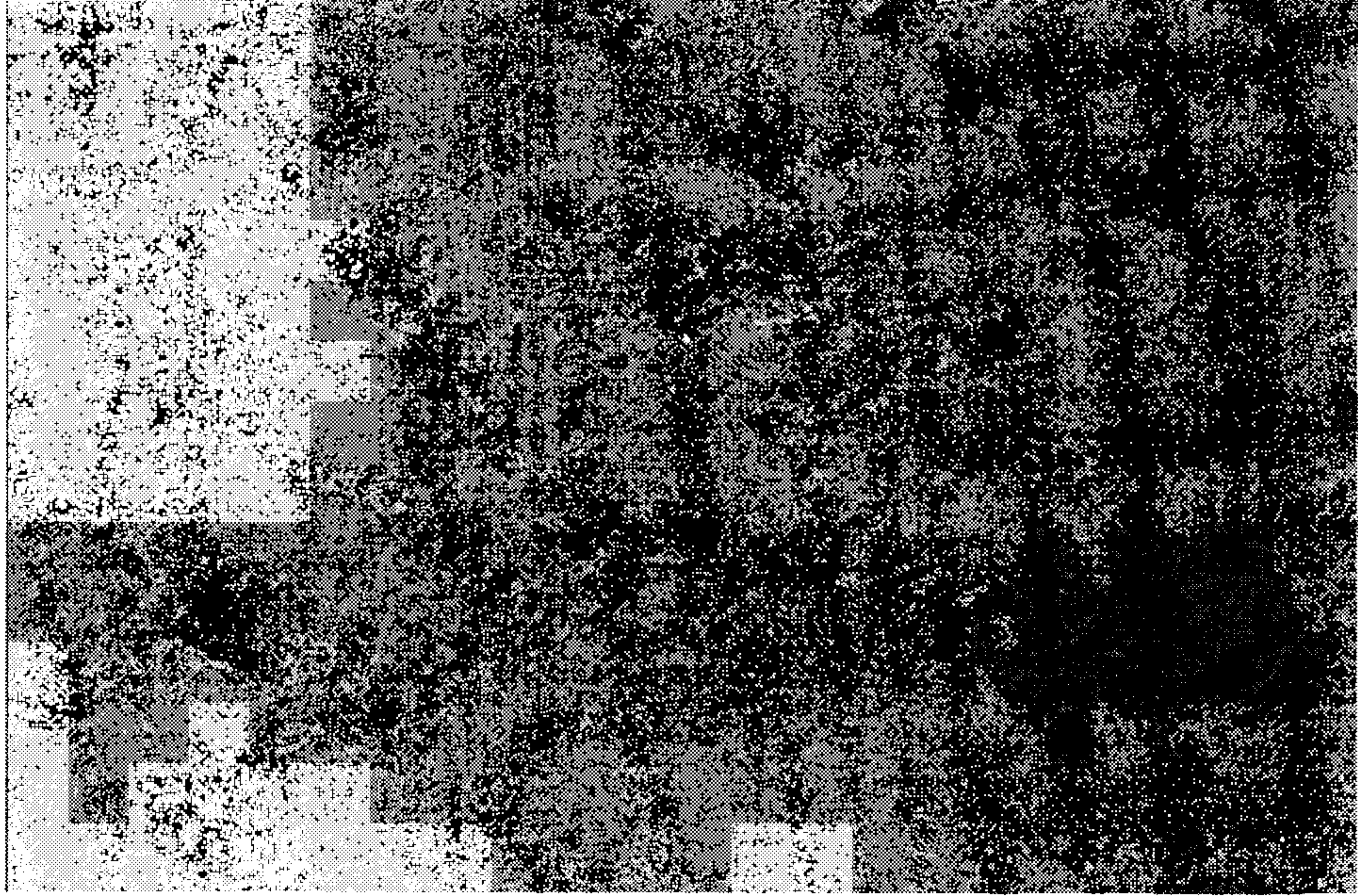


Figure 21. Lim Oksang, Earth, 1978, Oil on Canvas



Figure 22. Lim Oksang, The Earth, 1978. Oil on Canvas

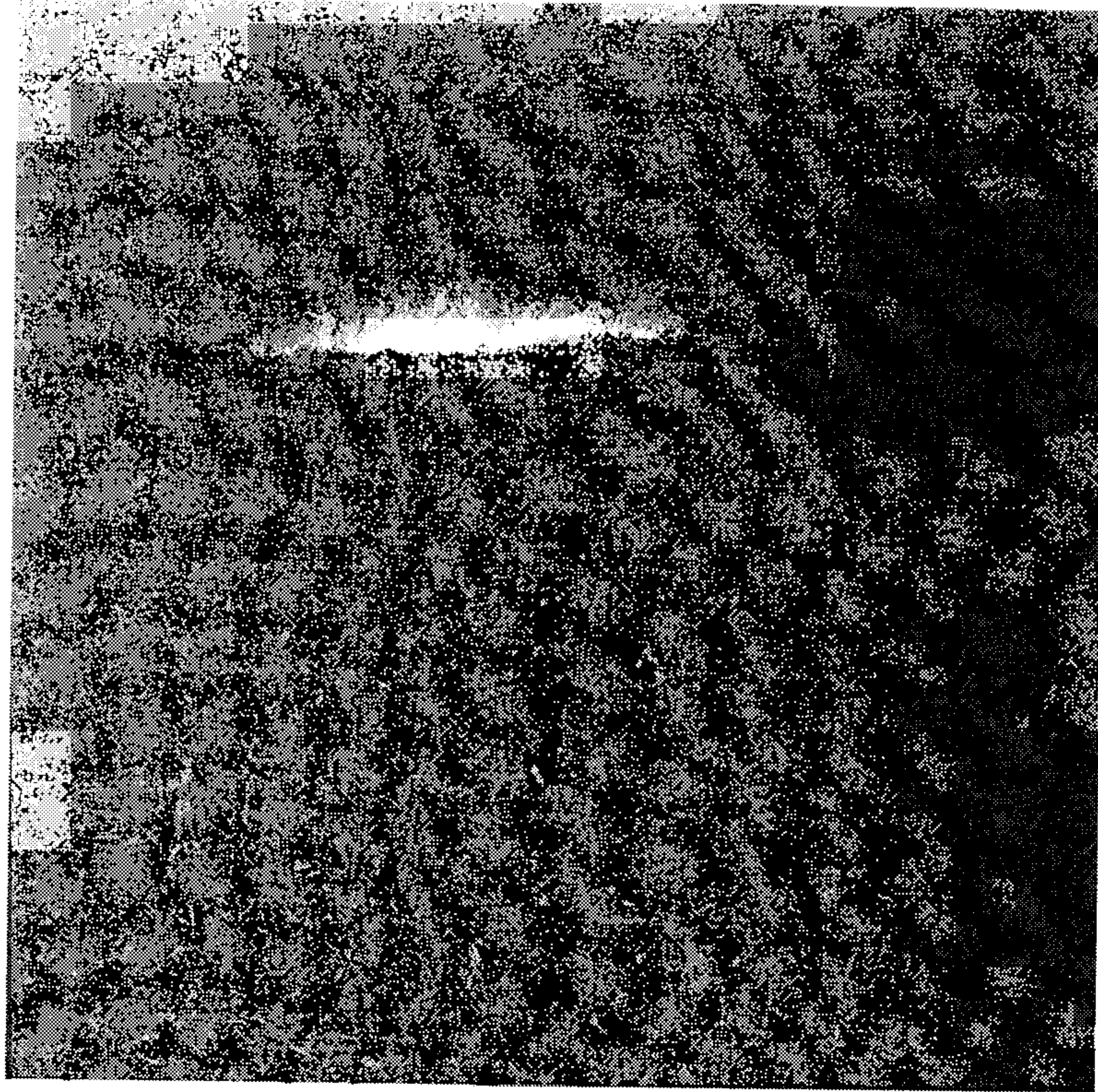


Figure 23. Lim Oksang, Fire, 1979. Oil on Canvas



was sensed by the critics although it was not further developed into an extensive theory. To explore the unacknowledged dimensions in these denominators and the residual meaning of “mystics” would constitute an important part of my rereading of Lim and Oh’s realism.

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Through their career, Lim and Oh constructed what I call a “symptomatology” of the “real-s” through their pictorial screens, through which they tried to work out the repetition of ‘the real’ in themselves and the collective history of *minjoong*. The ‘real-s’ consistently appear and are seriously affective, but the features of their appearance are symptomatic and often very fragmented.

As for Lim Oksang’s case, he has constructed his visual symptomatology of ‘the real-s’ as they appear as the traumatic state of bodies of *minjoong* through the series of ‘Earth’ works for over 20 years.\*\*\*<sup>48</sup> These works remind the viewers of their history entrenched in displacement, sense of unease, unfulfilled dreams and multiple hauntings. As I have introduced earlier, Lim has presented the traumatic return of shock of *Kwangju* in Earth 4(1980). Lim also has presented this traumatic state of the ‘real’ as related to characters such as ‘foreignness’, ‘absence,’ ‘anticipation’, ‘explosion’ and ‘specters’ through other Earth works.

### **Foreignness**

In one of the earlier examples of the ‘Earth’ work, ‘Earth’ (1978),\*<sup>49</sup> one witnesses a line of demarcation of the earth which invokes a strange sense of anxiety and foreignness in the viewers. Lim says of this painting, “nature changes its nature by these lines. The line depends on the one who draws it. Nature never speaks, because it is nothing to do with its will.”<sup>50</sup> This picture depicts the surrealistically vivid red lines marked in a rocky mountain. It seems to speak about the aftermath of a violent process of Korean modernisation, which has left irresolvable marks on the body of the *minjoong*. Modernisation is

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<sup>48</sup> See Figure 21. Lim Oksang, Earth, 1978; See figure 22. The Earth, 1978 ; See Figure 23. Fire, 1979; See Figure 1 Earth 4, 1980.

<sup>49</sup> See Figure 22. Lim Oksang, Earth, 1978

<sup>50</sup> Lim Oksang, *Gallery Without Wall*, *ibid.*, p.49

the process in which power inscribes itself on nature and the individual body alike, regardless of their will. That is to say, this picture alludes to the fact that the “progress” or enterprise for “civilisation” has left a form of irresolvable foreignness in us. As if to highlight this point, the line is presented as industrially clear and uncomfortably stands out from its surroundings in an uneasy silence.

The sense of uneasy “foreignness” that persists in the inner life of *minjoong* indeed elucidates one aspect of the state of trauma their bodies are embedded in. As Laplanche wrote, “there to be a trauma in the strict sense of the word—that is, non-abreaction of the experience, which remains in the psyche as a ‘foreign body’—certain objective conditions have to be met.”<sup>51</sup> Lacan’s concept of “the Real” also elucidates the concept of foreignness, when he says that the trauma is a return of the unknowable ineliminable “foreign object” in the psyche, which is presumed to be behind the return. Lacan’s concept of “the Real”, in which he has reformulated the Freudian theme of “unconsciousness”, explains a significant aspect of ‘the real’ Lim is dealing with. According to Lacan, “the real” is not an image of a visible reality, but the image that unexpectedly and disruptively returns to our psychic life. It is defined as the return of “ineliminable residue” in the apparent psychological order, or the “unknown substance”, which normally has “foreclosed elements”.<sup>52</sup> It is something that is “lacking in the symbolic order, the ineliminable residue of all”, which “may be approached, but never grasped: the umbilical core of the symbolic.”<sup>53</sup> In this sense, it can be said that Lim’s works presumably grasp the ineliminable residue of the *minjoong* experience which are discriminated, suppressed from the social apprehension. He envisions and contextualises the various symptoms of the real in and outside of the circle of repetition, operating their imagination, which Lacan’s concept of “imaginary” well elucidates; “imaginary” usually mobilized

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<sup>51</sup> Laplanche et. al., *ibid.*, find ‘Trauma’. p. 466

<sup>52</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, Pp.279-280

<sup>53</sup> Lacan explains the psychic function through the three different psychic factors which is “the symbolic”, “the imagery”, and “the real”. He defines “the symbolic” as “the network of signifiers which determine the order of the subject”, and “the imagery” as the “world, the register, the dimension of images, conscious or unconscious, perceived and imagined”. Lacan, *ibid.*, see the translator’s note, pp.279-280

through the pulsation in a subject that “the real” causes, in which he/she is satisfied with itself in “imagining itself as consciousness.”<sup>54</sup>

A sense of impossibility is persistent in Lim’s featuring of foreignness that overwhelms viewers with a strange sense of sorrow.

### **Absence**

The Earth series as a whole provokes a strong sense of “absence”. This provokes the viewer to imagine what is not there, what they have missed. This illusion of absence is construed as a critical commentary on the status quo since the lookers feel his/her existence as inadequate in the given form of life.

A literary critic, Do Jungil wrote about his impressions on Lim’s earth works in this regard in 1995. He summarises the status quo, which he believes Lim’s Earth works metaphorically deal with, as the “form of absence” and “exile”.<sup>55</sup>

Where is earth now? Today, there is no earth in city, horizontal surrender, stuffy silence, the name of disappearance-this is the form in which the earth exists in the city today. It is not the form of presence but the form of absence. Earth only exists as the form of absence and exile, the lapse of memory and shame/humiliation. Today the earth is soundless, breathless and invisible. As soon as the urban landscape deletes the earth from it, it was exiled from people's memory as well.

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<sup>54</sup> Lacan explains the function of “the imagery” in scopic field of experience or scopic topology in the context of the dynamic relationship between “the eye” and “the Gaze”, whose interaction are not only that of dominated and dominant but also in a precariously dynamic contestation. He talks about the function of imaginary later “that which appears from the position of the subject when he accedes to the imaginary forms offered him by dream, as opposed to those of the waking state.” He continues to elucidates, in the function of the imaginary, subject is given a pretext for the *me/connaissance* (the knowledge of what has been eluded, which is supposedly related to the existence of ‘the real’)-which he identified as different to *savoir*(knowledge which belongs to the symbolic register). See Lacan, *ibid.*, p.7. See also translator’s note in p. 281.

<sup>55</sup> Lim Oksang, Gana Gallery, 1995, From Do’s essay Do Jungil, “The Face of The Earth, Time of The Earth, and Narrative of The Earth”, in *Lim Oksang Solo Exhibition*, Gana Gallery, 1995. p.14

<sup>56</sup> Lim Oksang, Gana Gallery, *ibid.*, p.14

For Do, the earth is a metaphor of what is surrendered, silenced, and disappeared, forgotten in the social reality. The “absence” and “exile” of earth in urbanization is also construed as a critique of the status quo of the Korean *minjoong*, whose lives have been instrumentalised and surrendered to the order of industrial modernization.

Lim also states that his works on earth are transferable with the critique of civilisation in general and of Korean modernity where men have fallen into the state of enslavement under the logic of capitalism. He relates the human condition in our modern life to the loss of holism of nature (of the immanent form of earth) as being subsumed to the logic of capitalist politico-economy. In his working notes, he says,

We discuss the earth in terms of the social, political economy. We could not see it in the context of nature, the materiality that is the essence of the earth. Therefore we can not see the wholeness of the earth. This causes the endless conflicts, disharmony, violence, and disaster in our time.... It happens that we all subject ourselves to the capitalist logic. We all are the labors for the capital in forgetting earth.<sup>57</sup>

Lim esoterically relates the perpetuating forgetting of “nature” and “materiality” of ‘earth’ to the forgetting of the immanence of the *minjoong* life under the domination of capitalist logic in this statement. He states that this ‘forgetting’ perpetuates the disaster, violence, conflict and disharmony in both nature and *minjoong* life. Lim in this way implies that by ‘remembering’ this materiality we can see the “wholeness” of the earth or the sovereignty of *minjoong* and can overcome the perpetuating disaster in our life.

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<sup>57</sup> Lim Oksang, *ibid.*, p. 46

Do echoes Lim's point in the above mentioned essay by saying what we have forgotten is the immanent mode of existence of the earth which is construed as the "multi-linear poly-chrony." He says,

We don't remember the face of earth any more, and don't live with the story of earth. The labor and devotion of earth have been destroyed and then.....The multi-linear polychrony of earth has long been imprisoned by the mono-chrony of urbanity in the logic of linear time. Exiled .....the earth is forgotten exile.<sup>59</sup>

It is important note what Derrida says at this point, that the incorporation of "absence" would however always anticipate a limit since ghosts would endlessly return to us whenever one tries to assimilate and cushion that by way of "commitment". He reminds us of how the work of mourning in dealing with this haunting absence is an interminable task;

trauma is endlessly denied by the very movement through which one tries to cushion it, to assimilate it, to interiorise and incorporate it. In this mourning work in process, in this interminable task, the ghost remains ...<sup>60</sup>

Lim does not pretend to fully substantiate the absence in the history through his work but is honest about the limits of his works, although he strives to overcome them. Invoking the viewers to think what is not there and to remember what has been missing, the sense of absence in Lim's 'Earth' works provides (intentionally or not) the viewers with an "interval" to contemplate their uneasy time and history. The picture opens the question to the viewers of their belonging and unbelonging to a particular history, in line with their deep senses of disaster and loss.

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<sup>59</sup> Do, *ibid.* , p. 14

<sup>60</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p.98

### **A personal molecular**

This visualisation of the disasters of his own and *minjoong* times through the earth reflects the molecular elements of Lim's personal experience of modernity as entrenched in a collective experience of trauma and displacement. Lim himself was born into a peasant family who had been directly affected by the violent modern process, in particular that which the military developmentalist dictator Park Junghee's industrialization policy had imposed. Lim refers to this as Park Junghee's "compression" policy of the 1970s against peasants.<sup>61</sup> Park's aggressive industrialisation plan made the farmers exhaust themselves through having to survive with low profit margins, and drove them to leave their land to go to the city in order to survive. Almost all of them became cheap manual labour in urban factories. This marked an era of massive exodus or emigration of the rural population to the city during the 1970s.

This experience remained a memory of perpetuating violence and displacement in a huge portion of the population's mind. But the critiques against this policy were forbidden and the transgression of this norm meant a severe punishment. In this milieu, as Lim recollected, he moved to Seoul to study at a prestigious art school. In that school, academic minimal abstractionism was the normative aesthetics that pupils should follow. But in this, Lim could not find any aesthetic, conceptual accommodation since he wanted to explore life projected onto his experience and observation, and inflicted by violence and displacement. I asked him in an interview how much his personal experiences changed the direction of his art making. He told me "my experience made me question ...in which way the picture should exist. I thought that pictures should be something that makes the viewers encounter the scene of life".<sup>62</sup> Lim's art making became something through which he endeavours to work out his preoccupation with the experience and memory of the violence and displacement of himself and other *minjoong*, and intervenes into the lack of its representation.

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<sup>61</sup> The same interview with myself, on 4 August, 2000

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 2000

### **Anticipation**

The Earth works encounter the viewers with their secret desire, in particular a transgression and manifestation of their desire and will beyond the repressive consensus of time. 'Fire' (1979) is an imaginary and surrealistic picture. A fire is burning on the horizon of the red soiled field in this picture. The picture is covered with an overwhelming darkness, which makes this painting a sinister disaster picture. This picture may depict Lim's phantasm. In the same interview, Lim told me that it is "the picture of revolution". It is surmised that the picture reflects Lim's political unconsciousness, which is conversant with the historical, political and cultural (un)consciousness of his contemporary *minjoong*, who emerged in the 1980s and 1990s like wildfire.

The burning fire is a visual alteration in the mind of the dissident artist who pushes his deep seated emotions to subversive ends. "The fire on the horizon" can be generally read as a sign of impending disaster or of a formidable event. But under the particular time spirit of the 1980s and 1990s, this image becomes an uncanny reminder of the *Donghak* peasant uprising in the 1890s. The desire for change of the antagonist *minjoong* and the artists and intellectuals approaching the 1980s was intrigued by the history of *Donghak Hyegmyung* (*Donghak* Revolution) in 1894. The story of the *Donghak Hyegmyung* tells us that the peasants "arose like a burning wildfire" in Hwangsanbul (a flat wide field in Jeon-la region which is known as the place where the *Donghak* peasants arose). The story tells us that the peasants arose and marched through their fields holding fire in one hand and a bamboo spear in the other. This fire burning on the horizon in a wide and empty field had become one of the most powerful images in antagonising the *minjoong* and in the mind of poets and artists who dreamed of a revolution. Lim clearly aligned himself with these artists who dreamt of the *minjoong* revolution, but we do not see the peasants of 100 hundred years ago in his picture, and the red soil reminds us of their tragic defeat by the foreign troops.

The fire in this picture alone can be read as a signal of *minjoong Hyegmyung*. *Hyeg* means "change", while *Myung* means "fate" or "life", which makes *Hyegmyung* the change of fate. An English translation of *Hyegmyung* could be

‘Revolution’. ‘Revolution’ can be traced back to the Latin word ‘Revolere’, which translates into the contemporary verb, revolve. ‘Re’ means back, ‘volere’ means roll.<sup>63</sup> The cross cultural etymological speculation of this word can conjure the image of an evolving movement of something into a circle with intense forces which also change the cycle of its own fate in its own right. Lim’s imagination of *Hyegmyung* unites the concept of ‘revolution’ to the elemental life of fire, informed by the native natural philosophy in East Asia (that is to say, Lim’s ethical, aesthetical and political position revealed through this work seems to unite the critique of the politico-economy and natural philosophy, although I cannot develop this theme further within the scope of this thesis).<sup>64</sup> Fire is a primary element of the natural forces in the natural elemental philosophy. This philosophy teaches us that the changes of nature take place through the fusion and transmutation of the principal elemental forces of fire, water, air, soil, and stone. Nature is a constant and energetic process of (re)production by this continuous transfusion and transmutation of these heterogeneous elemental substances. Among them, ‘fire’ is the force which destroys but also which revitalizes nature. Fire burns down impurities in the soil and revives its fertility.

The motif of fire that Lim employs here is seen as signalling the rupture of the natural force that civilization has appropriated and domesticated in order to control it. Fire is an object of fear, and a wild substance which is believed to generate an excessive power capable of destroying civilization. Because of that, civilization has tried to domesticate the forces of fire through developing tools or technology to control its excessive force. In his painting, Lim imagines and depicts a wild combustion, or burning of the fire on the wild field, which alludes to the activation of *minjoong* power, and the pretext of *minjoong Hyegmyung*

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<sup>63</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary-10th edition*, Oxford Press, 1999

<sup>64</sup> His works often make a reference to the elementary power of nature through the motifs of the earth, tree, fire, wind, water etc. For example, his another work, ‘Fire in the Field’ (1979), also uses the fire motif. In this, the fire on the horizon meets the air/wind-represented as a cloud in the sky so the boundary between the sky and the earth is blurred in the mode of transmutation. Lim whether consciously or unconsciously embodies the principle of the natural philosophy in these works which is the division between the elements such as earth, fire, air is only an appearance but it is essentially integral part of whole circular process. Lim seems to imagine the modality of the real in repetition, transmutation, and alteration through principles of nature in the natural elementary philosophy.



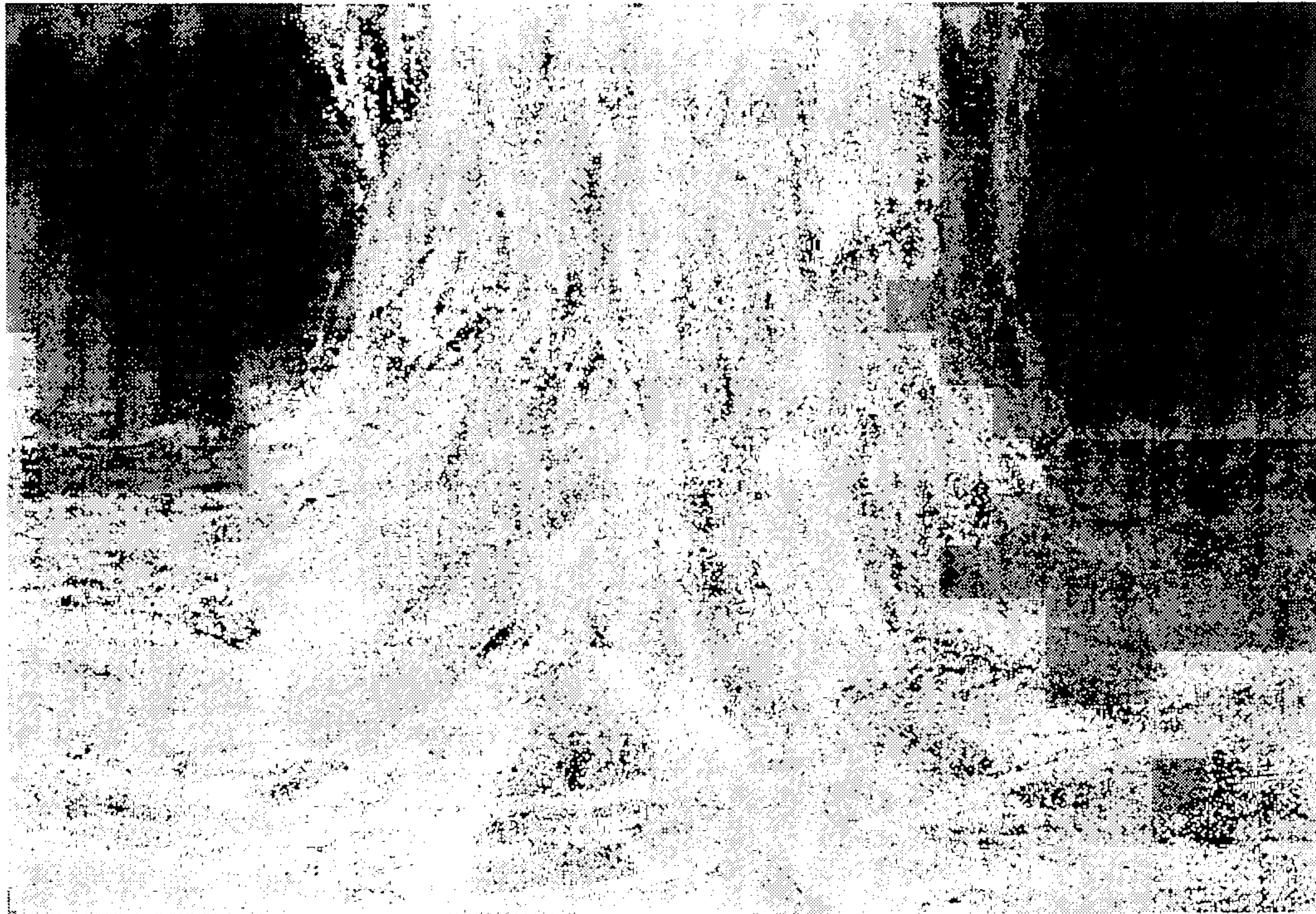


Figure 24. Lim Oksang, Go! Shell, 1990. Acrylic and Soil on Canvas

out of the civilization's repression of their power. Lim's imagination of the *Hyegmyung* here is construed as a restoration of the natural forces in its positive/natural circle, resisting man's artificial appropriation of those forces.

In another work, 'Go!Shells' (1990)\*<sup>1</sup> Lim finally realises the explosion of the earth. The surface of earth exploded as if the long repressed ones erupt by anger. Lim said he produced this picture after he read the famous poem of Shin Dongyep,<sup>2</sup> 'Go! Shells'. This poem is regarded as one of the most monumental works produced in the 1980s. This poem conveys the phantasmatic constellation of the poet, speculating through the fragments of *minjoong* histories of resistance during the last 100 years, attuned with a haunting vision of the future.

The poem reads as follows.

껍데기는 가라.  
사월\*도 알맹이만 남고  
껍데기는 가라. //  
껍데기는 가라.  
동학년(東學年) 곰나루\*의, 그 아우성만 살고  
껍데기는 가라. //  
그리하여, 다시  
껍데기는 가라.  
이곳에선, 두 가슴과 그곳까지 내는  
아사달 아사녀\*가  
중립(中立)의 초레칭 앞에 서서  
부끄럼 빛내며  
맞질할지니 //  
껍데기는 가라.  
한라\*에서 백두\*까지  
향그러운 흉가슴만 남고  
그 보오든 쇠붙이는 가라. //

Go, shell,

Leave only the kernel of April\*

Go, shell

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<sup>1</sup> See Figure 24. Lim Oksang, Go!Shells, 1990

<sup>2</sup> Sin Dongyep(1930-1968). He is regarded as one of the greatest *Minjok* poets. He left numerous poem on his love of landscape and nature with historical and *minjoong* imagination such as 'Jindalay Mountain Field', 'Kumkang'. He died at the age of 38.

Go, shell  
 Survive only the clamor in the Donghak's year, in Gomnaru\*  
 Go, shell  
 Therefore, again  
 Go, shell  
 Here, Asadal\*, Asaye\* who exposed their breasts and deep down there  
 Will bow to each other with a glittering shy  
 Standing up before her first wedding site of neutral zone\*  
 Go, Shell,  
 From Hanra\* to Baekdu\*  
 Leave only the fragrant earth-breast  
 Go, all, all the metal things  
 -Shin Dongyep, 1969\* <sup>67</sup>

Lim wrote in his autobiography that he always misses Shin and his poetry.<sup>68</sup> As Shin rendered in his poem, Go! Shell, Lim regarded the seemingly silent surface of the earth as a mask which disguises the inner reality of the earth and imagined that the destruction of this would let all the suppressed vital cores and contents of 'earth' come about and revive. Lim inherits Shin's poetic imagination and spirit here, wishing to bring about the emergence of all the submerged and suppressed.

'Fire' and 'Go Shell!' are the imagery of the future Lim endorses, and which aligned in the divergent modalities of 'the real'. This radical anticipation occurs when the desire of long repressed agency is focused on approaching the radical

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<sup>67</sup> Shin Dongyep, *누가하늘을 보았다 하는가*(Who Says Saw The Sky), ChangJak kya Bipyung, Seoul, 1989

\*April; indicates a civil uprising in the 19 April, 1960. This massive civil uprising made the military regime accept the demand of the people for the direct election of the president.

\*Gomnaru: the name of a ferry in the south eastern part of Korea. This is a historical place related to the Donghak peasant revolution.

\*Asadal: name of man in a folk tale, a general denominator of an anonymous woman

\*Asaye: name of woman in a folk tale, a general denominator of an anonymous woman

\*Neutral zone: the DMZ(the demilitary zone between the North and South Korea)

\*Hanra: Mt. Hanra, A mountain in South Korea, which is regarded as a spiritual center.

\*Bakdu: Mt, Bakdu, A mountain of North Korea, which is regarded as a spiritual center

<sup>68</sup> Lim Oksang, *Gallery Without Wall*, p140



Figure 25. Lim Oksang, The Barley Field 2, 1983. Oil on Canvas



Figure 26. Lim Oksang, 'Barley Field', 1983. Oil on Canvas

end of its own. In the impasse of history, this vision, or this desire provides the best alibi for the possibility of the future of the *minjoong*.

### **Specters**

The Earth is often juxtaposed with the image of the dead, especially, those who Lim misses and the loss of whom Lim very much mourns for. In the picture titled 'The Barley Field 2' (1983),\*<sup>69</sup> a group of wizened old men emerge in the field. Are they ghosts or 'real'? The aligned old and exhausted men, who appear like zombies in the back, front and middle of the yellow barley field on a summer's day, are the ghosts of peasants who returned to the place from where they had been expelled. The colour of the barley field is vividly real, highlighting the surreal atmosphere of this picture. It could be Lim's day dreaming and illusion. The peasants appear to have lost their vitality since their arms hang down rigidly, and they have slightly bent bodies as the result of hardship and old age. However, their return here seems to be a manifestation of some inexorable force of the dead, which no one has anticipated. Another work, the 'Barley Field'(1983)\*<sup>70</sup>, captures the face of a peasant man who emerges from a vivid green barley field. In a similar surrealistic atmosphere, the old peasant man stares at the viewer with the eye of a dissident and with endurance against the background of vivid blue sky.

These images are linked to Lim's memory as the son of a peasant who is implicated in the shame and mourning for his family and other peasants. He witnessed their despair and displacement. Their images return to his retinal eye as specters on the background of the absent field as these anonymous peasants are always perceived, as Lim wrote, as "the guardians of the earth". He also says "they are the *Bosal* (the deity of Buddha) and *Mirk* (a future Buddha) of the earth"<sup>71</sup>. Lim's vision of their return gives way to a "spectral spiritualization" of the peasants who he imagines never leave the field. They will return to warn and teach us about their immanent place on earth, as the sacred one to whom we must pay the utmost respect.

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<sup>69</sup> Figure 25. Lim Oksang, The Barley Field 2, 1983,

<sup>70</sup> See Figure 26. Lim Oksang, 'Barley field', 1983

<sup>71</sup> Lim Oksang, *Lim Oksang Art Essay: Who Does Not Dream the Beautiful World-A Soul Diary Of An Artist*, Saengak Y Namu, Seoul, 2000. p 254



Figure 27. Lim Oksang, The Tomb of Kim Namju, 1994. Mud and Pigment



Figure 28. Lim Oksang, Puddle 5, 1988. Acrylic on Canvas

‘The Tomb of Kim Namju’ (1994)\*<sup>72</sup> is another powerful work about such specters. Kim Namju is a poet who actively participated in the *Minjoong Art and Culture Movement* and who died in 1994 due to an illness he gained from repeated imprisonments. He was involved with writing poetry as well as political activism against the dictatorship. Kim Namju is famous for his poem, ‘My Poetry Is My Sword’. He is well known as an artist who kept his antagonist spirit alive through an anti-romantic attitude toward his own work, screaming or shouting his poems at literary gatherings instead of reading and singing them. The face of the dead, the antagonist poet, Kim Namju emerges from the earth as if resurrected from the tomb. His wide-open and penetrating eyes, behind his iconic black framed glasses, are staring up to the audience from below. This invokes a great sense of obscenity since the viewer does not expect his resurrection and does not know why he returns, staring at us with such a gaze. Lim told me that he needed to bring him back in this way because the present he identified with was an impasse due to all of the political confusion and exhaustion prevalent in the antagonist camp. Returning as a ghost, Kim Namju compels us to stay awake and not despair. The fact that his body is still half-buried signifies a sorrowful gap between reality and his own wishes. Lim needs him and sees him. But he only exists as a form of half-presence – not the whole. By resurrecting him in this way, Lim wishes to resurrect his consistent, antagonist spirit in a time of crisis but leaves the sense of impossibility there. This shocking reappearance of Kim provokes in the viewers a sense of shame and also of an indefinable imperative of commitment.

In ‘Puddle 5’ (1988)\*<sup>73</sup>, the face of Jeon Bongjun, the leader of a failed peasants revolution, the *Donghak* uprising in 1894, appears in the middle of an empty field. On the horizon of the field, is *Baeksan*, the symbolic mountain of *Donghak* in the *Jeonla-do* region. The field is covered with red soil, which indicates the region, the cradle of the *Donghak* peasant Uprising. Jeon’s face is projected onto the surface of a puddle in red. Lim wrote on this work, “the only man who would emerge in this red, muddy water would be Jeon Bongjun”.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> See the Figure 27. Lim Oksang, *The Tomb of Kim Namju*, 1994

<sup>73</sup> See Figure 28. Lim Oksang, *Puddle 5*, 1988

<sup>74</sup> Lim Oksang, *Lim Oksang Art Essay: Who Does Not Dream the Beautiful World-A Soul Diary*



This is the last and only image we have of this legendary figure, a photo taken by the prosecutor just before his execution in 1895.

Jeon is one of the followers of *Donghak* philosophy and one of the leaders of the *Donghak* uprising. *Donghak* is a home grown, synthetic philosophy of different religions (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity) that became a revolutionary ideology during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was widely supported by the antagonized and suppressed *minjoong* and the fallen intellectual class. Briefly, *Donghak* advocated the equality of *minjoong*, their utopia in the world, and redemption. These peasants arose and fought against the corrupted Korean feudal regime as well as the colonial powers (of the West and Japan) who were approaching Korea, united under the *Donghak* thoughts<sup>75</sup> This uprising is recorded as the first systematic attempt at a revolution by the *minjoong* in Korean modern history, although it was bitterly defeated by the Japanese troops which were brought in by the corrupt Korean feudal regime. Jeon was captured and prosecuted by the Japanese troops.

Most importantly, through this work, Lim successfully materialised his wish to link the *Donghak* to its grassroots origins by making Jeon emerge from the earth-puddle, which we may translate as the reservoir of *minjoong* agony and sacrifice. While the conservative Korean historiography has marginalized the history of the *Donghak* uprising and *Donghak* thoughts, which is a remarkable example of grass-root philosophy in Korea, Lim successfully reminded us that we have a case of modern grass-root ideology in the past. Lim conjures the spirit of the unfinished *minjoong* revolution by making Jeon return in a time of historical confusion and persistent agony of *minjoong*.

### **Symptomatology**

Lim's array of phantoms of "the real" as crystalised through the earth works presents us with the dynamic symptomatology of what is made inadequate and unseen behind the normative institution of representation. To discuss this

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*Of An Artist*, *ibid.*, p203

<sup>75</sup> see Korean History Research Academy ed., *Korean History Lecture*, *ibid.*. See *Donghak Peasant Movement*. P. 264

symptomatology further, I will look at Chow's discussion of the "symptom", which she addressed as an important point of analysis of post-colonial cultural politics and ethics after "the devastation of idealism".

Chow's essay, 'Ethics After Idealism' introduces the spectrum of the study of value<sup>76</sup>, which is one of the most significant concepts in leftist scholarship, which itself has emerged as the central discourse in contemporary critiques of cultural politics. Denouncing the tendency that "the economic" has been "too easily written off" as economic reductionism by many contemporary critics, Chow recapitulates the points Spivak raised in 'Marx after Reading Derrida' and Žižek's 'The Sublime Object of Ideology'. Chow sees here that an equally compelling ethical position emerges in Spivak's emphasis on the inheritance of the cultural politics on the value - in particular the use value- and in Žižek's discussion of the symptom. Chow sees these attempts as being largely interconnected and construed as the revival of the notion of the value in Marx in light of Derrida and Lacan. Chow stated that this dismissal of the notion of value has been indebted to the old binary opposition between economy and culture. By contrast, Spivak and Žižek consider the return of value and symptom (of the real) in the function of the reciprocal economy which is seen as the governing principle of a cultural economy as well as a political economy. They see the principle of reciprocal economy as intervening in the field of culture, as a general law of exchange, producing a value in *différence* and the rupture of the symptom. For example, Spivak discusses the return of the value of heterogeneity in the homogenizing appropriation of culture which is explained through the value circulation in money exchange. Spivak wrote, "the value [of money] comes from being inside the circulation/exchange, but in order to own it you have to take it *outside* the circulation": "[the value] is both the 'culture' and 'nature', and it violates the clean conceptual boundary between the two".<sup>77</sup> Culture's appropriation of heterogeneity through the action of ownership and exploitation of surplus value poses a problem in reflection to the

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<sup>76</sup> Rey Chow, *Ethics After Idealism*, Indiana Press, 1998. In the eponymous chapter in this book, Chow reappraises the works of whom she says the most energetic post-Marxist intellectuals such as S. Žižek and G.C. Spivak and read how they treat the issues of the value/difference/symptom. Chow sees each of them recapitulating the Marx's notion of (use) value anew and revives it as focal theme of their studies.

<sup>77</sup> Rey, *ibid*, Ray quotes Spivak, p.35

law of the economy of circulation in nature where value is produced. Spivak sees that the “return of value to its originary openness” is an inevitable movement within the economy.<sup>78</sup> It can be said that the return of “the real” is governed by this economy, in which the previous repressed values return to the site of originary openness, and appear beyond the homogenizing refrain of institutional culture.

Paraphrasing Chow, Spivak returns value to the *différance* - the place where the fissure and heterogeneity of the equation between capital and labour occurs. Meanwhile, Žižek returns value to the symptom - which he reads as “a surplus value” itself – in the same way in which Marx discerned it through the analysis of commodities - as the locus of the impossible “encounter between rationality and trauma.”<sup>79</sup> Žižek describes the “symptom [as] a particular element which subverts its own universal foundation, a species subverting its own genus.” In this sense, he continues to say that the elementary Marxist procedure of the criticism of ideology is already symptomatic: “it consists in detecting a point of breakdown heterogeneous to a given ideological field and at the same time necessary for that field to achieve its closure, its accomplished form.”<sup>80</sup> Žižek says that there is a “traumatic kernel” (the real) which we can not comprehend, but this non-comprehension is also what enables this to function. This “kernel - negativity because we do not know and can not know it - is what gives our life its positive consistency (our ability to make sense of the world). Survival means a non-knowledge of ‘the real’: conversely, knowing is lethal. This non-knowledge-cum-living-well is our symptom.” He also says, “when symptom erupts, is when the paradox reveals.” “The working of the symptom applies to individual organisms and collective bodies alike.”<sup>81</sup>

The symptomatology of the real in Lim detects the point of breakdown of social rationality and paradox in the *minjoong* experience of modernity, which is construed as the mapping of symptoms in the realm of broken rationality in the operation of *difference* in their history. That is, today, this symptomatology is

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<sup>78</sup> Chow, *ibid.*, p.35

<sup>79</sup> Chow, *ibid.*, Pp. 37-38

<sup>80</sup> Chow, *ibid.*, pp. 36-37

<sup>81</sup> Chow, *ibid.*, p. 38

the revelation of the *différance* in the repressive economy of Korean modernity, where the earth is used as an intermediary motif to convey what matters. The earth witnesses the “matters”, the causes and entirety of which are often difficult to comprehend despite their affectivity. A symptomatology is a method which is born out of the artist’s instinctual awareness of the nature of trauma itself which lies in the fact that it exists in the collapse of the integrity between truth and knowing, in which truth appears as only spectral. The earth lends itself for Lim as a communicative tool of such spectral truth.

The ethics that involves the work of “the real”, which is caught in the dilemma existing between the difficulties of knowing and the impossibility of forgetting, has been the concern of many post-Freudian Marxist critics. For instance, Chow cites Žižek’s contention about the political project of ‘real’ in the same essay in regard to this matter, “political project based on an ethics of the real... , an ethics of confrontation with an impossible, traumatic kernel not covered by any ideal (of the unbroken communication, of the invention of the self.<sup>82</sup> The ethics of the real take into account the danger for those who desire to know and to account for this, which is universalizing it through a meta-language or finalization of it. Rey Chow continues to quote Žižek on how to work with an ethical distance to the “unknowable”,

The only way to avoid the real is to produce an utterance of pure metalanguage which, by its patent absurdity, materializes its own impossibility. That is, a paradoxical element which, in its very identity, embodies absolute otherness, the irreparable gap that makes it impossible to occupy a meta-language position.<sup>83</sup>

Lim’s symptomatology of the real contextualises the phantom of the real but does so without assuming the transparency of knowing. But it has been observed that the impossibility of the representation of trauma has often been a rhetorical fetish that leaves no possibility of thinking the possibility of

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<sup>82</sup> Chow, *ibid.*, p.41 Chow quotes Žižek who echoes Ernst Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe’s ethics of “the real”.

<sup>83</sup> Chow, *ibid.*, p.40. This quote is originally from the Žižek’s *Sublime Object of Ideology*, p156



Figure 29. Ulum, 1984, Woodcut Print and Color



Figure 30. Oh Yoon, *Abi*, 1983, Woodcut Print. c. Oh Yoon Foundation, Seoul. Woodcut Print



Figure 31. Oh Yoon, Self-Portrait, 1984. Woodcut Print



Figure 32. Oh Yoon, *Jing-2*, 1985. Woodcut Print

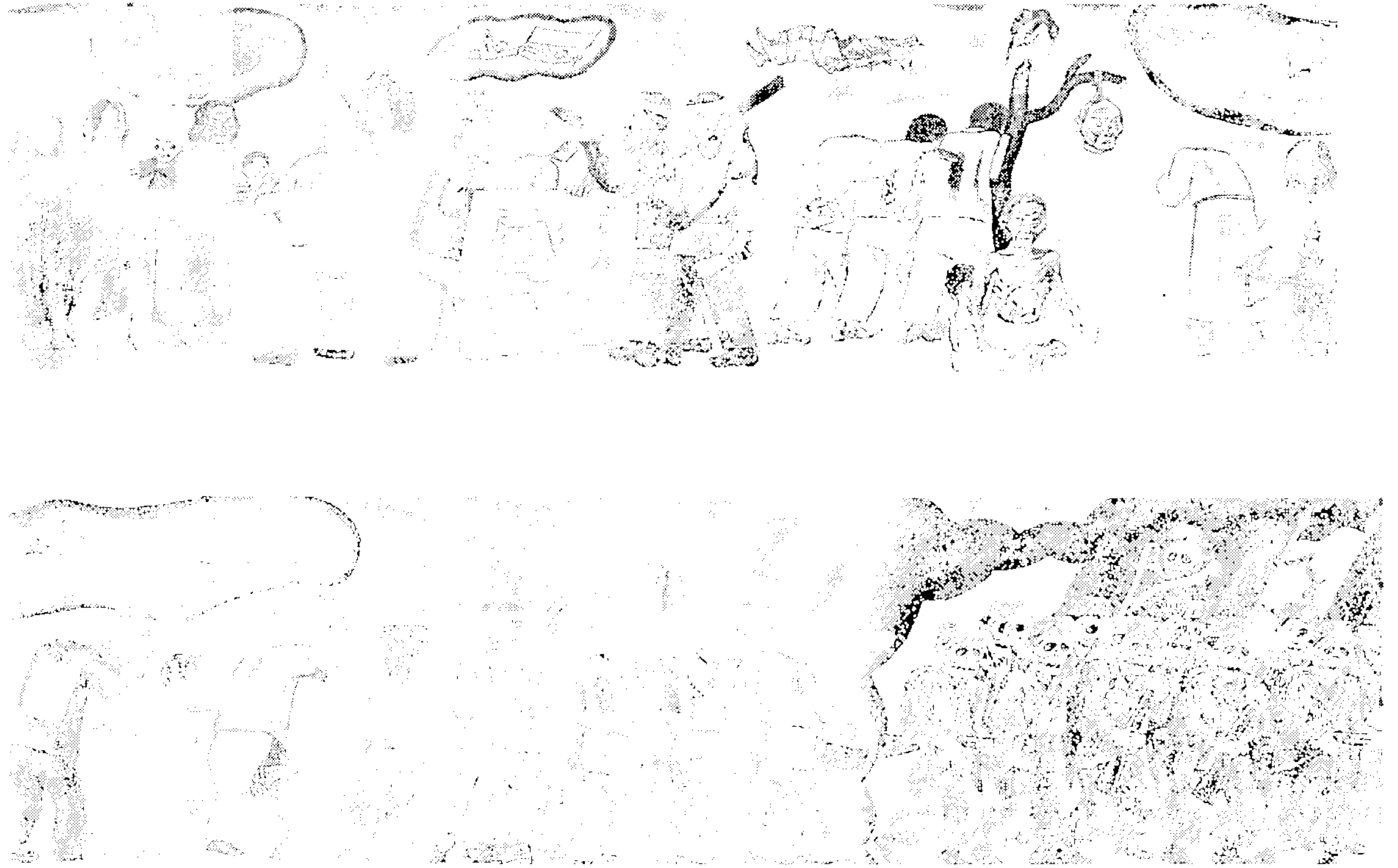


Figure 33. Oh Yoon, *Wonguido-6.25*, 1994. Oil on Canvas



33-1. Oh Yoon, *Wonguido(sketch)*, 1994. Oil on Canvas

commitment for one who desperately needs it. On the other side of the ethics of the unknowable, Cathy Caruth also addresses the significant point of the need and possibility of speaking of, and listening to, the trauma of the other:

A speaking and a listening from the site of trauma does not rely, I would suggest, on what we simply know of each other, but on what we don't know of our own traumatic pasts. In a catastrophic age, that is trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures: not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather, within the traumas of contemporary history, as our ability to listen through the departure we have all taken from ourselves.<sup>84</sup>

Caruth suggests that the trauma itself may provide the link between others. Rather than contending with the dogma of the “impossible”, her insight on our ability to listen to the other through the departure we have taken from ourselves is another significant ethical and pragmatic remark about the work of trauma in our time. Lim takes the departure from himself, and opens a virtual space for listening and speaking to the other's trauma. ‘The earth’ works Lim provides as an intermediary space of contemplation of the disasters link the previously segregated people in their own traumatic impossibility and non-communicability. Caruth's remark about the possibility of listening and speaking of trauma may evaluate the *modus operandi* of Lim's symptomatology, which appears to be a good example of the ethico-aesthetico-communicative methodology of our time.

### **Iconic**

As for the case of Oh Yoon's works, he constructed a symptomatology by consistently working on the iconic physiognomies of the anonymous *minjoong* who endure the repression, trauma, fright and resistance. Oh's portraits of the anonymous child, men, a woman, the old, and the young presented through print works such as ‘Echoing body’ Series (1984), the ‘Mother and Child’ (1979),

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<sup>84</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, The Johns Hopkins University, 1995 p.11



'*Ulum*'(1984),\*<sup>85</sup> '*Abi*'(1983)\*<sup>86</sup>, '*Self-Portrait*'(1984)\*<sup>87</sup>, *Jing-2*(1985)\*<sup>88</sup>  
'*Arario*'(1985), and oil painting, '*Wonquido-6.25*'(1984),\*<sup>90</sup> are haunting  
images of *the minjoong* in the postcolonial time of Korea.

Oh provides us with these works as a speculative medium of 'the real' of the *minjoong* in an enduring form. They are a spatio-temporal medium for us to look into the *minjoong* life in the past, present and future that is inseparable from their unforeseen inner reality. One's physiognomy is the facial character which is considered to show one's real character, or regarded as indicative of one's character.<sup>93</sup> The *minjoong* physiognomy is where their inner time is inscribed and through which the other can trace the code of their embodied history. For example, Lim's figures in common have faces inflicted by long repression and fright, but also have a solidity in endurance of life, and often powerful by their symptomatic gesture of liberation. Walter Benjamin talks about the physiognomist in his essay in relation to book collection and collectors. Benjamin remarks on how a book collector becomes "an interpreter of the fate of words inside the object (books) when he/she deals with the objects with the most speculative manner" like a "physiognomist" who speculates the fate of a person through their facial symptoms. A collector penetrates into the past "as though he is inspired".<sup>94</sup> Likewise, Oh's work of physiognomy of

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<sup>85</sup> See Figure 29. Oh Yoon, *Ulum*, 1984. *Ulum* means 'a cry'.

<sup>86</sup> See Figure 30. *Abi*. The title of this work is worthy of our contemplation. It is an appellation which elderly parents apply to their grown up son when he has had his own children in turn. There is a strong paternal sense in this appellation for the grown-up man. In the picture, the man who is a carer of a young child seems to have been exposed to the hardship of the era. The man has his back turned, holding his child on his shoulder, looking intensely at something. There is a strong sense of tension in the synchronised gaze of these two generations. This work materializes the sentiment of succession of hardship, compassion and uncertainty in the *minjoong* life through generations: *Abi* implies that this grown up man is also a child of the older caller. *Abi*, the call of great one resonated a spectral, sympathetic voice, "abi, my poor child, I'm very sorry for you." This evokes the utmost sense of *han* which is persistent through generations in Korea. Oh Yoon, *Abi*, 1983

<sup>87</sup> See Figure 31. Oh Yoon, *Self-Portrait*, 1984

<sup>88</sup> Figure 32. Oh Yoon, *Jing-2*, 1985

<sup>90</sup> See Figure 33. Oh Yoon, *Wonquido-6.25*, 1984

<sup>93</sup> *Collins Cobuild English dictionary*, 1995, and *Oxford dictionary*, 1999

<sup>94</sup> "everything remembered and thought, everything conscious, becomes pedestal, the frame, the base, the lock of his property. The period, the region, the craftsmanship, the former ownership - for a true collector the whole background of an item adds up to a magic encyclopedia whose quintessence is the fate of his objects. In this circumscribed area, then, it may be surmised how the great physiognomists-and collectors are the physiognomists of the word of objects-turn into the interpreters of fate. One has only to watch a collectors handle the objects in his glass case. As he holds them in his hands, he seems to be seeing through them into their distant past as

Korean *minjoong* retains a certain speculative insight of Oh on the enduring feature of *minjoong* life in both negative and subversive modes, and as a result, as it is often said, the singularity of his *minjoong* portraits astonishes the viewers.

An art critic, Sung Wankyung attributes the significant aspects of Oh's portraits to Oh's vision, which embodies and penetrates through an accumulation of the lived experiences of *minjoong* through which Oh succeeds to achieve an immanent form of Korean *minjoong* in his art.

The form of life of nameless people, his [Oh's] emotion and sensibility is *minjoong*. The lines of Oh's works are the accumulation of their lived emotion, lived form, and the succession. Oh's eye and technique is related to an immanent prototype. His works are iconic. For a human to draw the human character, more precisely to draw the human and the human relationship has been one of the areas which artists have been dedicated to.....<sup>96</sup>

Sung says that the portrait of the *minjoong*, which is a condensation of the "lived emotion" of *minjoong* of their "lived form", looks "iconic".<sup>97</sup> This *minjoong* portrait of agony, fright, and resistance is made to be an eternal space of contemplation by the effect of iconisation. The sense of 'eternal' in this imagery territorialises a tensed middle ground of the present of *minjoong*. The historical suffering of *minjoong* is released from their long imprisonment in Oh's visual enterprise and is rendered in a form of the duration of their subjugation, anxiety and resistance rather than sublimated. None of them are

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though inspired. So much for the magical side of the collector-his old-age image, I might call it". W. Benjamin, 'Unpacking My Library: A Book About Book Collecting', *Illumination*, ibid. p 62

<sup>96</sup> Sung, ibid., "Oh, Yoon's Brush and Sword", in the exhibition catalogue, Oh Yoon, *Oh Yoon's Woodcut Print Work, 'People in the Village and People in the World'*, Hakgojae, 1996. Seoul, (this article is originally written and published in Gaegan Misul, Autumn, 1985, ibid., pp.204-205

<sup>97</sup> Sung, ibid., pp 204-205

idealized, nor reduced, but the images appear to be a pictorial space which invokes what I call a 'subliminary sublime' at the tensed present.

This subliminary sublime creates a tensed moment of arrest in the viewers' mind. Sung surmises that the iconic in Oh's works is the product of the consolidated inwardness of the artist and this ironically creates an incommensurable distancing effect in the viewers who look at his pictures. Sung continues to say that Oh's works:

give the impression of an honest, solidly consolidated inwardness, in other side, it has an aspect of a materialized deadpan. Also it evokes the feeling that the work as a whole is seemingly gradually distancing into the remote dark space as if a propellant is separated from the rocket when it is about to enter the space.<sup>98</sup>

The consolidation of the inwardness of Oh's works can be surmised as a by-product of the artist's subjectivity and his oeuvre, formulated through the age of repression. His artistic consciousness in pursuing realism may be related to his age old wishes to make the recognition of the suffering possible. The distancing effect that Oh's works create is difficult to explain but it can be interpreted as the effect of the subliminary sublime in the viewer's body and mind, in which the viewer experiences the split of a partial self from being attached to the social intentionality and taken into a completely different cognitive realm. In this experience, the previously segregated and foreclosed bodies of the individual in the individuated production cell of the national economy and political repression find the possibility to feel themselves and to open the conversation of their own anxiety and problems.

The fact that Oh Yoon's portraits of *minjoong*, achieve the state of the iconic is remarkable. Oh's portraits of *minjoong* invoke, as Kim Chiha puts it, a kind of "Numinose"(sacred-ness), which transfers an object to iconic status.<sup>99</sup> The

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<sup>98</sup> Sung, Wankyung made this comment looking at Oh's 'Wonguido'(1984), which I will introduce later. Ibid, p. 201

<sup>99</sup> Kim Chiha, ibid., *Oh Yoo*, n p 178

production of an icon is possible when common cultural codes are shared and incorporated by the members of that society. The effect of *numinose* is an essential effect that the icon needs to have through which to enchant people into the same emotional, cultural, ideological band. It facilitates *corps de esprit* of the people, in other words, provides them with a common identification. In Oh's portraits, the viewers see themselves for the first time in history. They see the aesthetic realm in which the representation of their reality is realised. Kim explains *Numinose* in Oh's work as an effect of spiritual forces which are experienced in a 'reciprocal exchange' between works and viewers. The forces transmute like specters from one to another. Kim Chiha says, "It is the relation of the spirits or ghosts, the reason why the lines [of Oh's works] look iconic is because the lines pulled the sacred spirit and ghost up into the everyday level."<sup>100</sup> Through the lines that allude to a commonsensicality and sub-national cultural memory<sup>101</sup> the ghost effect of these works is construed as the spiritualisation of the suppressed memory of *minjoong*.

### **Excessive present**

The haunting effect of Oh's works also lies in the fact that it compels viewers to stay in the tensed moment of excessive present to contemplate 'the real' rather than allowing any transcendence or escape to a detached past or a detached future. In this way, his works compel us to see beyond the present by going under the convoluted strata of the present time. Sung explained this effect as Oh's "realistic consistency", which is Oh's method of symptomatology of the real in order to approach the real. However, Sung confesses a great sense of difficulty in translating this effect. He says, "horrifying non-personality, nonnegotiable realistic consistency, excessive present tense... deadpan face... I can not explain"<sup>102</sup>

Sung's comment on "the excessive present tense" elucidates an interesting aspect of Oh's realism which crystalises the *minjoong* present as more than the

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<sup>100</sup> Kim Chiha, *ibid.*, p.178

<sup>101</sup> Kim, *ibid.*, p178

<sup>102</sup> Kim, Chiha, "Contemporary Meaning of Oh, Yoon's Work" (this is a transcript of dialogue between Chiha Kim and Sim Kwanghyun in 7. May, 1996, in Sol Press, Seoul), in an exhibition catalogue, Oh Yoon, *Oh Yoon's Woodcut Print Work, People in The Village and People in the World*, Hakgojae, 1996. Seoul, p. 201

present due to the momentum which derives from their uneasy existence caught in-between their obsession with the unacknowledged past and the desire for the future. For example, the 'Echoing Boy' series and '*Jing- 2*'(1985)\*<sup>103</sup> materialize this excessiveness in a visible form. One can see the lines of sonic illusion which convey the sense of the turbulence around the anonymous figures. The excessive present is materialised through the illusion of echoes here, which is visually presented as ever expanding, multi-layered lines and vibration. This illusion of echoing sound also signifies the excessiveness of the experience of "haunting" of differential matters, while not knowing what they are. The *minjoong*, who Oh presents live in the "now", at the same time are compelled to live beyond it because of their very impoverished condition. These indefinable, spectral characters of the *minjoong* that Oh presents affect the viewers and their imagination of time beyond the limitative horizon of the present.

### **The personal molecular**

Compared to Lim's, Oh's life is little known except for the fact that he was born into a novelist's family in Pusan (a south-eastern city of Korea). His life as an individual and his ethos as an artist remain largely unpublicised due to the absence of his own testimonies on his artistic impulses before he died at the age of 41 in 1986. Despite these difficulties, I attempt to note some points which hint at his personal molecular of the *minjoong* history through which his ethos as a unique realist artist can be found.

His friends remembered him as a dissident but also as a very introverted, quiet, stubborn character. Oh is regarded as one of the pioneers of the *Minjoong Realist Art and Cultural Movement* since he was the participant of the signal exhibition of the movement, 'Reality and Utterance', as a member of *Hyunsildongin* (roughly translated as the Contemporary Society) in 1969. This was an attempt of group of young pioneer artists and critics that is recorded as the cornerstone of the realist art movement which matured in the 1980s and

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<sup>103</sup> See Figure 33. Oh Yoon, *Jing*, 1985. A *Jing* is a gong.

1990s. However, their exhibition is recorded as a failed affair, as it was cancelled on the day of the opening due to censorship by the authorities.<sup>104</sup>

According to his close interlocutor, Sung Wankyung, Oh is very much like his works, whose character is inward-looking, solid, and *minjoong*-oriented.<sup>105</sup> Kim Chiha, his other close interlocutor since his student period, also testifies that he had “the emotion and sensibility of *minjoong*”, and “the quality of the prophet and *Noin*”.<sup>106</sup> *Noin* literarily means “an aged person”, but this has a culturally specific meaning beyond that. *Noin* is a figure of a speculative wisdom, which he attains through the accumulation of his experience and memory. It is surmised that others saw Oh as having a capacity of thinking and seeing described as wisdom independent from what the goal-oriented rationality dictates. Similarly, Sung’s comment on Oh’s inwardness may indicate Oh’s constant reflection on this memory-thought.

His artist friends testified not only to his *Noin* like character but also to his stubborn and critical attitude to other realist artists, which may also resonate the solidity Sung noted in Oh’s work. It is well known that Oh used to criticise his colleagues for their elitist attitudes in saying “art for *minjoong*”. In relation to this criticism, Sung recalls that Oh used to say to his colleagues, “be honest”. The expression “honesty” was present in the commentary Sung made on Oh’s works, that they have the character of “honesty, solidly consolidated inwardness”<sup>109</sup> Sung himself does not take account of what this “honesty” means or explains the realism Oh pursued, but this utterance supposedly translates Oh’s differential approach in relation to other realists. This differential approach may be related to his reliance on the memory-thought, which is the locus where Oh tried to repair the gap between *minjoong* reality and their spiritual vocation. Honesty requires us to listen closely to the artist

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<sup>104</sup> Sung, *ibid.*, p.195; see the launching statement of this group in Yoo Hyungjun, “*The Realism And Minjok Art*”, in Jungheun Kim, et. al ed., *The Historical Condition and The Discourse of Art*, Hangerae Press, 1986: pp 45-81, p. 49

<sup>105</sup> Sung, *ibid.*, p. 196

<sup>106</sup> “Contemporary Meaning of Oh, Yoon’s Work”, *ibid.*, p172

<sup>109</sup> Sung, *ibid.*, p. 201

himself/herself as a point of departure whilst attempting to apprehend the elusive reality in/outside their bodyscape and in pursuit of *correspondences*. “Correspondences”, Benjamin noted, “record a concept of experience ... through the appropriation of which an artist can be able to fathom the full meaning of breakdown which a modern man was witnessing.”<sup>110</sup> Presumably, Oh thought other realist artists were not making enough effort to approach this *correspondence*. In this context, in Oh’s utterance, “honesty” can be understood as a significant remark of a realist who acknowledges the ‘split’ in the artist’s own body in the absence of a realist tradition, and the lack of capacity to represent his own experiences. Oh urges others to contemplate the way to represent themselves before they can claim to represent the other. This is a significant question for those who claimed to be ‘objective’ realists but who do without much reflection on the split of their own body.

In relation to the *minjoong* orientedness, Sung recalls Oh’s disinterest in viewing or circulating his works in an institutional art space like an art gallery or solo exhibition. He says that, rather, Oh liked to work for the readers of workers’ poetry, university newspapers, *minjoong* theatre, *Talchum* theatre (a folk mask dance theatre, which was revived in the 1980s and has a very satirical, witty character), literature nights, and rallies. His unconventional approach to his art, although being a graduate of a prestigious art school, is also revealed by the period during which he worked on a roof brick factory in Kyungju between 1973 and 1975, and put less emphasis on his art work. Sung recalls Oh’s passion for the *Talchum*. He also recalls Oh’s frequent illnesses and sudden disappearances. He is known to have been deeply interested in *Zungsan-do* (a philosophy, or religion, or the way of meditation that has survived over 100 years after it was invented by Kang Zungsan, one of the spiritual leaders who were involved in the *Donghak* uprising), in the later part of his life.<sup>111</sup> Oh died in 1986 after his first and last solo exhibition, in *Grim-Madang Min*.<sup>112</sup> ‘Sword Song’ was the title of the exhibition and a collection of prints was published under the same title later by his heirs.

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<sup>110</sup> Benjamin, *ibid.*, p.177

<sup>111</sup> Sung, *ibid.*, p.194

<sup>112</sup> Grim Madang Min is an exhibition space which has offered an open space for the artists affiliated to the *Minjoong* realist art movement throughout 1980s and mid 1990s.

### *Wongui*

In '*Wongui-do*(1984)\*<sup>113</sup>, one of Oh's monumental works, we witness the succession of life and death of *minjoong* in the tragic history from the Korean War (1950-1953) to the *Kwangju* uprising(1980). Oh speculates where, when, who, and what are to be remembered in the succession of the disastrous history the *minjoong* have suffered and endured. Sung commented on this work that it is the most advanced, the most pertinent and visionary representation of *minjoong* history, unlike any other history picture genre or photojournalism, where the real sense of history is often mumified.<sup>114</sup> One sees a horrifying sequence of realistic and surrealistic imagery of *minjoong* as *wongui* (ghost) which contextualises the unseparated-ness of their life from the disappeared in history.

*Wongui-do* is an oil painting and made in a horizontal scroll style. It is made to an epic scale in a width of 4 meters and a depth of 69 centimetres. In the Korean War section,<sup>115</sup> the immediate interpretation would be that it features the refugees of the war, who, as Sung Wankyung has rightly described, are the central characters of the tragedy. In this picture, the surviving are displaced, mad, devastated, bewildered, whilst the dead are floating in the air as *wongui*. *Wongui* is the ghost of deploration and regret and *do* means the picture of the ghost, which makes *Wongui* 'ghost's picture'. *Wongui* is a term especially used for the ghost of someone who has died with a grudge or grievance and who subsequently, and necessarily, comes back to life to fulfil its remaining wish and to compensate for its unfulfilled desire. The *Wongui* is virtually connected to the surviving *minjoong* in the midst of the tragedy, who are continuing to seek for the missing bodies of their beloved.

The life of the *minjoong* is, as pictured here, inseparable from the *Wongui*. Oh accounts for the *minjoong*'s connectedness to them. Because of this connection, *minjoong* do not live at the limit of the present but beyond. Kim China said that *Wonguido*:

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<sup>113</sup> See Figure 21.

<sup>114</sup> Sung, *ibid* p.236

<sup>115</sup> see Oh Yoon, *Wonguido*-6.25, 1994



deals with “now and here” revealing the epochal life of *minjoong* but their invisible but dormant, curling up willingness.[ ...] And it is very significant to observe the history of ‘*mincho*’ (roughly translates grass-root people like *minjoong*) is presented as the history of the *Wongui*. It is a very important beginning....<sup>116</sup>

Kim’s expression, “an important beginning”, means that Oh’s recognition that “the ghostly matter” of the dead is a significant and constitutive part of contemporary *minjoong* life and their identity. In other words, the real of the *minjoong* is defined by the experience of haunting at the centre of the disastrous history and its succession. In the picture, while the surviving *minjoong* are unable to be separated from the dead loved ones, the headless figures of the military band and the parade of soldiers whose faces are skulls are seen as puppets driven by the evil deity like ‘war maniacs’.

The end of this picture is left uncompleted which signifies that the *minjoong* history as the history of *Wonguis* never ends whereas a picture does. The scroll, the form *Wongui-do* has taken, even gives homage to this continuation as the entering becomes an end and the end becomes an entering in the scroll.

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Lim and Oh’s realism, their symptomatology of the real, is to be a “crisis proof form”<sup>117</sup> in a “crisis of perception”.(The crisis of perception is, according to Susan Buck Morss, caused by the persistent state of shock and excessive facilitation of the shock defence system in the individual.<sup>118</sup>) Lim and Oh actively deal with the crisis by working out both inside and outside of the realm of their subjective experience in postcolonial Korea, wherein the individual is

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<sup>116</sup> Kim Chiha, *ibid*, p171

<sup>117</sup> Benjamin talks about “crisis proof form” in his essay “On Some Motifs on Baudelaire. He says, “when Baudelaire meant by correspondences may be described as an experience which seeks to establish itself in *crisis-proof form*.” Benjamin, *ibid.*, “On Some Motifs”, p 174. Lim and Oh’s aesthetic motivation is tied to, what Benjamin described, the obsession with “the inassimilable data of the world by way of experience”: “Man’s inner concerns do not have their issueless private character by nature, They do so only when he is increasingly unable to assimilate the data of the world around him by way of experiences of such as inability”, *ibid.*, p 155

<sup>118</sup> Susan Buck Morss, “Walter Benjamin’s Artwork Essay Reconsidered-Aesthetics and Anaesthetics”, *October* 62, 1992:3-41

generally incapacitated from knowing their experience as the way of experience, and where numerous spectres return in the gap between their perception and consciousness in a repetitive mode. The acknowledgment of this crisis has never been allowed by the modern technocrats, so that they perpetuate their control over people and of the politics of forgetting. In dealing with this crisis and transgressing the norm of self-denial, Oh and Lim's realism, the pictorial phantasm of traumatic state of body in crisis and resistance, provides a space of commemoration of unacknowledged narratives, forbidden values and aspirations of the repressed at the centre of the problem. It invites the viewers to the realm of a new perception and a communicative community among themselves wherein the participants can reencounter their long lost selves and others.

Oh and Lim's realism, the symptomatology of 'the real-s', engenders a zone of "corporeal sensorium" in the interface with the viewers, where an alternative realm of perceptive faculty of the repressed can grow. Susan Buck Morss introduced the notion of "corporeal sensorium" as a particular mode of "the aesthetic" experience in the particular perceptive state of modernity, which is characterised as the state of shock and crisis of perception. She says this contention was already expounded in Benjamin's 'Art Work' essay, in which he attempted to re-conceptualise a new concept of the "aesthetic" in the latter part of the 19th century, witnessing the advent of technological society. The corporal sensorium is formed when the subject, who has grown an excessive defence system in one's own body (after experiencing persistent shocks and impeded speech or expression), is disrupted and opens oneself to the formation of a new perception of memory-anticipation. Susan Buck Morss calls this "the synaesthetic system". She explains it as follows.

It [synaesthetic] is a form of cognition, which is achieved through - the whole corporeal sensorium. Meanwhile, the traditional aesthetic system of "sense-consciousness" is decentered from the classical

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<sup>122</sup> Buck Morss, *ibid* , p.13

subject, wherein external sense-perceptions comes together with the internal image of memory and anticipation, the synaesthetic system.<sup>122</sup>

“The synaesthetic system” can elucidate the effect that Lim and Oh’s realism of the negative diagnosis brings about in viewers, which leaves impact on a faculty of self-reflection rather than satisfying their longing for an answer. Their works instigate to open up the very closure of consciousness and heal the split between the consciousness and perception in the hitherto repressed *minjoong*. The works produce the invisible imperatives of this “opening up” and also “the negative must become a positive”. The alternative cognitive faculty in the viewers’ mind come about while they receptively work out this imperative of alteration. The “subliminary sublime” and “excessive present”, the powerful aesthetic effects that Lim and Oh’s realism prompts, as I have described earlier, are the threshold experience of this coming alternative faculty, the “synaesthetic system”.

In the next chapter, I will discuss how Oh and Lim return their realism to the unwritten poetic plane of the consistency of *han* as latent in the undercurrent *minjoong* histories of grievance and wounds, in the pursuit of liberating *han*’s alterity from itself.

**Chapter 3**  
**The Vision of Haunting:**  
**The Vision Machine of *Han***

In Lim Oksang and Oh Yoon's realism, one is offered a space to "speak to" and "speak with" the ghosts of the history of the long repressed *minjoong*. Their art persistently engages in constituting what I term the "vision of haunting" in a remarkable consistency, aligned in the visceral genealogy of post colonial trauma of Korea. This vision of haunting is attained through the materialisation of the ghosts of the invisible culture of *han*. *Han* is the Korean expression of long repressed sentiment of grievance, delineated from a psychic matrix of unease as accumulated through a history of repression imposed on the population. Lim and Oh's arts give a visible expression to this otherwise invisible culture, and push their vision to go beyond the prescribed impasse of *Han*.

Their vision of haunting evolved in their persistent attempts to "foremark" these habitual ghosts in the sub-national and collective sites by the very act of their picture making. In the virtue of consistency, their vision of haunting in *han* became what I term "the vision machine of *han*". This evolved through the creation of a chain of inspiration in which the artists simultaneously involved themselves in the transformation of the self and provided sensational forces in their relationship to the viewers. This vision is the product of the recuperative desire or will of artists who identify lost meaning in history and enable the actualisation of the persistently incapacitated imagination. The artists work out their psychic wounds and then relate them to others' wounds.

In taking account of the formation of this vision and the vision machine, I found the psychoanalytic concepts of Jacques Lacan and Jean Laplanche and those of post-Freudian philosopher such as Félix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida invaluable. Psychoanalysis provides a theoretical language through which to take account of the ultra interiority of subjectification in various modes,

including discursive and non-discursive feeling, and the mode of utterance through metaphor, which is culturally particular as well as universal.

Deleuze and Guattari's concepts were developed through a reinvention of psychoanalytic theory. Their idea of the "machine"<sup>1</sup> is good example of this.<sup>2</sup> Through 'machine', I can visualise the dynamic constitution of "the plane of consistency" of the vision Oh and Lim's work which is involved in relationship to itself and its alterity. This bypasses the subjectivist and the objectivist interpretation of 'the real' we are dealing with (the former would refer to the untouched unconsciousness and the latter would refer to the immediate reality) through which one may try to render Lim and Oh's works of *han*. Oh and Lim's artistic ego emerges from the "deep abyss" of *han* but leaves the realm of its interiority to develop into a rich historical, social, political exteriority finding the elemental interrelations, between molecules of interiority and exteriority.

Like Deleuze and Guattari's idea of "machine", Derrida's concept of "spectrogenics"<sup>3</sup> is an equally useful conceptual device for taking account of the multitude of ghosts, which once seem to belong to the individual and invisible world of the private but then emerges as a vision machine through Oh and Lim's picture making.<sup>4</sup> This reveals that the dynamic process of transformation of matters of *han* in machine like consistency and transmutation of invisible quantum. This makes the picture appear machine-like. It allows us

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<sup>1</sup> Deleuze and Guattari's "machine" differs from Lacan's "automaton". The 'machine' is connected to the process of comprehending the image of "the Real" which always "lies behind the 'automaton'". Lacan introduces that the 'real' tied to the function of the unconscious and repetition as something distinctively different to 'automaton'. See J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. *ibid.* P.54

<sup>2</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's re-envision of psychoanalysis is characterised by their denunciation of Freudian psychoanalysis as to which is reduced to an "ego-analysis". See the preface written by Michael Foucault, for Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane tr., *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Athlone Press, London, 1984

<sup>3</sup> "spectrogenics", see *Specters of Marx*, see p.126 "The spectrogenics process corresponds therefore to a paradoxical incorporation. Once ideas or thoughts (*Gedanke*) are detached from their substratum, one engenders some ghost by giving them a body."

<sup>4</sup> Both 'machine' and 'spectrogenics' stand for the recent development of methodology which I call "psycho-philosophy". The psycho-analysis contributed to the comprehension of fragmented and dynamic world of human subjectivity. Lacan, Guattari, Deleuze, and Derrida are indebted to the psychoanalytic theory and its central aspiration and constructed their philosophy of the real, complexity, *différance*, Rhizome. To explain the rich textuality of "hauntology" expounded in the pictures of Lim and Oh conditioned by the repression and haunting, they provide conceptual tools that seems to be of great relevance.

to envision how the pictures, persistently expand their zone of ‘incorporation’ of ghosts through engendering ‘other’ ghosts. This becomes the plane of the “uncanny”, which grasps the image of the ‘real’ of the repressed populace and continues to engender the ‘other’ ghosts for the viewers.

In this chapter, I will firstly demonstrate the features of Lim and Oh’s dynamic vision machine which is conceived as an “interface”, operating through the *aporia*<sup>5</sup> of *Han*. Secondly, I will discuss the emotional state of *죄의식* *Joiysik* (roughly translated as guilt), inhabited in the *aporia* of *Han* at the level of its psychic interiority and in relation to the exteriority that plays in this vision machine of *han*. This seemingly negative emotion produces revolutionary creative energies as seen in Lim’s ‘Earth’, and Oh’s *Wonguido and Doggabi*. Thirdly, I discuss how the *joiysik* is overcome by Lim and Oh re-identifying themselves with ‘alterity’ as a part of the artists’ creative embodiment and intervention. In particular, I take account of the function of the “feminine” in their works as sign of the alterity of the suppressed subject and whose immanent forces have not been fairly recognised in the history. I will also demonstrate the function of “ideal-ego” in the construction of vision machine which was hitherto suppressed by the function of “the ego-ideal” in the course of colonial State-driven modernisation. I explain how ‘Ideal-ego’ is an artist’s narcissistic alter-ego, re-envisioning the figure of mother, the symbol of the repressed and whose immanent strength has been forgotten, overcoming their *joiysik*.

I will go on to attempt to reveal the complex modality of the vision machine. I demonstrate how it becomes a spectro-picture machine engendering reversibility between the picture and the viewer, affirming the law of reciprocity, and becoming a “legacy” that operates “heterodidactics” (Derrida). I will also take account of the vision machine as a vernacular picture machine that is designed to penetrate the predispositive culture of *han*. I show how the vision machine becomes a ‘pleasure’ machine overcoming the impasse of *han*, while engendering a multiple opening of foreclosure and reciprocal communication, and new communicative community.

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<sup>5</sup> *aporia*. An irresolvable internal contradiction or logical disjunction in a text, argument, or theory. The origin is in Greek, the impassible. Oxford English Dictionary, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, 1999

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### **Vision Machine of *Han*: The Function of 'Consistency'**

The vision machine of *han* evolves through its relationship with 'itself' and with 'alterity'. This "machine" is similar to Guattari's conception of the relationship between the process of "subjective individuation" and "collective subjectivity" in the function of "consistency". Through this, I contemplate how Lim and Oh emerge the horizon of "new subjectivity" and a "new reality" of the future beyond the impasse of *han* and the history. So, the vision machine of *Han*, that the artists operate can be said, as Guattari expressed it, to be "conceived as an interface" which constantly moves along two axes, related to "itself" and to "alterity" in the function of "consistency"; Guattari says there is the function of consistency in the machine, both a relation to itself and a relationship to alterity. <sup>6</sup> Using Guattari's term, likewise, this function of consistency is the "existential function" of Oh and Lim, working on the recuperation and reinterpretation of the repressed elements and the imagination of the unimagined. *Han*, in the way in which Oh and Lim treat it, emerges as the site of the opening of the foreclosure and creative "becoming" of numerous repressed dissociated subjects in *han*, whose congregation resulting in the disruption of the omnipotent hegemonic reality and its representation.

In Lim's series of works, the Earth contextualises the array of phantoms of trauma and encounters with the ghosts in the place of "the missed reality" and so constructs a vision machine of *han*. This machine is first aligned in the process of existential self-affirmation process of the individual subject of *han* in its mode of becoming something else. Lim's repetition of the wounded body through the intermediary object of earth is a process of search for the "missed reality" in an imaginary space of picture-making. That is to say, the Earth is associated with the persistent and consistent self-affirmative image of 'the real', "the forgotten familiar", the body's own "other". Incorporating the "uncanny" matters and sensibility that are latent in the zone of *han* is a central drive in Lim's picture making.

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<sup>6</sup> Félix Guattari, Vivian Constantinopoulos tr., *On Machines: Complexity: Architecture/Art/Philosophy*, Academy Editions, London, 1995, pp8-12, see p8

In the same way that “the work of mourning” has been forbidden in modern Korea, the work of *han* has been equally abandoned for the years of repression. The population’s obsession with these unsolvable domains of matters becomes a latency and also a ghost.<sup>7</sup> Here the artists seek resolution of the ghosts’ imperative in the picture’s line of becoming. The vision machine of *Han* which Oh formulated is rooted in the aporia of *han*, that allows for the possibility of *han* to speak for itself. Sung Wankyung sees this as the expression of the “deep abyss”. He says,

Oh Yoon made us to reach to the smell of mother, its most honest, and absolute poverty navigating the begrudging bone of history and the physiognomy of people in everyday life with his gaze of *Han* pulled up from a deep abyss.<sup>8</sup>

Oh’s vision machine of *han* as pulled up from the “deep abyss” is overlooked by the dominant modernist institutional way of seeing and also that of the rational materialist realist artists. Oh’s gaze is situated in counter-part of the elitist modern gaze which has sustained the forgetting machine. Beyond the gaze constituted in the intoxicating ideology of pseudo-happiness and progress, he pulls up counter-forces from the seemingly impossible dimension. Oh’s vision penetrates into the realm of the elided time of the repressed and sets the perspective to speculate this hitherto unforeseen matter. Sung’s statement recognises “honesty” as the quality of Oh’s vision into this *Han*’s latency. Oh overcomes the persistent indifference on the dimension of *han* in the domain of modern art which he regards as “dishonesty” or “disavowal. Lim and Oh’s vision is reinforced by its recognition of the incommensurable and untouchable depth of *han* in a post colonial simulacra culture. Oh indulges himself in the latent image or the returned, dissociating himself from the determination of the

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<sup>7</sup> The work of *han* is parallel to the work of mourning. This is an active “work of mourning” of the lost people, lost meaning, lost present in the age of haunting as the result of the perpetuating repression, stepping out from the closed history of academic discourse. Through this work, I try to resurrect the traces of “life” of the repressed in the history and the historical language in order to give them proper body. This is a pervasively relegated task in Korean radical criticism which has lost its direction and fallen into a deep dilemma since 1990s affected by forgetting machine of post-ism, the advent of neo-conservatism.

<sup>8</sup> Sung, *ibid.* p.198



social imperative and 'coming to the others' in the picture's time. Lim and Oh's vision machine retrieves the visceral power of *han* in the impasse of spatial simulacra prevalent in this time.

### *Joiysik*

The vision machine of *Han* makes us encounter the various forms of psychic states of *han* which are the product of the 'self-interpretation'<sup>9</sup> in Laplanche's terms of the subject of *han*. The various emotional states appear at the level of manifestation of its interiority in relation to exteriority. For example, a sense of shame, which is one of *Han*'s emotional by-products, develops into the *Joiysik* (roughly translated as 'guilt') as seen prevalent in *Wonguido*, *Doggabi* and 'Earth' works.

The *Joiysik* is a product of reflective consciousness which invokes a 'negative' evaluation of the self in relation to an ideal subjectivity. The sense of *Joiysik* which has been a customary sentiment in the culture of *han* is latent in the subconscious of Korean *han*. In particular, it has been persistent in the Korean population who endured the many years of catastrophe, and observes the stagnation of justice and the redemption of the victimised. This makes the survived endlessly feel the guilt or shame of their living. But *Joiysik* does not have same connotation as "guilt" as it does in Judaeo-Christian tradition. It differs in the way in which the subject of evaluation defines "its longitude and its relations, from latitude and its degree"<sup>10</sup> to infer the good and bad. The Judaeo-Christian 'moral' has always been associated with original sin, and redemption has been always associated with the function of an 'absolute figure', 'absolute institution'. The evaluation of good and bad is possible through the identification with such an absolute 'other' of judgement of the moral, such as 'God', or its earthly incarnation, 'the son'. The vision machine of *Han* is apt to

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<sup>9</sup> "Interpretation:

a. procedure which, by means of analytic investigation, brings out the latent meaning in what the subjects says and does. Interpretation reveals the modes of the defensive conflict and its ultimate aim is to identify the wish that is expressed by every product of the unconscious  
b. In the context of the treatment, the interpretation is what is conveyed to the subject in order to make him reach this latent meaning, according to rules dictated by the way the treatment is being run and the way it is evolving"<sup>9</sup> -L. Laplanche et. al., *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, ibid.

<sup>10</sup> D & G, *A Thousand Plateaus-Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, P.257

seek its ethical solution in the state of *joiysik* where the subject is in internal conflict with good and bad.

*Joiysik* as conditioned by the culture of *han*, is an evaluation of the subject in relation to the pre-institutional community origins that regulate the relationship between individuals whose belonging to a community has depended upon justifiable, fair and reciprocal interactions between members. Such immanent ethics recognise and effect the individual on a breaking point of reciprocal justice in the relations between individuals in a horizontal community. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'ethics' appears to draw upon a similar concern regarding 'ethics', which is rooted in a dimension of 'immanence' rather than a transcendental moral code.<sup>11</sup> Oh and Lim's tensed ethical ego seem to endeavour to bring forth a different ground for defining the ethics dissociated from the superior code of the moral which imposed on the individual in order to alleviate its *Joiysik* and reach the state of the goodness.<sup>12</sup>

The vision machine of *han* embraces this *Joiysik* and transforms it into a creative energy. These creative forces deriving from Oh and Lim's poetic vision constitute a poetic machine. This poetic vision stems from *han*'s primary sense of grievance and the *joyisik* that always pushes itself to divert and extrapolate the sensibility of something else as a way of overcoming it. In other words, *Joiysik* draws upon the consistency of poetic vision of Lim and Oh under repression and the *durée* of *han* which is driven by a revolutionary desire. Kim Chiha points out that *Joiysik* had been an underlying motor of Oh's will to continue his work and I would argue further that Lim's impulse to create 'art' is a way of alleviating his *joiysik* by making his viewers encounter what has been unjustly lost. Oh and Lim's gaze of *Han*, tensed with *joiysik*, drives them to be conversant with the haunting "other" which lingers on the artist's ethical sensor.

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<sup>11</sup> To find the concept of ethics of Deleuze and Guattari, see *A Thousand Plateaus*, *ibid*, p.153. See also Deleuze, Anne Boyman tr., *Immanence: A life, Pure Immanence: Essay on A life*, New York: Zone Books, 2001, p. 29. For the Judaeo-Christian notion of the "guilt" "debt", "morality" see Nietzsche's primary work, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Francis Golfing tr., *The Birth of Tragedy And The Genealogy of Morals*, Anchor Books, New York, 1990. Psychoanalysis also announces that much of psychic patient are suffered from the guilt in this origin.

<sup>12</sup> I believe the English phrase "do unto others as you wish them to do unto you" has this ethical connotation.

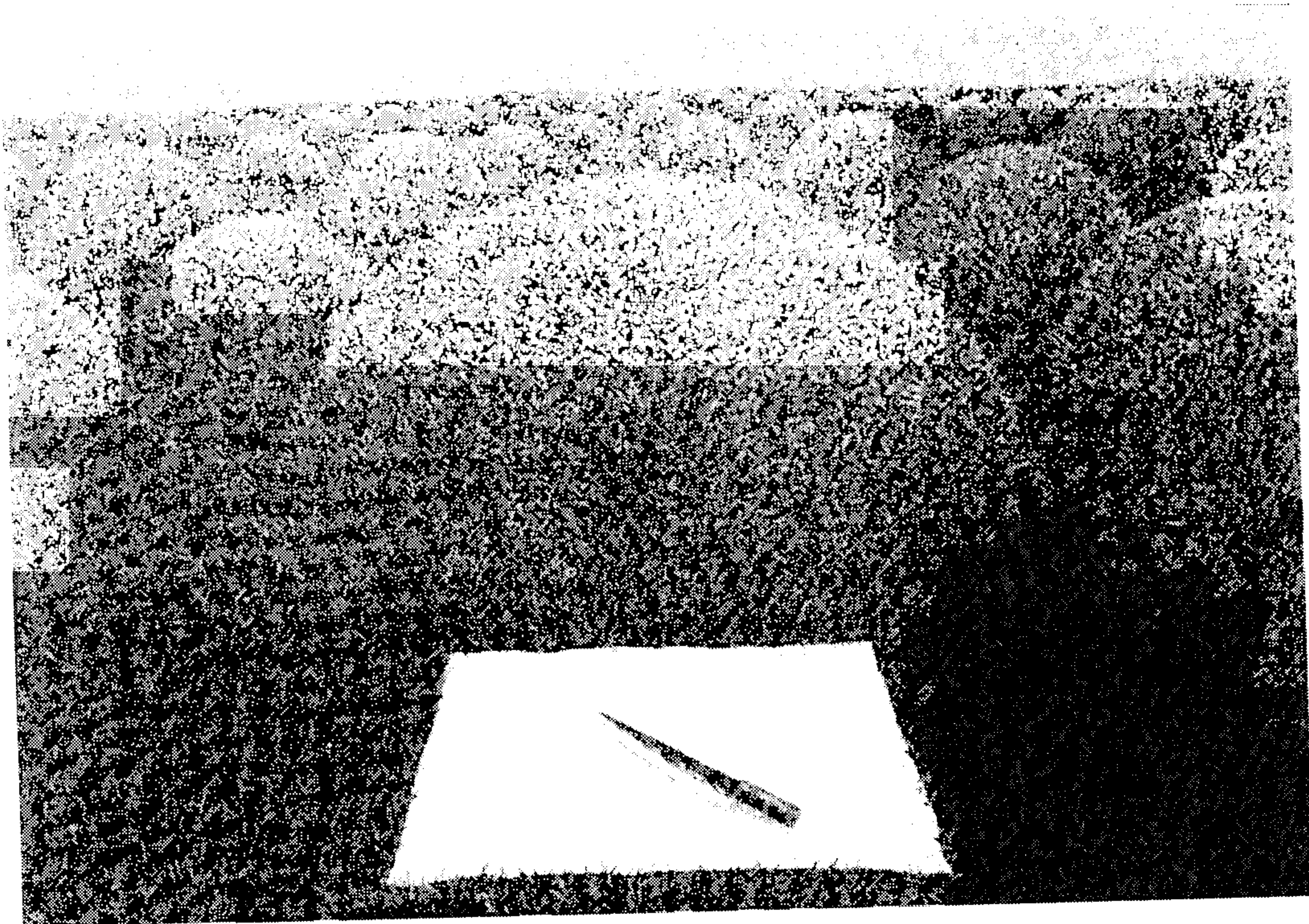


Figure 34. Lim Oksang, Offered To The Departed, 1990. Acrylic on Canvas

Lim in conversation with Kim commented on *joiysik* as the persistent ethos of Korean artists as the tradition sustained throughout Korean history. That is to say, *joiysik* has been the primordial emotion of the poetic subjectivity of Korean artists. Lim said,

Until the 1980s, almost all the artists had somehow the kind of *joiysik*, even if I do not put it a *minjoong's han*. [...] but such a sense of *joiysik* seems to have dominated the intellectuals and the artists for over 100 years.<sup>13</sup>

In this light, Oh and Lim's art is the product of a proactive attempt to overcome *joiysik* by surfacing the matter of negativity over the conscious level. For example, Lim expresses his *joiysik* as a survivor and tries to introject the ghostly will of the dead and project it in the work 'Offered To The Departed'(1990)\*<sup>14</sup>.

This work is about, as he testifies, his unbearable *joiysik* to the unjustly killed in the *Kwangju massacre*. He introjects the unfulfilled wishes of the dead to whom he feels a deep ethical responsibility. The picture depicts a knife laid in front of a tomb in an anonymous cemetery. Strikingly, blood comes out from the tomb. The grass over the tomb has overgrown and is surrealistically green, as if it signifies that a long time has passed since the tomb was made. The bleeding from the tomb is the sign of violation of the unviolatable. This pictorial scene invokes a sense of disaster to the viewer as a result of the meaning of tomb which is a sacred object and a sacred place. The bleeding tomb visibly makes reference to the uncurable wounds of the victim's family and the witnesses of the death since the political authority has denied and concealed the affair by manipulation and censorship. Lim said this picture is his way to speak to and with the ghosts. He said,

Through this painting I was speaking to them (the dead), as if I'm saying 'your death has been manipulated and in such a situation

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<sup>13</sup> Sim Kwanghyun, *ibid.* p.168

<sup>14</sup> See Figure 34. Lim Oksang, *Offered To The Departed*, 1990

another Kwangju can happen again in any minute. So I cannot offer you a flower but instead offer a knife. I will not forget your *han*'.<sup>15</sup>

The symbolic meaning of this work is the impasse of the history over 10 years since the *Kwangju affair* in which the deceptive situation has remained unchanged. The shame and trauma is perpetuated since the situation is that the regime still perpetuates the repressive silence over the event. These emotions intensify and becomes his *joiysik* to the dead. Lim told me this painting was initially made to commemorate 5.18(*Kwangju Massacre*). Haunted by his *joiysik*, in this unbearable situation of violation and forbidden commemoration, the sharp knife, as Lim states, signifies a promise that he as a survivor offered to all the unredeemed dead. Lim's pledge to keep the unfulfilled will of the dead us a way to overcome his *joiysik*. This painting also successfully provokes a sense of communal responsibility for the dead through employment of the motif of tomb, which is a pertinent object to signify the collective disaster in the violation of the inviolatable. He tries to alleviate his *joiysik* by making this picture share this responsibility with others.

Oh's work, '*Wonguido*' also can be read as a work that alleviates the *joiysik* of Oh, Oh habitually speculates on the memory of the victimised, their trauma, and grievances in history. His sense of grievance, his reading of history, is apparent in a tragic sequence of impasse where neither life and death has fully been comprehended. This is construed in "the plane of consistency" of the unsolvable entanglement of life nor death without any "line of flight".<sup>16</sup> This picture maps the long and never ending chains of sorrow which seem to absorb the viewers into the sentiment of historical and communal sorrow and *joiysik* to the unredeemed.

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<sup>15</sup> The interview with Lim Oksang, 2000, *ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> To find the meaning of "the plane of consistency" and "lines of flight", see Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus-Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. *Ibid*. p. 270; "... the plane of consistency does not preexist the movement of deterritorialisation that unravels it, the lines of flight that draw it and cause it to rise to the surface, the becomings that compose it. The plane of organisation is constantly working away at the plane of consistency, always trying to plug the lines of flight, stop or interrupt the movement of deterritorialisation, weigh them down, re-stratify them, reconstitute forms and subjects in a dimension of depth".

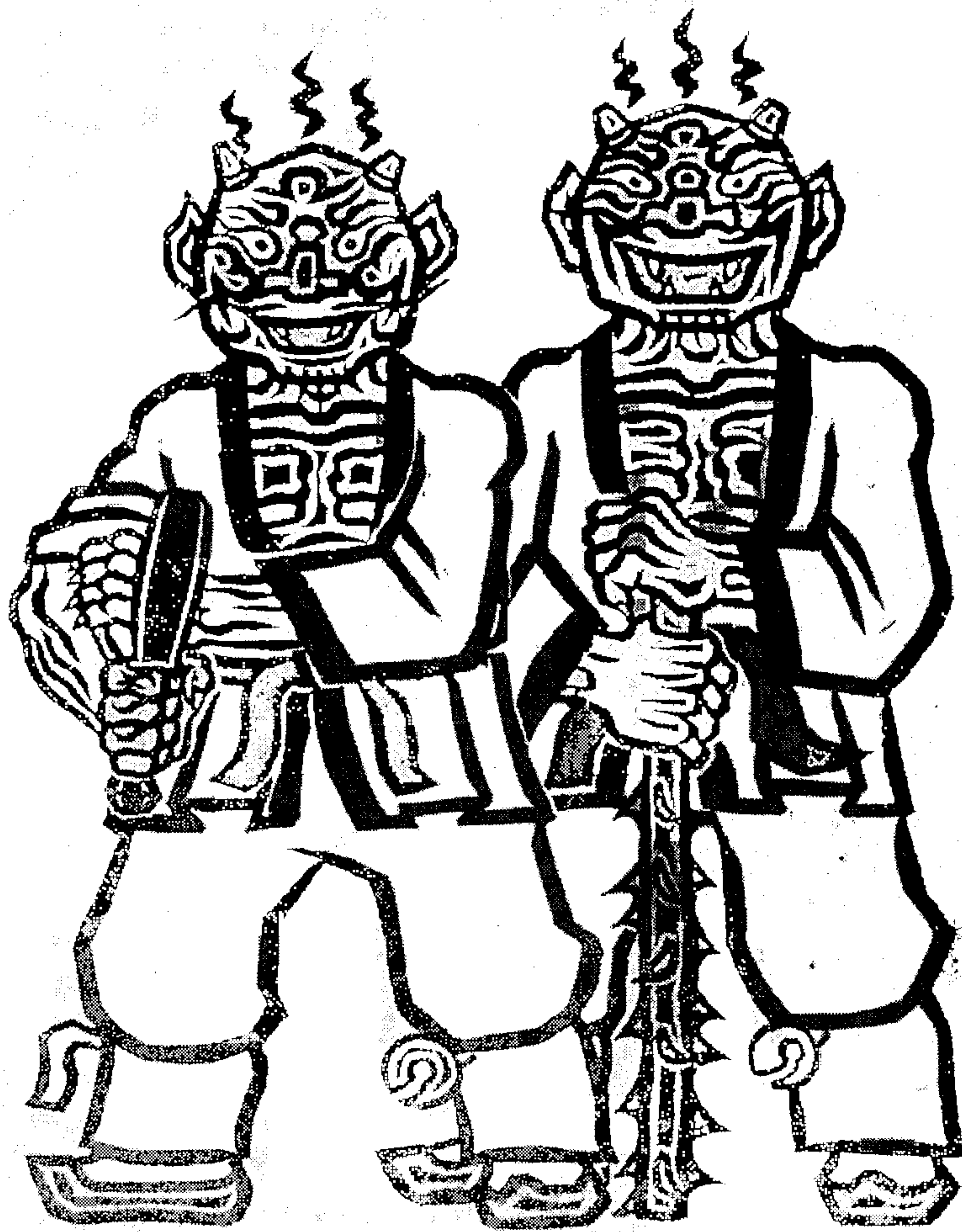


Figure 35. Oh Yoon, *Day Daggabi*, 1985, Woodcut Print and Color

In the case of *Doggabi*,\*<sup>17</sup> we see Oh's *joiysik* transformed into a spectral machine in which he seeks the phantasmatic resolution of the emotion calling the "ethical deity," whilst the vision of *han* meets Oh's poetic consciousness associating itself to this "alterity". *Doggabi*<sup>18</sup> refers to a myth of a ghost that is said to normally live in a ruined house close to a village. *Doggabi* is a bogey; a goblin; a bugaboo. It has an ambivalent face. It is said to normally be ugly looking but it can present itself as a friendly, witty friend. "A house of *doggabi*" means "a haunted house".<sup>19</sup> *Doggabi* live 'near' to people's home and, in its case of 'unhappy' return, will suddenly emerge to right wrongs. And in the case of a happy return, it emerges when there is happiness to celebrate. That is to say, *Doggabi* typically reveals the indigenous dimension of the sense of life and the concept of their morality.

The *doggabi* is an ethical and aesthetical emblem passed on through the oral history of the repressed Korean *minjoong*. It is an emblem of horror to the people who have forgotten the law of *doggabi*. But it is not a deity of a metaphysical law of God which returns and passes "the judgement" on a final day. The fact that it 'lives' near people's houses elucidates the fact that the good and bad are not outside but inside, which defines one's interiority in relation to its alterity. In this vernacular imagination of ethics, 'good' and 'bad' are the site of internal conflict of potential positivity and negativity. *Doggabi*, as Oh employed it, is the return of "others" that consummates the reciprocal economy of immanent ethics by repairing the broken symmetry between life and death, and the self and the other.

*Doggabi* is an uncanny diversion of *joiysik* of Oh, through which Oh wishes to take part in a transcendence. *Doggabi* is derivation of his ethical alter-ego in the pursuit of a creative alteration of negative to the good. Through this, he reorganises the 'surface'(representation) in relation to 'the depth'(interiority of *joiysik*) and lives out the 'widths'(the communal future) in relationship to the

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<sup>17</sup> See Figure 35. Oh Yoon, Day *Doggabi*, 1985

<sup>19</sup> Si-sa English Company, *Si-sa Elite: Korean -English & English Korean dictionary*. Sisa English Press, 1996

depth where many ghosts like *Doggabi* are latent. The “depth” and “width” are the philosophical explanations of the function of the vision machine and new ethics which move along the two axes through the interiority of *joiysik* and exteriority of the resolution. Deleuze and Guattari say,

what is depth, for me, in accordance with which objects encroach upon one another and hid behind one another, I also live through as being possible width for Other, a width upon which they are aligned and pacified(from the point of view of another depth). In short, the Other assures the margins and transitions in the world. He is the sweetness of contiguity and resemblances. He regulates the transformation of form and background and the variations of depth.<sup>20</sup>

This *Doggabi*, the ‘alterity’ assures the margins and transitions while pushing the potential resemblance of the one who bears the *joiysik* and the ghost which addresses the injustices. Oh revives the connectedness of this *joiysik* to ghosts.

In this light, Kim Chiha discerns that Oh’s *Doggabi* fuses conflictual emotional dimensions into one which is to gain an uncanny power of “opening” of the elemental heterogeneity of emotions and values beyond a prescriptive moral code.

It (*doggabi*) seems to embody the sorrow of *joiysik*. It looks very optimistic but the sorrow is underlying because of the *joiysik*. The experience of infinite falling down, and habitual melancholia are fused with the power of laughter in *doggabi* that seems to characterise the complexity and the multitude in Oh's work...<sup>21</sup>

The "habitual melancholia" and "sense of falling down” are by-products of *joiysik* and *han*. Oh embraces and tries to alleviate these negative emotional

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<sup>20</sup> For the “width” and the “depth”. see in Gilles Deleuze, Mark Lester with Charles Stivale tr. *Logic of Senses*, NewYork, 1990. p.305

<sup>21</sup> Kim Chiha, *ibid.* p. 165





Figure 37. Lim Oksang, Earth-Mother, 1993. Mud, Pigment and Soil

resonances through *Doggabi*. Kim continues to make a spirited comment that Oh's *Doggabi* functions like *Doggabi Taryung* (a folk tune). Kim says,

[I see in Oh's work] the sense of shame...but which is reaching to the realm of innocence...I do not know where it derives from... From a condition of family history or an uncovered collective prototypical unconscious. Putting such a sorrow, *joiysik*, shame, innocence chained with *Doggabi*'s tune of optimist power forward, in his *Doggabi Taryung*.<sup>22</sup>

This folk tune is something familiar, witty, satirical that conveys the will of *minjoong* towards the resolution of injustice. Kim sees Oh's artistic ego appear to reach a level of "innocence", through this *Doggabi* work. This innocence is surmised to be an existential, aesthetic, ethical ideal that Oh always wanted to reach beyond the sorrow, *joiysik*. Oh's *Doggabi* tune creates a sensuous, liberating, poetic territory. As Kim continues to say, "without being sublimated but continues to transform itself".<sup>23</sup>

### **The Feminine**

Oh and Lim's self-reflective, altering- ego embedded in the sentiment of *joiysik* is in endless transition through the identification with the 'alterity' as a primary process of becoming in relating to itself, and the other, especially through incorporating the ghost of "the feminine". Their *joiysik* is expected to be overcome through the hyper-differential identification with the 'feminine'.

For example, Lim's 'the Earth' is incarnated in the feminine, especially in the figure of the mother. In 'Earth-Mother' (1993)\*<sup>24</sup> the figure of an old woman or a mother emerged from the earthy ground. She is a nude presented with her furrows on her body and old face, as if proving her long hardship and labour. This 'other' Lim identifies himself with is an adjacent "I" or transitory "I"

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<sup>22</sup> Kim, *ibid.* p. 169

<sup>23</sup> Kim, *ibid.*, P. 21

<sup>24</sup> See Figure 37. Lim Oksang, *Earth-Mother*, 1993

which haunts him in the moment of his imaginary re-subjectification in mourning. Psychoanalysis sees the “I” as the product of narcissistic imaginary. The post-Freudian writer, Daniel Lagache, as Laplanche paraphrases, wrote that it is a necessity for a narcissistic ego to identify with the other, other than itself: “the narcissistic ideal of omnipotence does not amount merely to the union of the Ego with the Id, but also involves a primary identification with another being invested with omnipotence-namely, the mother.”<sup>25</sup>

This ‘other’ in the vision of *Han* is a significant factor which assures the margins and transitions of the artist’s altering “I” in the world, and regulates the transformation of form and background and the variations of depth of ‘I’. The ‘other’ that the subject of *han* identifies with is not an authority which posits itself as a superior than ‘I’ to which ‘I’ has been paying a long servitude without any fair recognition: the omnipotent authority -other both Oh and Lim dis-identify with would be the anti-democratic State, the neo-colonial foreign power in collusion with this state, which has been taking the status of the father or God. But the ‘other’ the subject of *Han* identifies with is the repressed other and the ‘feminine’ other. The association with ‘the feminine’ in Lim and Oh is not accidental. *Han* is the emotion of the repressed, those who were made passive against their right and will. The negative dialectic of the ‘the feminine’ is replayed in their search for the politics of the repressed by these artists.

‘The feminine’ when it is treated by Lim and Oh, is not just an essentialist attribute, to its romanticised passivity. That is to say, that the Earth-Mother does not replay the essentialist assumption of ‘the feminine’ or ‘the maternal’ regulated by male centric social agents. Rather Lim pertains to the romantic image of her unconditional giving, sacrifice and muteness. It pertains more to the immanent strength of her existence, in relationship to the fact that she produces and raises life as well as witnesses the disaster, struggle, subjugation and survival. Lim demonstrates the state of the present of the repressed *minjoong* through this work, recognising both its disaster and also irreducible immanent power. The sculpture directs the viewers’ gaze to her contribution and

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<sup>25</sup> Laplanche, *ibid.* p. 202

the immanent strength in her, which squares with the forgotten strength and immanent power of *minjoong*. This is the basis of her sovereignty which has never been represented as much as it deserves under the Korean modern political economy.

Lim's rethinking of the feminine is inspired by an unexpected encounter with the actual figure of a woman, un-deflected by the mirror of prejudice. In this encounter, as Lim confessed, he experienced the immanent power of 'the earth-mother' which revealed itself in the form he never expected. One day, a group of children passed by Lim's open-air studio and saw his model work of this Earth-mother. With an uninhibited manner, one and then all of them said to him-that "she does not look like granny at all". Listening to them, he somehow felt that he had failed to achieve the core essence of the earth mother he wished to realise. Lim told me that how this recognition of failure awakened him and taught him to realise that a re-presentation can be a mere projection of a banal imagination of an artist. In order to gain this 'real' image of the mother, he decided to find a model. One day, he met an old woman who was accompanied by her young daughter on the street. He asked if she would consent to be a model. The young daughter insisted that her mother could not pose nude. Lim agreed. Coming back to the studio with the old lady alone, Lim had to confess that the model he needed had to be nude. He was worried that she would condemn him for being dishonest. But unexpectedly, she willingly agreed and took off her clothes showing her old collapsed body with all its furrows.

Lim said that he wanted to crystalise and restage the "individuated form of collective disaster" through his work Earth-Mother. However, he confessed, could not reach the understanding of the immanent power of the earth and woman, other than seeing them as victims. But this actual encounter with 'the mother' becomes a shifting point of his vision on whole image of, so to speak, 'the repressed'. For him, she was already and always would be a victim but he realised that she had the power that readily put herself forward, in order to show the history inscribed in her body beyond the shame, the shame of her nudity. This strength may have derived from the enduring time, allowing her to face the young generation's demand for her contribution. He states that he felt that she

spoke to him rather than him speaking to her. The old woman turns into a spiritualised entity for him, from whom he learnt how to speak differently to the others as well as his audience. He learnt her immanent power and also the immanent power of the 'earth'. He says,

The earth I painted during *Kwangju* affair was really the earth as a victim. But I found as time goes on, the earth ..... speaks to me-it is not the earth I look at, but the earth which looks at me. It is the earth as *guia* [the goddess of earth].... There is more immanent and fundamental appearance of earth. I might be talking about *youngsung* [divinity or spirituality] of the earth. Taking more positive attitude, I wanted to make it walk forward in order to alert the impoverishment of the earth and negligence in the life and also make people realize their own vital forces...<sup>26</sup>

When Sung mentioned that Oh's works invoke "the smell of mother", he means that Oh's works somehow circulate the value of the 'maternal', which is related to a unique symbolic economy in the culture of *han*. The feminine is qualified as an infinite vital force of life which produces, endures, protects, remembers and struggles, independent from the temporal finitude of her phenomenal subjugation. The frequent motifs such as anonymous young and old women who are presented in states of fright and angst, yet often appear to be solid-looking, empowered by their revolutionary gesture. Dancing implies the uncanny reminiscence of the existential smell of maternal strength and their endurance. They are grasped by turbulent forces of undetermined movement that manifests the potency of the feminine which goes beyond the confinement imposed on her. The picture's self-sufficient integrity relies on Oh's treatment of this immanent power, immanent in the seemingly repressed.

Oh's vision machine of *han* somehow inherits the unique treatment of feminine in the Korean narratives of *han*. These narratives often make a reference to the begrudged women who call for a disaster while their remorse persists; a parable

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<sup>26</sup> Lim Oksang, Interview, *ibid.*, 2000.

reads, “if a woman is begrudged in *Han*, it frosts even during May”. This particular parable suggests that the begrudged women could bring about a natural disaster like frost. This reveals the fear of the power of women who are entrenched in *han*, a belief that these women will bring drastic events such as natural disaster and disorder to destroy crops that would threaten the communal survival. Also in folk tales, the *wongui* (the ghost of a begrudged person) is more often a feminine incarnation than male, which will return to realise the unfulfilled wish by taking the living as their medium.

Lim and Oh inherit and modernise this narrative tradition that links ‘the feminine’, and the return and resolution, through which they overcome *joisik* for all the repressed and the lost in collective memory and history, and reinvent for a future community.

### **The Ideal-Ego**

Through identification with the feminine, the visionary machine of *han* approaches the ‘ideal-ego’ of *minjoong* and *minjoong* artist that has been repressed or lost under modern symbolic law and culture.<sup>27</sup> Derrida wrote that there was a link between narcissism and the work of mourning. He said “he lost his body out of love of one’s own body. For this whole history remains under the control of the paradoxes of narcissism and the work of mourning”.<sup>28</sup> The function of “ideal-ego”, as psychoanalysis says, is related to the narcissistic evaluation of agency that idealises its ego in relation to others oppressed by authority in a similar way that it identifies with the figure of mother diminished by the father.<sup>29</sup> The *joisik* prevalent in Oh and Lim’s work is the function of

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<sup>27</sup> Laplanche summaries that the first psychoanalyst in common point out the “narcissistic ego” which is “unconscious formation in its own right”, but without a precise differentiation between “the ideal-ego” and “ego-ideal”, which is as she characterises, “the process of idealisation whereby the subject sets out to recover the supposedly omnipotent state of infantile narcissism”. The difference between two should be found in the point what kind of “the other” “I” identifies in operating this narcissistic and idealising identification. Laplanche, *Ibid.* Pp. 201-202

<sup>28</sup> Jacques Derrida, Peggy Kamuf tr., *Specters of Mar.*, Routledge, New York & London, 1994 p135

<sup>29</sup> Laplanche, *ibid.*, “ideal-ego”, see pp. 201-202

this 'ideal-ego' that identifies its loss or wound in relation to that of other *minjoong* and mother which is primordial part of constitution of their ideal 'I'.<sup>30</sup>

However, the 'ideal-ego' does not equate with the 'ego-ideal' in psychoanalysis, although both "ego-ideal" and "ideal-ego" are products of identification with the 'other' that a narcissistic ego involves. Also the way in which psychoanalysis explains "guilt" which is through the relationship with the 'ego-ideal' does not explain the function of *joiysik*. 'Ego-ideal' is equally narcissistic self-evaluation but it is a self censoring psyche that identifies itself with the superior and absolute being, which usually appears as the State or the figure of father<sup>31</sup>. Generally speaking, the function of Ego-ideal suppresses the "ideal-ego". But the discrimination of these two is important here. This highlights the significance of the 'other' in the process of identification of 'I' that moves along two distinctively different passages. In the discussion of Oh and Lim's vision machine, the key to identify which ego among them is functioning is to trace what is the 'other' that they identify themselves with: indeed, many post-Freudian writers have overlooked the importance of this distinction of the 'other' that will make a significant difference in the discussion of contemporary cultural politics.

In the procession of the vision machine, Lim and Oh's narcissistic altering egos evolved in an antagonism with the idealised authoritarian 'others' which dominate the practical and symbolic world in Korean modern history. That is to say, Lim and Oh's vision machine has little to do with this identification with these dominant others. By identifying themselves with other repressed in various modalities, they involve the process of the hyperdifferentiation of the others as well as themselves, the ideal-ego which is adjacent to these other. That is to say, their vision machine of *han* approaches this ideal-ego through restoring the feminine, the uncanny, the forgotten familiar, non-present presence, alongside 'I'.

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<sup>30</sup> The ideal-ego in *han* has nothing to do with Hegelian *dasein*, the absolute conscious or Cartesian rendering of ideal-ego which reassures itself by dismissing and excluding the potency of its other which the agency of ideal-ego differentiated and discriminated.

<sup>31</sup> to find "ego-ideal", see Laplanche, *ibid*, pp.144-5

## Spectrogenic Process

Derrida reformulated the question of “Being” in relation to ghosts, the other. Derrida puts ghosts as uncanny (non) being which posits the question of “what is its materiality and modality”, and “its time and history”. Derrida sees the spectral as an imagination of what one thinks one sees in the frequent repetition of certain visibility in the mode of “appearing disappearance”, which demands an enormous attention to this non present presence. He wrote,

There is no *Dasein* of specter, but there is no *Dasein* without the uncanniness, without the strange familiarity (*Unheimlichkeit*) of some specter. What is a specter? What is its history and what is its time?

The specter, as its name indicates, is the *frequency* of a certain visibility. But the visibility of the invisible. And visibility, by its essence, is not seen, which is why it remains *epekeina tes ousias*, beyond the phenomenon or beyond being. The specter is also, among other things, what one imagines, what one thinks one sees and which one projects-on an imaginary screen where there is nothing else to see. Not even the screen sometimes, and a screen always has, at bottom, in the bottom or background that it is, a structure of disappearing apparition. But now one can no longer get away shut-eye, being so intent to watch out from the return.<sup>32</sup>

He goes on to say that this witness of non-present presence in the uncanny demands the consideration of the “singularity of temporality”, its historicity; he says that “the non-presence of the spectre demands that one take its times and histories into consideration, the singularity of its temporality or of its historicity.”<sup>33</sup>

The vision machine of *han* considers the singularity of the temporality of the ghosts of hitherto repressed, through the incorporation of invisible ghosts of the repressed people and the repressed matters. It opens a space to speak to “the

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<sup>32</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, pp.100-101

<sup>33</sup> Derrida, *ibid.* P101



ghosts” and this dictates that the “consideration” of the temporality is the beginning of ‘incorporation’. Derrida said, “to speak to the ghosts and to do with them” involves the process of “incorporation” of the invisible, which engenders some other ghosts, which he called “spectrogenic process”. He says,

The spectrogenic process corresponds therefore to a paradoxical incorporation. Once ideas or thoughts (*Gedanke*) are detached from their substratum, one engenders some ghost by *giving them a body*.<sup>34</sup>

Lim and Oh’s pictures incorporate the ghosts, pulling them from their individual and *minjoong* collective substratum of *han*, and then they engender other “ghosts”. These haunt viewers. Looking at these pictures, the individual bodies of *minjoong* who were previously embedded in a turbulent interiority of repressed matters leave their substratum and meet the alterity as being haunted by this picture. This spectral vision machine *then* penetrates the individual bodies and diverts itself by bringing the viewers into multiple sites of encounters the forgotten familiarity. The *minjoong* see their self-image and find the reciprocal gaze unforeseen through years of repression in these pictures, and conjoin the picture’s becoming. This spectrogenic machine re-territorialises a massive surface of exteriority of collective subjectivity and the depth of interiority of subjective individuation.

The haunting substances the pictures bring out traverse through the aporiac zone of *han*. They perform the machinic reconfiguration by reactivating the virtual or potential possibility of understanding in the virtual community of mourning caught in impossibility. It would be a great reduction to read the function of this machine as a ‘representation’. It is not a representation of subjective fantasy world, of the unconsciousness in an untouched archaic form. There is more concern on the “interface” in the works of Lim and Oh than in the European surrealists’ works at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The spectro-machinic movement of the picture involves a spectral spiritualisation in which the aesthetic vision of the artists is reincarnated in other bodies. They then is

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<sup>34</sup> Derrida, *ibid.* p. 126

reincarnated in other bodies in the course of its interminable movement. Derrida comments on how spectrogenics enactivates itself through the incorporation of 'other' bodies.

Not by returning to the living body from which ideas and thoughts has been torn loose, but by incarnating the latter in another artifactual body, a prosthetic body, a ghost of spirit, one might say a ghost of ghost, as ....the first spiritualisation also, and already, produces some spectres.<sup>35</sup>

Lim and Oh's pictures produce the second ghost or the second spirits; the second necessarily produces the third; the third produces the fourth and the infinite production of ghosts.

A conceptual dichotomy has been forged when Guattari takes account of the function of 'consistency' of the machine, which moves along two axes, one through the relationship to 'itself' and another through the 'alterity'. This dichotomy is purely conceptual. Talking about vision machine of *Han* that Oh and Lim operates, the picture's relation to 'itself' and to 'alterity' in the function of the machinic consistency is an intertwined process. As seen in the function of ideal-ego in relation to the other, the artists take consideration of the matters of themselves in relation to the other. This 'other' here is not an object completely separated from itself but its hyper-differential value has a close relationship to 'I'. The other is indeed a partial "I" which is once belonged to "I" but which is made to be other and made to be uncanny. In the "spectral spiritualisation" of Lim and Oh, the connectedness between 'I' (of the audience) and 'the Other'(of the picture) starts to be perceptible (in a ghostly way) where the picture starts animating in the viewers' mind's eye. The 'depth' of individual *han* expands its 'width', through this picture, to the culture of *han* where one pacifies the "encroaching other" as a part of "I". The 'I' in turn, is expanded by incorporating the other's depth. Captivating the audience by its

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<sup>35</sup> Derrida, *Ibid.*, p126

haunting power and engendering the imperative of reworking into depths in variations, the picture engineers new realm of aesthetic experiences.

### **Vision Machine: Reversibility**

Derrida said that the technique for having visions, for seeing ghosts is in truth a technique to make oneself seen by ghosts”.<sup>36</sup> As I have discussed with regard to Lim’s experience of being looked at by the women, Oh and Lim’s vision machine of *Han* engenders a reversibility in the viewer’s mind of its relationship to these pictures. The viewers feel the pictures are looking at them instead of them looking at the pictures. For example, the imagery of *wonguido* absorbs the viewers into its uncanny panorama while the imagery strangely look “familiar” and at the same time “horrific”. This soon gives the impression that the picture looks at us. Being looked at, the unbearable feeling of being inspected, the viewers begin to wonder who they are and what they are looking at. Great uncertainty does not determine borders or *Dasein*. Derrida examines these illusionary effects of reversibility where viewers do not any more see but are being seen. He says,

Whence the theatricalisation of speech itself and the spectacularising speculation on time, the perspective has to be reversed, once again: ghost or *revenant*, sensuous-non-sensuous, visible-invisible, the specter first of all sees *us*. From the other side of the eye, *visor effect*, it looks at us even before we see it or even before we see period. We feel ourselves observed, sometimes under surveillance by it even before any apparition....<sup>37</sup>

Likewise, the perspective of the perceiver and the perceived is reversed where the movement of the spectral vision machine becomes spectacularised. The vividly spectacularised uncanny images Oh and Lim provide are magnified in the viewers’ mind and the picture returns its initial question of what is missed to the viewers. Being looked at, the viewers are to look away from the body previously arrested by the forgetting machine. The picture becomes a sensation

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<sup>36</sup> Derrida, *ibid.* p134

<sup>37</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p.101

that invokes the hyper-differential reflection which eventually makes spectators go back to their own body and uncover the sense of hidden shame and remorse. Looking into the depth of the unnarrativised body, trauma, angst, and its repressed wishes, and others in the zone of *han*, a third observing gaze emerges and trans-penetrates “the invisible” in the non-discursive zone of vision machine.

### **Reciprocity And The Therapeutic Machine**

This reversibility is possible only when a reciprocal relationship is established between the pictures and viewers. Lacan explains that ‘the real’ is found at the point of reciprocity between the “eye” and “Gaze” in the field of scopic apprehension. According to him, the eye is normally a feared stain, surrounded by the Gaze, but as he says the “*tuche*[the real]” in the “*tychic* point” is the point where the eye emerges “where one is capable of choice.”<sup>38</sup> The “*tuche*” is understood as being related to the return of the repressed ‘I’ as the “coming-back”, and the “insistence of the sign”, by which “we see ourselves governed by the pleasure principle” beyond the rule of *automaton* of the social. The “*tuche*”, opposed to the “*automaton*” proves the function of heterogeneous organisational economy of our body in opposition to the external power that tried to impose its own economic law.

The experience of haunting itself is the verdict of the function of this economy of reciprocity where the repressed pushes its altering-ego to emerge by recuperating its previously suppressed narcissism. The experience of *Han* and *Joiysik* as haunting occur when the subject recognises that the economy of reciprocity is broken and sees the gap between the representation and their bodily truth and witness. The ghosts return to compel the artists, then urge the viewers, both of them are implicated in equal measure in completing the reciprocal economy of spectrogenics.

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<sup>38</sup> Lacan says,

“I am trying here to grasp how the “*tuche*” is represented in visual apprehension. I shall show that it is at the level that I call the stain that the “*tychic*” point in the scopic function is found. This means that the level of reciprocity between the gaze and the gazed at is, for the subject, more open than any other to alibi. That is why we should try to avoid, by our interventions in the session, allowing the subject to establish himself on this level. On the contrary, we should cut him off from this point of ultimate gaze, which is illusory”. Lacan, *ibid.*, p.77

In the functioning of the economy of reciprocity, it can be said that the *modus operandi* of this vision machine of Oh and Lim is distinctively different to how the logo-centric philosophical machine and classical picture machine normally work. The logo-centric machine is based on the notion of an “ultimate” vision and ‘ultimate’ subject, which the radical philosophy and aesthetic theory of the vanguard critics of the 1980s seems to have been based on. The elitist abstract modernists before the 1980s also have fed themselves with this illusion.

Denouncing any idea of ‘ultimate gaze’ or ‘ultimate subject’, the vision machine of *han* inspires viewers to become with these pictures, participating in the movement of picture from where they are, to come to terms with the unexplainable ghosts. Each of Lim and Oh’s pictures compels the viewers to establish a ‘reciprocal’ relationship with them by engaging in a psychic abreaction<sup>39</sup> of their partial subject. In this way, this vision machine brings out both therapeutic and emancipatory effects. This imperative of reciprocity detests the illusion of universal Being and the myth of over-night formation of the ‘revolutionary’ subject. The suppressed subjects are encouraged to see the split between their truth and representation and then see below and beyond the split to look at their wounds and their history in order to heal them rather subscribing to such imperatives of “radical cancellation of the past”. Through this process, they can truly empower themselves as recovering the self-understanding and self-governing power in the field of political, and cultural struggle. The politics of the vision machine of *han* do not separate the therapeutic from the emancipatory.

### **Inheritance and Hauntology**

In the vision machine of *han*, becoming-I with ghosts such as the bleeding earth, anonymous *minjoong*, peasants, the mother, *wongui*, and *doggabi* is a question of inheritance, that is to say, the inheritance of legacy. Legacies are something lived with, that already affect one’s situation and which need reconsideration. The legacies are potential and possibility as well as an obstacle. To make this legacy the source of the ‘actual’ becoming of their ideal “I” and the constitution of a future, one must find the way to a resolution. Oh and Lim’s spectro-picture-

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<sup>39</sup> ‘Abreaction’ means in Psychoanalysis, “the expression and consequent release of a previously repressed emotion, achieved through hypnosis or suggestion.” In *Oxford Dictionary*, *ibid.*

machine treats the legacy of *han*, which becomes ‘the debt’ in the state of *joiysik* as it urges the artists themselves and the viewers to be witnesses to the asymmetries, wounds, and injustices.

How have our contemporary culture, politics, and state of subjectivity been written without this reflection on the imperative of this legacy or debt? Jacques Derrida’s work, ‘Spectre of Marx: The State of Debt, The Work of Mourning, & The New International’<sup>40</sup> came out as a conspicuous ethico-politico-philosophical work of hauntology after Fukuyama’s “the end of history” had a worrying, sweeping, ghostly impact on the discussion of political economy after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Identifying the intellectual predicaments in the last decade of the twenty century in the unfolding “new world order” of the liberal market democracy, it provides a theoretical vision of widespread concern and mourning about the withering of Marxism. He links the question of legacy and debt to a new ethics, politics and philosophy that is dedicated to the “historical materialist” who has inherited “some weak messianic force”<sup>41</sup> (recapitulating Benjamin’s insight in the Thesis On the Philosophy of History). He links the question to the aspiration of ‘new international’ which is concerned with the new global division of labour driven by American and Euro-centrism that brings out new forms of injustice.<sup>42</sup> Characterising post-World War 2 history as a state of ‘debt’ and ‘mourning’ in “the gap between an empirical reality and a regulating ideal (of the idealism)”, he links the issues of ghosts in relation to the question of the work of mourning, the witness, and witnessing, the inheritance and inheriting, as what the issues of legacy and the new conception of ‘being’ consist of.

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<sup>40</sup> Derrida, 1994

<sup>41</sup> Derrida, *ibid.* P.55

<sup>42</sup> For example, Derrida talks about the “plagues of new world order”. He summarises in them as he puts it, “ten-word telegram. To list them briefly, they are, unemployment, the massive exclusion of homeless citizens, the ruthless economic war among countries of the European community, themselves, and them and Eastern European countries, between Europe and United State, and between Europe, United States, and Japan, the inability to master the contradictions in the concept, norms, and reality of the free market, the aggregation of the foreign debt and other connected mechanisms, the arms industry and trade, the spread of nuclear weapons, inter-ethnic wars, growth and empowerment of capitalist phantom-States, the limits of present state of international law and of its institutions. Derrida, *ibid.*, see pp. 81 -84. He also agrees with and quotes the points that Kojève made that the post-war America or the European community constitutes “the embodiment of Hegel’s state of universal recognition”. Then he adds “in other words, consequently and in all good logic, Christian state of Holy Alliance.” He continues to say the operation of neo-evangelism is already internal norm in this. Derrida, *ibid.*, p.61

The question of “inheritance” that ‘Hauntology’ deals with should not be confused with any backward looking attitude or traditionalism. Derrida says,

what is to be ( not to be) is the question of inheritance. There is no backward looking favour in this reminder, not traditionalist flavor. Reaction...[is] but interpretations of the structure of inheritance...we are heirs.<sup>43</sup>

Quoting Marx in ‘The Eighteenth Brumaire’, he also wrote “men make their own history, that is the condition of *inheritance*.”<sup>44</sup> Derrida’s spectrogenics disengage with any essentialist reading of the spectres. Spectres are never images of the inactivated archaic fetish but the inheritance and the legacy that allows one to make one’s own history.

Questioning the state of subjects in relation to the question of inheritance of the ghostly matters, he suggests a non-idealist notion of “being”, which as he puts it, is ‘larger’ than the ‘Being’ and ‘ontology’. He recapitulates the hauntology that Marx and Freud already expounded by rereading Marx away from the shadow of Hegelian idealism and liberating the kernel of Freudian aspiration away from any schematic interpretation.<sup>45</sup> That is to say, Derrida proposes that “hauntology” which is about the matter which is nether dead nor alive is closely tied to the question of inheritance and conversely with something “larger” than the traditional thinking of ‘Being’ and ‘ontology’. He says,

what is ghost? What is its affectivity or the *presence* of a spectre, that is of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum? Is there *there*, between the thing itself *and* its simulacrum, an opposition that holds up? Repetition and *first time*, but also a *last time*, each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time.

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<sup>43</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p 54

<sup>44</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p 108

<sup>45</sup> Derrida points out the ghosts is the ‘legacy’ of the idealism which are born in the ‘gap’ [that has been] “denounced and reduced [...] *as much as possible*, in order to adjust ‘reality’ to the ‘ideal’ in the course of a necessarily in finite process”. He argues that the Kojévian-Fukuyama’s illusion of the end of history is also under this shadow of this idealism that produces this ‘gap’. *Ibid.*, p. 86

Altogether other. Staging from the end of history, let us call it hauntology. This logic of haunting would not be merely larger and more powerful than an ontology or a thinking of Being (of the “to be”, assuming that it is a matter of Being in the “to be or not to be”, but nothing is less certain).<sup>46</sup>

Derrida’s thinking of being in relation to ghosts, regarded as what is invisible yet affecting, contributes to rethink the idealist philosophy of being as much as Lacan contributes to their thinking of subject from the point of ‘the return’, which emerges and establishes itself at a point of reciprocity.

Derrida poses a notion of “heterodidactics”, which is significant in discussing this notion of being or the ‘I’ in relationship to this alterity. His heterodidactics suggests that subjects in mourning necessarily “need” ghosts in order to learn “to live” again, and this is related to the compelling question of “to be” and “not to be”.

To live, by definition, is not something one learns. Not from oneself, it is not learned from life, taught by life. Only from the other, by death. In any case from the other at the edge of life. And the internal border or the external border, it is a heterodidactics between life and death.<sup>47</sup>

Take ‘death’ and the return from the death as the ‘alterity’ of life, Derrida suggests that one learns to live “justly” by death whose meaning often the ghosts would reveal. Derrida talks about “being with” the ghost in the context of the “just” life. Derrida wrote,

The time of the ‘learning to live’, a time without tutelary present, would amount to this, to which the exordium is leading us: to learn to live *with* ghosts, in the upkeep, the conversation, the company, or the companionship, in the commerce without commerce of ghosts. To live otherwise and better. No, not better, but more justly. But *with*

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<sup>46</sup> Derrida, *Ibid.*, p10

<sup>47</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*,



them. No being without the other, no socius *without* this *with* that makes *being-with* in general more enigmatic than ever for us. And this being-with spectres would also be, not only but also, a politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generation.<sup>48</sup>

Lim and Oh's vision machine of *han* is constituted in machine that functions as machine of 'heterodidactic, that enables us to envision and live 'with' the ghosts, raising the compelling question of "to be" and "not to be" in relation to what is missed.

### **Vernacular Machine**

Oh and Lim's vision machine of *Han* operates the idiomatic and vernacular vision to deal with the predispositive depth and particularity of sensibility and modality of *han*. It, as conceived in the particular community of *han*, uses a unique mode of expression to awake and speak to the individual who inhabit the predispositive culture of *han*.

By denouncing the myth of a universal language in modernism, Oh and Lim's pictures incorporate the sensibility and forms of the culture of *han*. To repeat, they operates a predispositive language in erecting their aesthetic compound while concerned with how to allow 'the depth' of the silenced to be uncovered and seen, freeing themselves from the colonial economy of *différence*. The "predispositive" has been a little discussed theme in postcolonial cultural studies, which is closely related to thinking 'transference' of postcolonial subject. Oh and Lim's works, which derive from the milieu of treating their own trauma and shame, *joiysik*, needed to cultivate a language in order to converse with others implicated in the culture of *han*. They in this way attain the predispositive partiality and particularity of the *minjoong* culture.

It is worth noting how the 'predispositive' is an essential point to discuss the 'cure' in the psychoanalysis. According to Laplanche, it is said that the complete translation of the psyche in the traumatic return is not possible unless

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<sup>48</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*

one considers the psychic ‘predisposition’ of the suffering individual.<sup>49</sup> Laplanche continues to say that the only way to deal with it is through “abreaction” and the “psychological working out” of traumatic experiences.”<sup>50</sup> The vision machine constitutes the image of the ghosts where the viewers relate to them by forming a synaesthetic cognition. The formation of ‘synaesthetic cognition’ is a possible where the reciprocal communicability between the viewers and the pictures take place. In this light, I should note that the idea of “universality” of the traumatic through which Cathy Caruth proposes a possibility of listening to the other’s trauma between cultures today, does not, however, presuppose that solution is in universal language. Speaking to and listening to the other’s ghosts and trauma should always be based on the consideration of the cultural, psychic, linguistic ‘difference’, unique to each historical cultural community, although the difference should not be an eternal category. Furthermore, it also should be said that a predispositive difference exists between Lim and Oh, which determines the unique existence of each of these artists’ works in the community of *han*. Lim and Oh each propose their own method of ‘abreaction’, which then constructs of the heterogeneous vision machine of *han* in the 1980s.

A machine to be a therapeutic and emancipatory machine, should be a vernacular machine which allows the repressed dimension to be communicated so that it becomes a constitutive force for the subject’s process to come to terms with their own problem. The “vernacular” has various meanings in different contexts. It is the native speech of the populace, in contrast to another or others acquired for commercial, social, or educative purposes. A “vernacular building” is a residential house, not a monument. When it refers to arts and thesis, it is of native indigenous or peculiar to a particular country or locality. It is used to describe the disease, when it is characteristic of, or occurring in, a particular country or district: endemic. ‘Vernacularism’ is the use of vernacular words, idioms, and expressions. It also means a spoken language of homely honesty, in

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<sup>49</sup> Laplanche, *ibid.* See ‘Trauma’, pp. 456-469

<sup>50</sup> Laplanche, *ibid.* pp. 465-469

a mother tongue rather than technical scientific language. The term/verb, “vernacularise” means to render or translates into the native speech of people.<sup>51</sup>

Lim’s interest in vernacularity is apparent when he employs ‘earth’ as a medium in order to explore the particular experiences and wounds caused by Korean modernity. The various modalities of the ‘Earth’ trace the particular state of emotions and imagination of Korean *minjoong*. The earth is incarnated as an ancestor’s tomb, fire, a decaying tree, blooded water, mother, Jeon Bonjun, Kim Namju, which are familiar motives in Korean mind. Yet Lim presents the familiar motives in shocking context of event that make it look unfamiliar somehow since it exposes its elided quality forgotten in amnesic sociality. Lim’s symbolic formation of the ‘earth’ which is influenced by the native elemental natural philosophy, is other features of vernacularity Lim endorses. Lim constructs an uncanny aesthetic plane through the motifs of native trees, and elemental motifs such as fire, earth, sky, and water which shed light on the marginalized *minjoong* imagination.

The vernacularism of Oh is persistent in his portraits of *minjoong* who are incarnated as anonymous girls, boys, the old and young women, and young and old men, who look so ordinary but their appearance is uncannily poignant, with their expression of angst of the age. The unprecedented prototypical predispositive faces of Korean *minjoong* are pictured here by Oh Yoon. Oh presents the *minjoong* as they reside in the context of the everyday rather than in recorded historical events, but interestingly, these ordinary figures look ‘monumental’ at times because of the way Oh align them in his picture machine. Such a vernacularity Oh’s portraits invokes has been mentioned many times by Korean art critics in such terms as the “smell of mother” and “gaze of *han*”(Sung Wankyung). The “smell of mother” suggests that the images speak to the viewers with a poignant familiarity of what is part of my familiar self but so long lost.

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<sup>51</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary, 1990, p 137



Figure 35. Oh Yoon, *Day Doggabi*, 1985, Woodcut Print and Color



Figure 36. Oh Yoon, *Doggabi*, 1985. Lubber Print

Most of all, Oh's *Doggabi* is a good example of how Oh's vernacular machine reinvents the vernacular paradigm of haunting and ethics. Through *Doggabi*, Oh crystallises the wish and desire of the suppressed populace to resolve the stagnation of morality in everyday life inflicted by sociality. The *Doggabi*, as I mentioned earlier, normally live in a ruined house near a village. They emerge suddenly in a most familiar place, such as the house. The *Doggabi* haunt people through their frightening and ugly appearance to punish the figures of wrongdoing in the case of unhappy return. The *Doggabi* presented in *Day Doggabi* (1985),<sup>52</sup> the *doggabi* holds a horrific power stick. But in the case of happy return, *doggabi*, as believed, come to celebrate with the people in a festival at the end of hardship. '*Doggabi*' (1985), one of Oh's *doggabi* pictures, is an example of this where the, *Doggabi* drink, dance, and play like the *minjoong* themselves in a festival with their ugly appearance yet witty and smiling faces.<sup>53</sup> The *Doggabi* tale has been transmitted through anonymous storytellers. It reveals the vernacular paradigm of ethics, witnesses the repetition of the vernacular psyche. The *Doggabi* reveal the structure of *minjoong* ethics, which convey their view on how the punishment of wrongs and the changing of the world should take place. In other words, the *Doggabi* combine the *minjoong*'s sense of the moral in an ironical structure of interiority and intimacy.<sup>54</sup> The *Doggabi* constructs a poetic machine of vernacular orality.

*Dogaabi* is the crystallisation of Oh's desire to envision a new ethical sociality. The *Doggabi* vision machine spells out Oh's positive will, that *minjoong* ethics overpowers the present as if entailing, as Derrida says, the "effective" idiomatic signs and myth. Oh's consideration of the *Doggabi* which derives from *minjoong*'s sentiment and ethics is observed in the cinematic transformation of the face of the *Minjoong* to the *doggabi* in his works through a period of time. His portraits of *minjoong* and the *Doggabi* have an extraordinary similiarity as if *Doggabi* is the metamorphosis of the ordinary *minjoong* who were in angst and fright. This transformation becomes apparent in his works after 1985, in the

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<sup>52</sup> See Figure 35. Oh Yoon, *Day Doggabi*, 1985

<sup>53</sup> Figure 36. Oh Yoon, *Doggabi*, 1985. Lubber Print

<sup>54</sup> A secular interpretation of 'myth' would be that it is something through which people code their sense of life and morality but exalts the codes of belief and conduct to a function as a supernatural power. As any myth is so, through this exaltation, it functions as a vehicle to impose the ideal law of the community to the living.

short period before his death. His close acquaintance, Kim Chiha, said that “we do not know, if the *doggabi* motif is here with us by chance called by Oh” or “if Oh actually saw them, during the visionary period of his illness just before his death.”<sup>55</sup> But we know that desire and dreams are always correlative.

Derrida also talks about the ‘idiomatic’ language which one needs when trying to speak to ghosts. In the book ‘Archive Fever-A Freudian Impression’,<sup>56</sup> Derrida states that ghosts speak to the living only in an idiomatic language. It is the language which “is indeed the multiplicity of languages”, which cannot be “abstracted away to leave naked pure perception or even a purely perceptive hallucination.” He quotes the lines of Jenson’s fiction, ‘Gradiva’, which Freud is alleged to have been haunted by. He quotes Gradiva, the midday ghost, who says to Harold, “If you want to speak to me, you must do it in German”. German is the native language of Gradiva. Harold initially tried to speak to the ghost in Greek and then Latin. But “there was no response.” Derrida states that, “a phantom can thus be sensitive to idiom. Welcoming to this one, allergic to that one. One does not address it in just any language. It is the law of economy, once again, a law of *oikos*, of the transaction of signs and values, but also of some familiar domesticity: haunting implies places, a habitation, and always a haunted house.”<sup>57</sup> The “law of economy”, the law of “the transaction of signs and values”, but also “of some familiar domesticity”, points to the economy of reciprocity which I mentioned earlier that Oh and Lim’s works have incorporated. Vernacularism is closely related to the concern of the artists who wish to present their arts as medium of transference by inducing a reciprocal communication between the arts and the viewers. The vernacular vision machine is presented as an uncanny sign system and a vehicle of transference for those who were hitherto alienated from any self-referential expression and affective speech as well as tackling the impossibility of modern language to speak of what it radically oppressed and dismissed.

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<sup>55</sup> Kim Chiha, *ibid.* p.169

<sup>56</sup> Derrida, Eric Prenowitz Tr. *Archive Fever-A Freudian Impression*, the university of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1995

<sup>57</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever-a Freudian Impression*, *ibid.* p. 86



Figure 38. Park Sebo, Stroke No. 43-78-79-81, 1978, Oil and Charcoal on Cotton Fabric.

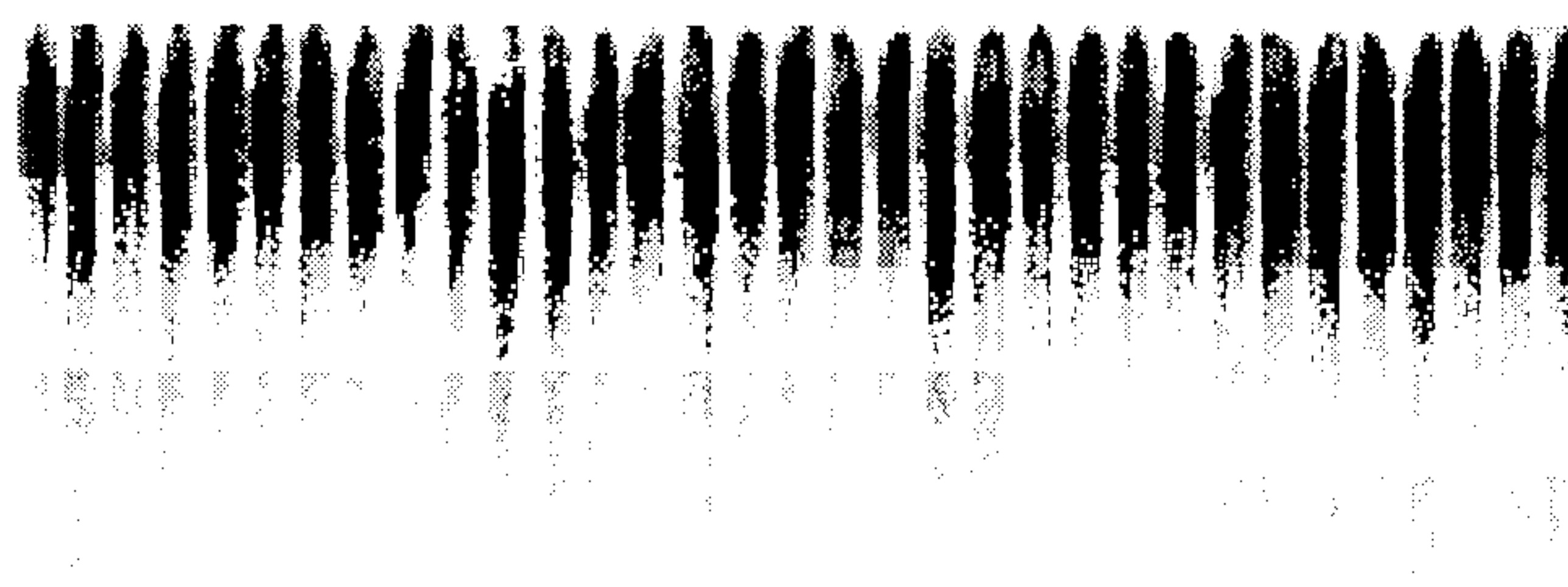


Figure 39. Lee Uwhan, From Line, 1974, Oil on Canvas

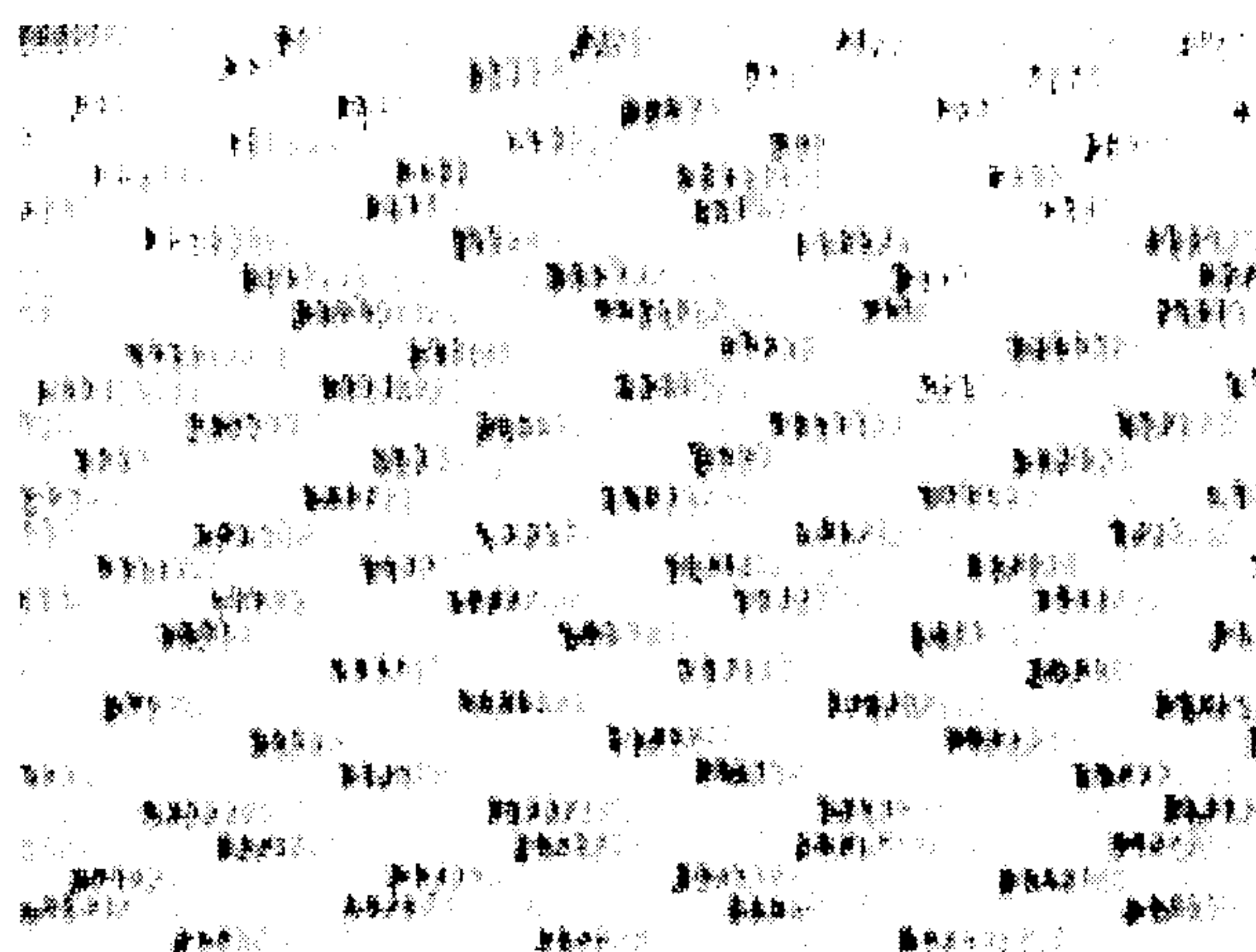


Figure 39-1. Lee Uwhan, From Dots, 1973. Oil on Canvas

Oh and Lim's vernacular vision machine, overcomes the banality of the Korean modern art that preaches the sublimation of *Han* for the better. Oh and Lim, like other realist artists in the 1980s, were concerned that Korean modernism perpetuates the subalternisation of voices of *han* which itself exists completely independent from the realm of *minjoong* experiences. For example, the artistic inspiration of the elitist modernism that Park Sebo's solipsistic, mind-emptying minimalist Stroke \*<sup>58</sup> and Lee Uwhan's Monochronic minimalism\*<sup>59</sup> endorsed, reside in their fascination with the meta-language, universal recognition, self-resolution, oneness with nature. Meanwhile, the familiarity, domesticity and reciprocal communication that Oh and Lim were concerned with was regarded as being non-artistic, unrefined and inflammatory.

Some critics in the 1980s called Lim and Oh's works *minjok sasiljuy* (roughly translated as native realism). This name is used to indicate the differential quality that Oh and Lim's realism presents from that of others, such as the so-called "social realists" and "critical realists". Although the 'difference' has been little explained by the critics themselves, it would be meaningful for us to think of the difference in relation to Lim and Oh's embodiment of the predispositive culture of *han* and vernacular language. *Minjok Sasiljuy* was indeed an emblematic name which is a tribute to their works which have paid a great attention to the aporia of *han*, of the impossibility and possibility, in a great consistency and honesty.

### **Pleasure Machine**

This vision machine of *han* is a sensuous pleasure machine, rather than a didactic machine without a sensual pleasure. This is the machine of *juissance* as it creates and moves along the creative line of numerous openings, instigating the formation of synaesthetic perceptibility and reciprocal communication with the viewers. The pleasure comes into this space by the formation of a certain "perceptivity". The reactivated agencies of the ideal-ego, released from its dark substratum find a focus and attention to his/her long lost body once dissolved in the spectacular simulacrum of the modern, the "reception of which is

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<sup>58</sup> See Figure 38. Park Sebo, Stroke No. 43-78-79-81, 1978

<sup>59</sup> See Figure 39. Lee Uwhan, From Line, 1974



consummated in collectivity in a state of distraction”<sup>60</sup> The perceptibility is also an inter-corporeal formation which derives from the opening of a dialogue of *han* between individuated subjects. The machinic interfaces created between the hitherto suppressed ‘I’ and ‘the suppressed other’ enhance the mutual opening of their psychic foreclosure. The perpetuating melancholia in the *aporia* of *han* is transformed into a zone of multiple opening and communication, through exploring much machinic interface in encountering with the other. The numerous ‘I’ entrenched in *han* rejoices with the other in others and one’s ideal-ego in a visionary mode.

This anticipates the new collective subjectivity and communicative community which is to come. It is a liberating passage toward the altering-I, becoming-other, and the altering-world. In *Doggabi*, Oh materialises his uncanny encounter with a “revolutionary” future that provides a space to form a common perceptibility between the previously suppressed populace together with the excitable festivity of laughter and resolution. This horizontal communication of *han* expands the participant’s bodyscape of previously limited in the private realm of suffering to an cosmological dimension. Kim Chiha comments that Oh’s work of *han* involve the infinite expansion of the body to the cosmological space while so honestly and rigorously pertain to the memory of *han*.

While looking at *Oh Yoon's* work, on the one hand, it seemed to connect the bodily desire which is full of cosmos to the *minjoong* (people) energy for the social transformation like what F. Rabelais said "the cosmological expansion of human body". But meanwhile, a strange sorrow, nihilism that penetrates to the bone which bears one on a bitter grudge is still underlying...<sup>61</sup>

This expansion is a *juissance* that has never been experienced and the limit is unknown. This also indicates the possibility of a sub-national and inter-national communication of *Han* between *minjoong* in the world.

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<sup>60</sup> W. Benjamin, Harry Zorn tr., ‘Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in. *Illumination*, Pimlico, 1999. p.232

<sup>61</sup> Kim, *ibid.* p.166

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To summarise, Oh and Lim's artistic visions align in a visionary consistency of haunting in *han* in which the incorporation of the invisible matters of long repressed subjects takes place. The vernacular vision machine they engender enables the possibility of communication of hitherto repressed matter. It brings to surface the suppressed "real" of the *minjoong* to make them seen by the *minjoong* themselves and to return them to their original desire.

Through this, it radicalises the potential of *han* by pulling its potential power of transformation. The negative emotional resonance of the artists is envisioned in order to be overcome and calls for this resolution in a collective level. The auratic effect of the vision machine sheds light on the sovereign sensibility of *minjoong* which is alive despite being invisible and can be developed into the most fundamental radicality and constitutive power. Moving together with the vision machine, the borders between individuated bodily territories of viewers are surpassed, forming the interface of reciprocal communication which is mutually empowering for the participants. The *minjoong* sees the image of "beyond" in *han* out of *han*. A new postcolonial cultural politics emerges in relation to this vision machine. The vision machine activates the creative "becoming" of the suppressed, by enacting the transference of their dissociated self, and the empowering communication, which consequently deterritorialises the persisting repressive economy of the *différence* in postcolonial time from within.



Figure 40. Yun Jeongok



Figure 41. Kim Haksun

## Chapter 4

### Silence, Subaltern Speech, and The Intellectual

“The men came back but we never heard about the women coming back”,<sup>1</sup> said Professor Yun Jeongok,<sup>\*2</sup> the representative of *Hanguk Jeongsindae Yenguso* (The Korean Research Institute for the Military Comfort Women).<sup>3</sup> She is from the same generation as these women, who were deceived, abducted and coerced into sexual labor in the “Comfort Houses” run by the Japanese military, during the period of 1930-1945: Chunghee Sarah Soh describes the ‘Comfort Women’, as follows,

a translation of 従軍慰安婦, the Japanese euphemism, *jugun ianfu*, (military comfort women), categorically refers to women of various ethnic and national backgrounds and social circumstances who became sexual laborers for the Japanese troops before and during the Second World War. Countless women had to labor as comfort women in the military brothels found throughout the vast Asia Pacific region occupied by the Japanese forces. There is no way to determine precisely how many women were forced to serve as comfort women. The estimate ranges between 80,000 and 200,000, about 80 % of whom, it is believed, were Korean. Japanese women and women of other occupied territories (such as Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Burma and the Pacific islands) were also used as comfort women[...]The comfort women issue began to emerge only in

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<sup>1</sup> Yun Jeongok says, “The day of independence came. Then men came back, who were in penal servitude, requisition, forcible drafting. We heard of the name of whom came back. But there were no news of so many women who were drafted. But I had my own memory of thumb-printing for the requisition of Korean people. I paid a lot of attention to the news paper. But no news at all. I felt very strange. Then I entered I-Hwa University, it was in turmoil because of the division between North and South and conflict between groups who were anti-trusteeship by UN and those pro-trusteeship. Then I forgot, but probably did not forget deep inside. Especially when studying abroad, I thought I completely forgot. But I maybe I didn’t forget. Historians never dealt with it. When they produce the statistics of how many men were drafted...they did not deal with the women. How can it be?” in Byun Yongjoo’s documentary film, *Murmuring* (Nazen Moksori, 1995). The full transcript of this documentary is in the production note, published by Byun’s film production, Boim /Docufactory Vista. “How The Camera Waits - Making of The Murmuring”, Seoul, 1998. p.65

<sup>2</sup> See Figure 1. Yun Jeongok

<sup>3</sup> Hanguk Jeongsindae Yenguso is established by Yun and her a few graduate students on July, 1990, see their website, <http://truth.bora.net/main.html>

the late 1980s. The international community began to hear about the comfort women issue from December 1991, when a number of Koreans, including three former comfort women, filed a class action suit against the Japanese government on behalf of former soldiers, paramilitary, and bereaved families demanding compensation for the violation of human rights of certain categories of Koreans under Japanese colonial rule. A major political impact of the lawsuit has been widening the bi-national dispute into the universalistic issue of women's human rights.<sup>4</sup>

Yun recalls that as she herself was also in danger of being drafted, she had to withdraw from school, in order to get married in 1943. (For young Korean girls, this was one of a few ways to avoid the draft). When the war ended, as Yun recalls, nothing was heard about the fate of these abducted women for nearly 40 years. After many years of feeling unease about this silence, Yun decided to bring this issue to the public. Yun's first public activity was to report the result of her archival and field research on the Comfort Houses that she had conducted in various locations in South East and East Asia to the international seminar on 'Women and Tourist Culture' in 1987.<sup>5</sup> Yun's catalytic historiographical work broke this profound silence in Korean society shortly before the 1988 Olympics in Seoul when the nation was feverish with hopes for the "new era" by the success of this international event. Yun soon organized *Hanguk Jeongsindae Yunguso* in order to archive the related documents, which had been missing and sealed by the Japanese government.

After her articles on her field research about Comfort Houses in Japan were published in the daily news paper, *Hankyoreh Sinmun*<sup>6</sup>, in January, 1990, the activities of Yun Jeongok and her colleagues provoked much wider public interest. Many intellectuals and artists joined together to publicize and resolve this issue in

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<sup>4</sup> See Chunghee Sarah Soh, San Francisco State University, in her website, entitled 'The Comfort Women Project' <http://userwww.sfsu.edu/~soh/comfortwomen.html>

<sup>5</sup> This conference was hosted by Korean Church Women's Association, and took place in Jeju Island, S. Korea, from 21 April to 23, April, 1987

<sup>6</sup> *Hangyere Sinmun* (Hangyere Daily Newspaper, Korea), Jan. 1990

both domestic and international contexts. The Korean Council for The Women Drafted For Sexual Slavery by Japanese Military ('The Korean Council' afterwards) was also launched by jointly associated civil and women's human right groups on November, 1990 to conduct a political campaign to demand apologies and compensation for these women from the Japanese government.

Whilst these activities were growing, many surviving victims of this sexual enslavement came out from the shadows and testified to their past. In 1991 Kim Haksun was the first woman to give testimony. Others then followed Kim and more than 70 women had given testimonies by 1993.

In this chapter, I will firstly introduce the testimonies of two former sexual slave women - Kim Haksun and Kim Yunsim. These testimonies mark a significant revisionary moment in Korean history, as well as demonstrate the consciousness of subalternised women. Through these testimonies I trace the moment in which there is a remarkable shift in the subjectivity of the women from a body of shame (that consolidated them in silence) to a body of responsibility to both oneself and the other (that prompted their speech).

Secondly, I demonstrate the function of what I call, "the silencing structure" in a society. The silencing structure of a society, through the interplay between repression and collective forgetting, perpetuates the silence of certain individuals within that society. I focus my investigation on how the silencing structure is sustained and dismantled by the performance of both the intellectual and subaltern. In short, the intellectual participates in the creation and revision of the silencing structure, while the subaltern either conforms to the culture or subverts it.

Thirdly, I explain the indispensability of the intellectual's commitment to the speech of the subaltern. This theme reappraises Spivak's theoretical points as formulated against the "new empiricism" of Foucault and Deleuze as conveyed in "let them[the subaltern] speak for themselves". Additionally, I point out how the relationship between the subaltern and the intellectual is not simply defined by the indispensability of the intellectual in the subaltern speech process, but also through the pragmatic interdependency between these two parties.

Fourthly, I introduce the representational and marginal voices of the speaking women uttered in the context of their individual proclamations as well as in conjunction with others working in civil rights groups. I also interpret the consciousness conveyed in these voices. While not completely unbound from the preexisting ideology, victim women testimonies raise challenges for the historical norm regulated by Korean nationalism, patriarchy and the neo-colonial economic political relationship with Japan.

Finally, I conclude by introducing the voices of the young interviewees who worked with the victims for many years, and whose careful 'listening ears' have created a zone of potential intelligibility of previously unspeakable matters in a society deeply saturated in a norm of silence.

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### **Kim Haksun**

Kim Haksun,<sup>7</sup> (who was 67 at the time she gave the testimony) was, as I mentioned earlier, the first to come out to testify about her experiences as a sexual slave in 1991. Two years after the publication of Yun's article in the Hankyoreh daily newspaper she became aware that there was a growing public interest in the suffering she had endured. Kim recollects the moment when she was determined to break her silence. On 14 August 1991, she was watching the news on TV and was enraged by the denial of a Japanese politician of the existence of the military's 'Comfort Women' and 'Comfort Houses'. She felt that history, of which she was both a victim and a prime witness, was being ruthlessly manipulated by the words of this politician. (At that time, the 'The Korean Council' had repeatedly sent open letters that list six demands<sup>8</sup> on this issue to the Japanese Prime Minister, Kaifu

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<sup>7</sup> See Figure 2. Kim Haksun

<sup>8</sup> The six demands are:

1. That the Japanese government admit the forced draft of Korean women as comfort women;
2. That a public apology be made for this;
3. That all barbarities be fully disclosed;
4. That a memorial be raised for the victims;
5. That the survivors or their bereaved families be compensated;
6. That these facts be continuously related in historical education so that such misdeeds are not repeated.

See Chunghee Sarah Soh, *ibid.*

Toshiki since 1990.) But Japan consistently denied the fact that the war- time government and military had systemically abducted and coerced civilian women into sexual labor. Since the Japanese authorities were claiming that there was not enough evidence to confirm the allegation of Yun and the Korean civil activists, Yun and her colleagues were deeply disappointed and despairing. In the middle of this impasse, Kim suddenly came forward, changing the course of the movement. Kim says in her testimony,

I thought I should fix what was going wrong. Japan was lying. I did not know why. Nobody asked me to do this. I'm in my 60s now. It does not matter if I die now as I will die anyway. But I was still horrified. But no remorse even if I die now [since I make this testimony]. I should definitely say what I should say.. when I must do it. They dragged me by the arms. But how could I not resist. I was scared. They were kicking me...saying if I obeyed, I would be happy...Otherwise I would be dead. How dare I resist ... the young girl dared to resist and was raped by him[Kim indicates herself in this way of indirect speech]. The horror, I cannot speak ... my clothes were all torn down ... You definitely must know this. *Know each other* about the fact that such thing happened in the past. It must never happen again in the future.<sup>9</sup>

Her long, suppressed speech needed to be uttered. The inner tension in Kim's mind was increasing since her sense of emergency is not only about her desire for self-redemption but also about the "responsibility" to the truth. Such tension was created in a continuum of the unforgettable history she had undergone whilst there was no recognition of this in Korean society and history. She says of this moment

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<sup>9</sup> Her speech is still fragmented with the suggestion of much anger. I retain the pauses, fragments of her speech in order to preserve the original feeling of it. This testimony is a transcript of her testimony and never published. I have obtained the transcript of this testimony from the archive of 'House of Sharing', which is a collective residence of the survivors, located in Kwangju, Kyungki-do, S. Korea, which is taken right after her ground breaking testimony in 1991. For other published testimony of Kim, see Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slaves and Jungsindae Yenguhoi eds, *Witness 1; Forcibly Drafted Korean Military Comfort Women*, Hanul Press, Seoul, 1993. pp. 33-44.



of breaking silence, “I have lived all my life bearing the experience in my heart the experience which was unspeakable and horrifying...but I could not withstand everybody forgetting about the past and begging to Japan any more.” (Kim refers to the issue of the foreign loan that the Korean government was anxious to secure from Japan at that time)<sup>10</sup>

In particular, the phrase Kim Haksun used in this testimony, “know each other” is worthy of contemplation since it not only elucidates the aspiration behind her breaking of the silence but also reveals a remarkable grassroots insight into how a new history can come about.<sup>11</sup> By this statement, she first indicates who are the responsible ones for the future through the new historical knowledge. They are presumed to be the Korean public, the Japanese public, the victims themselves, and the younger generations whom she often refers to. By “know each other”, Kim also states the significance of the inter-subjective learning and the remembering of the truth in bringing out the new historical awareness of this deeply silenced matter: that is, to establish her testimony as historical knowledge.

### **Kim Yunsim**

Kim Yunsim broke her silence in 1993, whilst still struggling with the enormity of her personal shame. She testifies that she hesitated for a long time but it was her sister’s support and persuasion that helped her determination. Kim was kidnapped at the age of 14 in 1943, and abused as a sexual slave for the Japanese military in Harbin, China. She fled the Comfort House in 1944 before the war ended. However, after returning home she found that she had to live in an unspeakable ‘homelessness.’ On her return home, Kim was abandoned by her mother, who was worried that her father would become furious if he found out that their daughter had lost her virginity in the military camp. Kim recollects that she returned “home with

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<sup>10</sup> I quote this from the report of the Korean Council, inserted in the production note of Byun Yungjoo’s documentary film. Docufactory Vista, *The Way of Capturing Memories-Making My Own Breathing*, Seoul, April, 2000. p.51

<sup>11</sup> I directly translate Kim Haksun’s colloquial expression, “know each other”, as it is spoken by her to deliver the originality of her speech in the original context. This colloquial speech deliver the full originality of her grass-root speculation which I would like to maintain which may be lost have tried to render it in a neat and legitimate English translation.



Figure 42. Kim Yunsim and Yesuk, 2000. Still From Film. Byun Youngjoo, My Own Breathing.

c. Boim, Seoul. Provided by Kim Yunsim

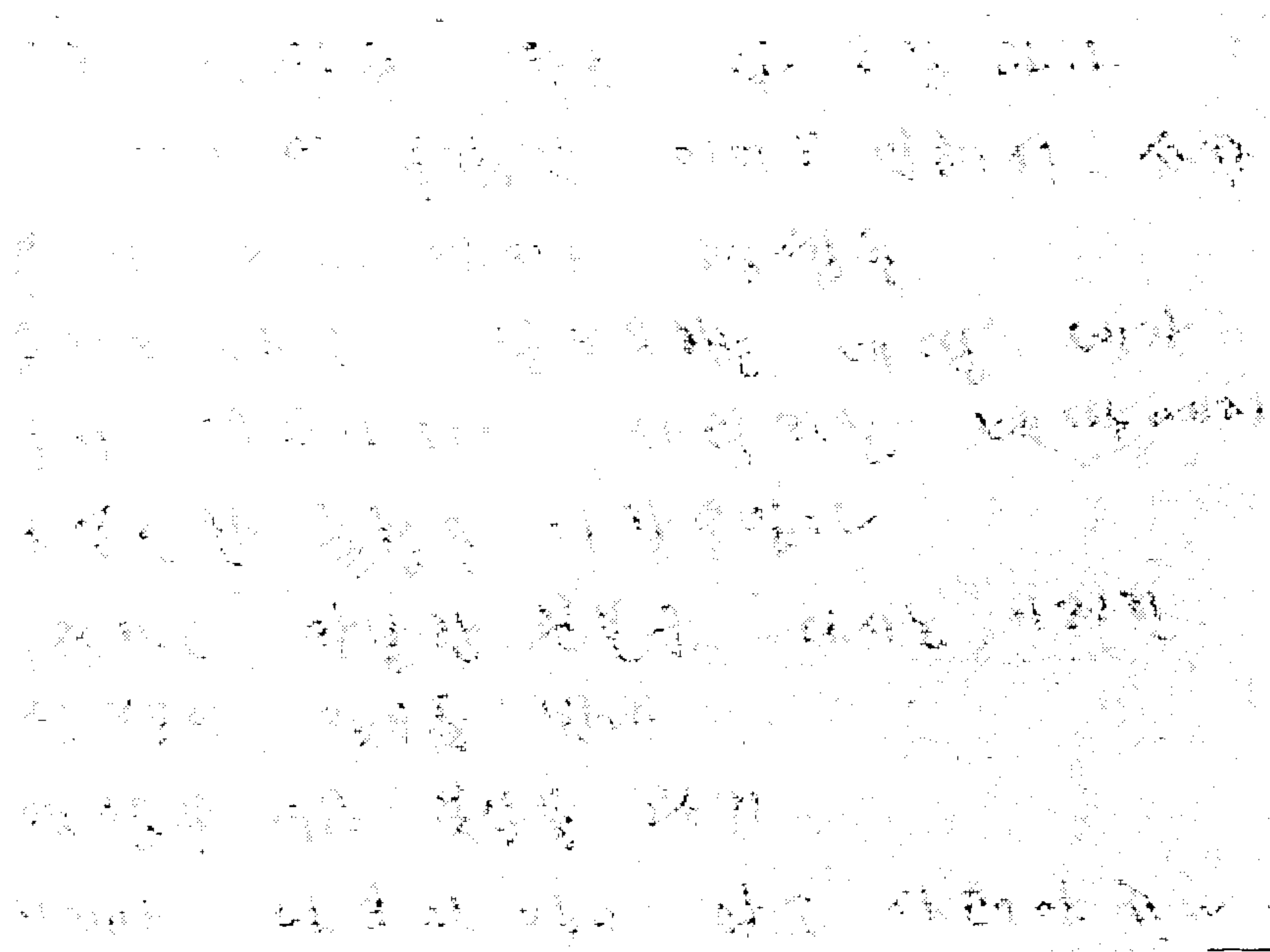


Figure 43. Kim Yunsim's Hand Writing, 2000. Still From Film. Byun Youngjoo, My own breathing

much nostalgia and miss after running away from the comfort house”. However, she added: “but I had to leave my home again”. She then married to avoid being drafted again by the Japanese military since the war had not ended by then. But her husband abandoned her because she was seen as ‘disabled’ by her barrenness. She was afraid to tell him and his family about her past. She married again less than 10 years later, out of loneliness, after which Yesuk, her deaf and mute daughter, was born. Being afraid of the probable suspicion about the causes of Yesuk’s “disability”, she fled to Seoul with Yesuk and no possessions. Since then, she has endured a hard life raising Yesuk alone whilst a low paid worker in a factory.\*<sup>12</sup>

In 1993, the Korean government started to advertise that the survivors, who had returned home after “forced labors” by Japanese during the war and were presumed to have lived under hardship without any reparation and support from the State, must register with their local council. She saw the advertisement in the paper and the posters on the street and was very afraid that, as she put it, her “shameful” past would become known to everybody. She avoided looking at the advertisements or posters. She could not sleep at night as the horror of the past, kept recurring more vividly. Meanwhile, her sister encouraged her to report since she believed that Kim had lived long enough with such a huge unspeakable misery. She convinced her to do so by saying that she would thus take “revenge” against Japanese since more people would be better able to help take action against them, and through which Kim could get at least some mental redress. She persuaded her that none of her relatives would know about it as they do not live in Seoul. Kim was, however, still deeply agonized thinking “what use could this reporting have, since even killing all of them [the Japanese responsible] would not be enough.” But she finally became determined to act, saying to herself, “yes, I will withstand my personal shame for the all the women who lived in the shadow.” Deeply perplexed, Kim wrote, “I cried

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<sup>12</sup> See Kim Yunsim’s essay, “Those Who Should Be Ashamed Are Not Us but You”, in *The Anthology of Jeun Taeil Literary Prize, A Small Book of Working People Press*, Seoul, 1998. See also Figure 3. Kim Yunsim and Yesuk

silently deep inside, I'm not guilty about the fact that my childhood was devastated by being dragged like an animal into sexual slavery."<sup>13</sup>

Kim's tensed silence in the pre-testimonial moment represents the mode of her conflicting yet apparently transforming psyche, the emotion and consciousness in the function of shifting self-evaluation. It is a shift from the subject of "shame" to the agent of 'resistance' and 'responsibility' to her human right and others. She denounces the invisible, moralizing voice that imposed the shame on her, condemning her to be a "fallen woman" and to her misery, depriving her of self-esteem and emotional well-being throughout her life. She "cries out" her "innocence". Also she pursues self-redemption by urging herself to utter that she was a victim of the barbaric acts against her will, and the shame should not be hers but that of others. In this shift, she mistrusts, reinterprets, and de-legitimises the politically and morally encoded social imperatives that repressed and oppressed her true speech, and enters into the fields of new politics and history.

This ethical inversion in Kim's mind is made explicit in the title of Kim's essay, '부끄러운 건 내가 아니고 너희다 Those Who Should Be Ashamed Are Not Us but You'. This is Kim's auto-biographical essay on the dramatic journey she went through before, during and after her life as sexual slave. It is written in a somewhat erratic style grammatically and with poor calligraphy.\*<sup>14</sup> In this essay, those "who should be ashamed", include the Japanese government, which had organized the controversial 'Civil fund', also known as 'Asian Peace and Friendship Fund For Women' in 1995. This was intended to replace the legal reparations and governmental level apologies to the victims, and provoked much anger amongst the victims and civil groups, who regarded it as a "deceptive" maneuver of the

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<sup>13</sup> Kim Yunsim, "Those Who Should Be Ashamed Are Not Us but You", *ibid.*, pp.12-68; see pp.55-56. By this essay, she won the prize in 8<sup>th</sup> 'Jeon Taeil-il Muhaksang' (The Literary prize commemorates the struggling of a fabric worker, Jeon Taeil who died young in 1970 with a suicidal protest against the exploitation of labors by the owner of the fabric factory he worked for and for the universal right of workers).

<sup>14</sup> See Figure 4. Kim's hand-writing (a still taken from the third documentary film on these women, Byun Younjoo, *My Own Breathing*, 2000).

Japanese government to avoid its legal responsibilities. Kim also utters angrily that the Korean women who have received money from this fund should also be ashamed. “This imposes the shame to us all again”, says Kim since it, as she observed, hurts and humiliates herself and other survivors, on top of all the atrocities they endured that have never been properly acknowledged.<sup>15</sup>

Kim Haksun’s utterance earlier claimed that true historical knowledge is to be established by the individual and inter-subjective participation in learning and acknowledging the truth. Kim Yunsim also elucidates her historical aspirations at the end of this essay, “my story would matter to everybody and every woman in this world. This should be written in history books and everyone should be able to reflect upon it lest this tragedy happens again.”<sup>16</sup>

The testimonies of Kim Haksun and Kim Yunsim contribute to the struggle of the subaltern women for the historical and political recognition of their truth beyond their previous designation as ‘improper’ women by Korean society and as civil prostitutes by Japanese political authorities. On the one hand, the economic political order of post war promotes this imbalance in East Asia, whilst on the other hand, Korean patriarchal society simply dismisses this issue. But Haksun and Yunsim, through the process of their testimonies, synchronously integrate their self-transformation process into a re-configuration of society’s silencing structure. In detail, by breaking the silence, the women first transgress the norm of this repressive power structure. They broke through the pseudo-homeostasis of the silencing structure, which represses the transgression of discontented individuals by constantly excluding, marginalizing and appropriating their speech. Disrupting the politically and morally coded “silencing structure” of Korean society, their speech consequently drives us into a space of new historical debates.

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<sup>15</sup> Kim says, “I have heard that seven women had received the money called “civil fund” and “medical warfare fund” given by Japan. Terrifying Japanese soldiers, the land of China with the cannon and bullets that are fleeing everywhere, vast field with no houses or men. I have only survived with red bruises in the my heart and remorse.. being dragged as slaves....without saying a word, until my bone is crushed and my flesh is scrambled....but what is the civil fund?. I wanted to even punish the women who received the money”, Kim, *Ibid.*, p. 56

<sup>16</sup> Kim Yunsim, *ibid.*, p. 56

The transformation and reconfiguration at both the level of subject and the society are mediated by the dynamic formation of a new manner of “interpretation” in the individual and the society. At the level of subjectivity, the women’s testimonies are construed in the release of the repressed memories that were prompted by an activation of new self-interpreting agent in relation to ‘others’ in the society. In particular, ‘the other’ or the ‘others,’ are the essential factors to this reactivation of new self-interpreting agency through which Haksun and Yunsim’s subjects re-identify their self-esteem and their role and prompt the breaking of their foreclosure. For example, as seen in the testimonies I have introduced, Haksun stands for the ‘others’ in history through her anger against those who manipulate the truth to which she is the prime witness. Yunsim simultaneously speaks on behalf of the other female victims and hopes to encourage others to speak out against injustice. The dimension of these “others” that these women are inspired by are various, for instance, those other victims of sexual slavery, or other victimised women in the world (who invoke them the compassion), as well as the perpetrators of their suffering in the past and present (who invoke the rage), or the next generation, or the future(who or which invoke them the sense of responsibility).

Above all, there are the significant ‘others’ who took direct roles in helping these victim women to break the silence and through whom they experience the affirmative alterity that shifted their life. For example, Haksun testifies how much she was motivated to break her silence by learning of Yun Jeongok’s activity. In Yunsim’s case, the role of her sister is essential. Her sister understands Kim’s life long remorse and urged Kim to speak out, reminding her of the subversive possibility of her testimony whilst Kim was unable to think, being so traumatized by her past: the revival of the memory and speaking of the story was too painful for her. The others prompted aspirations for a new political and historical horizon for these women where these formerly subalternised and traumatized women gradually recover the epistemic and discursive interface with the others and involve their subjectivity in the transitional mode of the transformation of the self and reconfiguration of the society.

However, the effects of the politically and morally coded silencing structure continue to haunt them even after the silence was broken and in the course of their speech. For instance, it did not fail to haunt Haksun and Yunsim even when they were determined to break their long silence: “I was still horrified” (Kim Haksun), “I was still afraid of anyone recognizing me” (Kim Yunsim). This statement anticipates the potential limit in uninterrupted speech of these women even after the opening of the foreclosure and although their desire for speech for themselves and others will continue. This is the ghost-effect of the silencing structure which has long been residing as a bodily constituency in the women. This will continue unless it is properly understood and carefully worked out. The women who were once forced to see themselves as ‘fallen women’ rather than victims, are still haunted by the same voice which used to bother them even after they broke the silence and learnt the just context of their situation. This is the point where the intervention of the intellectuals is necessary for the women to continue their positive speech, by deterritorising the zone of political and moral silencing machine inside the women’s fragile consciousness and outside the discursive society.

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Observing the process of these women’s speech emerge, I am obliged to argue that the condition of “subalternity” of these subjects is deeply dependant on the ideological constitution of the defective intelligibility in society. That is to say, the women’s silence in no way attributes to their essential personae but to this social function by which they are made to be unspoken and unheard beyond the realm of their private realm of mourning.

I have introduced Yun’s groundbreaking memory work, as the materialization of the new historiographical work that has provided a condition in which the subaltern women ‘can’ finally speak out. Her actions can be attributed to the creation of a gap in society’s thick silencing structure. Yun took the initiative as an intellectual woman as she was ‘haunted’ by this memory in the midst of the silence of society and to ensure that the memories of the drafted women were never forgotten. To

people who ask why she was interested in this issue, Yun Jeongok replies: “how can I forget about it?”<sup>17</sup> Yun’s work transposes her unease towards the society’s silence over the vanished women into the arena of historical and political debate. This transposition became the condition whereby the victimised and subalternised women find the justification for individual remorse and anger, which would otherwise be neglected and unheard of.

Yun’s subversive historiographical work opened up the possibility of a new intelligibility that as a result will reshape subalternity in society. The intellectual in a society predominantly facilitate and sustain aspirations of intelligibility which make certain types of speech possible and heard and others types to remain unspoken and unheard. Yun as an intellectual and the women as subaltern individuals were both previously subject to this apparatus that is construed as what I called ‘silencing structure’ of Korean society which made these women’s speech impossible.

A silencing structure in a society is constituted through the production of ‘silenced individuals’. The silence is produced as part of the ideological formation of discursivity that dominantly and also contingently determines the possibility and impossibility of certain speech. In other words, a ‘spatial’ formation of speech and silence facilitates the enunciating and non-enunciating individuals in the society. The interplay between the pre-existing political structure of neo-colonial relations and patriarchic morality in Korea has formed certain ideological and discursive norms and the code of conduct in which the women have been forcibly made “mute” for such a long period of time. That is to say, the repressive silencing structure in Korea is the result of the institutionalization of postwar neocolonial economic and political ideology, in relation to Korea’s economic dependency on the industrialized Japan and post war East Asian politics, which has prevented Korean government from making a charge of the enslavement of civilians against the Japanese government. Furthermore, the patriarchic culture in Korea and of East

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<sup>17</sup> Yun, *ibid.*, in Byun Youngjoo, ‘Murmuring’, 1995.



Asia in general, continues to be complacent with this econo-political norm to neglect the suffering of these women.

Iain Chambers analogically discusses the spatial formation of 'silence' in text and society. He talks about the space of silences which reside in the universe of "western logos" which realises itself in the archaeology of power, "authority". He discusses how this logo-centric authority mobilises a binary discursive and discriminating system, reducing the world into its own point of view. In the essay, 'Signs of Silences, Lines of Listening,'<sup>18</sup> Chambers articulates the 'authority'(of absolute reason)'s formation of "silence" as constituted by the "archaeology of its powers" which obliterates, silences, negates its other. He writes,

one of the central themes[he refers to Levinas's works on 'absolute reason']is clearly to return to this space, and to reconsider the archaeology of its powers: the power to name, identify, classify, domesticate and contain that simultaneously doubles as the power to obliterate, silence and negate. For the recognition of other histories, of other people, language and sounds, of other ways of dwelling in the same space that have been consigned to the shadows.<sup>19</sup>

The creation of the sexual slave appears a succinct example of this "archaeology of powers" that Japanese imperialists operated, which systemically obliterated, silenced and negated women's humanity and their being without shame. Japanese imperialists and their Korean perpetrators demonstrated the violent rationality formed in the course of the development of East Asian modernity, deeply entrenched in militarism and patriarchal authoritarianism. The women's humanity and being were first "negated" when they were abducted and coerced into sexual enslavement against their will. Then, the imperial army's rationality treated the

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<sup>18</sup> Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti eds., "Signs of Silences, Lines of Listening", in *The Post-Colonial Question-Common Skies, Divided Horizon*, Routledge, 1996

<sup>19</sup> He takes on Emmanuel Levinas's idea of the inhuman logic of "absolute reason" to elucidate this dimension. Chambers sees the "absolute reason" has determined historical, cultural, and individual identities of the Western mind as its constitutive interiority. Chambers, *ibid.*, p.48

women as consumables for military use as part of the conduct of a war for the glory of the emperor. In the camps, for instance, if women suffered abuse or contracted venereal disease and were no longer able to offer the 'service' they were recruited for, they were occasionally killed and secretly buried. Moreover, despite the fact that they were not treated as human, they were still forced to think of and appreciate their "service" for the victory of Japanese emperor.<sup>20</sup>

Chambers writes that the 'archeology of its powers' operates a binary opposition through which I argue the process of silencing of these women in the postwar history can be accounted for. Chambers says,

we confront those binary oppositions that authority invariably deploys in reducing the surrounding world to its point of view: reality/appearance, truth/falsehood, male/female, centre/periphery. While the former element is considered the stable bearer of truth, the fluctuating aspects of the latter can only be rendered comprehensibly, and represented, once it has been subjected by the logic of the former to its wording-worlding.<sup>21</sup>

That historical wording-worlding structure of politically and patriarchally coded rationality of East Asia, reveals the complicity between the colonial rationale of Japan and patriarchy.

In postwar Korean society, the persistent patriarchic rationality did not regard the women's disaster, truth and reality as matter worthy of consideration. The patriarchic authority had readily forgotten these women since no officials,

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<sup>20</sup> Kim Yunsim describes her eye-witness of how the women used to be secretly killed in the comfort house and buried. Kim. *ibid.*, p 26. See also the section 'Military comfort women who died' in 'The Report On the Issue of Japan's Military Comfort women', by Center for Research and Documentation On Japan's War Responsibility, Tokyo, Japan, 1994. P.46. It describes the women were treated by medical doctor regularly but it does not describe the kind of the case that Kim describes. But it dealt with how the women were left to die by air raid while the Japanese military moves.

<sup>21</sup> Chambers, *ibid.*, p.48

historians, or intellectuals in the postwar society had raised the issue of them, as Yun Jeongok bemoaned. The society had sealed them in the 'silence' through its officialdom in which the victimised women were forced to believe that what they had experienced was not a matter of historical, political, and colonial injustice but that of personal disgrace and shame. The patriarchic rationality endorsed the idea of women who are the epitome of silent devotion. This rationality was already assigning to women this place of silence, devotion and celebrating the absence of their claim of reward for their labor and devotion. One of the common stories that are told by these women on how they were taken into Comfort Houses is that they were the girls of poor rural families. They were willing to help their families. Local Korean collaborators recruited them deceiving them by telling them that they will be earning good money and helping their poor families by working in factories abroad for the Japanese war effort. Those "good" girls were mostly aged 13-16 although some were as young as 11 and as old as 22 when they volunteered to leave their homes and to work to help their family were taken in by this fraud.(Many others, like Kim Haksun, were abducted in the street by strangers). Despite the fact that Korean patriarchal society would have celebrated the good will and the labor of those girls for their families, it did not recognise the case of their disappearance during the war and the post-war society as a significant matter. And it was disinterested in the redress of their wound when their dignity is violated

That is to say, the patriarchal ideology is hypocritical and weak so far as it contemplates the women's fair place. On their return from Comfort Houses, their families were ashamed of their daughters and sisters. As the women testify, their own families abandoned them and often convinced them to conceal their experiences rather than embracing their wounds and needs. Many had to marry despite a fear of men, because their families or even the women themselves feared that their communities would call them "improper" women whilst they remained unmarried. During their married lives, they often concealed their past, often being maltreated by their husbands and his family when it was found that they could not conceive and "function as a woman."(Many women became barren as a result of

sexually transmitted disease or abuse, whilst other women's offspring were affected by these diseases contracted in captivity.) With no recognition and no systematic support, they were left alone to deal with their immense physical and mental scars, and the long lasting trauma of their sexual abuse.(For example, one woman, Sim Dalyen suffered from psychological illness caused by the severe sexual abuse she suffered in the comfort house yet received no proper medical treatment for many years).

The complicit structure of different ideologies in post-war Korea encapsulated these victim women in the space of silence, who had the right to demand compensation on their suffering and reveal the injustice to all. No opportunity was given to them, and the chance for them to restore their human dignity also has been lost so they lived in a state of trauma, low self-esteem, and angst in the shadow of individual shame for more than 45 years.

In her famous essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Spivak argues that "measuring silences" is a significant task for postcolonial critics. She argues that these silences are produced in an intellectual text where the refusal of "the others" takes form. She states that 'the silence' is *not* an abstract or "pure" formation since it is the product of the "sign-power" in discursive sociality which, as she insists, intellectuals are unavoidably involved in. Spivak discusses 'silence' as the "inaccessible blankness in an interpretable text" in a text like the silence produced in Chambers' "wording worlding". Spivak discusses the "blankness" as an analogy of an 'absence' of 'presence' that resides in the logocentric and Eurocentric grammatology employed in Derrida's frame work. She proposes "the inaccessible blackness circumscribed by an interpretable text is that postcolonial critics of imperialism would like to see developed within the European enclosure as the place of production of theory."<sup>22</sup> In other words, as Spivak argues, Derrida's position urges us to "appeal to" or "call to" the "quiet-other" for "rendering delirious that interior voice that is the voice of

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<sup>22</sup> G.C. Spivak, *ibid.*, p.294

other in us”.<sup>23</sup> Spivak highlights that the important aspects of Derrida’s project are his vision of the “double”. As indicated in his formulation “*différance*”, the phenomenon of “the presence” and “absence” is contingent and temporal rather than essential or fixed. The same structural understanding can be applied for understanding of speech and silence. The speech and silence are phenomena wherein speech often hides behind silence and the vice versa. The silence is the voice of the other in us in the contemplation of what is of significance for us in order to be able to articulate the question of ‘other’ that persistently haunts us.

Theoretically speaking, Spivak’s methodological suggestion to “measure the silences” is closely related to her constant preoccupation with the project of ‘deconstruction’, as inspired by Derrida. For Spivak, the task is to conjure the silenced others that dwell in the blankness of the text essentially necessitates the intellectual awareness of their complicity to the ‘blankness’ of their text. The complicity of the intellectual is found in their constitutive-ness in the “blankness” of his/her text detached from the actual site of the silenced other. This perspective echoes the basic hypothesis of ‘deconstruction’ that there is nothing outside the text, which implies that “I”, my “speech”, my “silence” are always and already implicated in the discursive mechanism of ‘interpretation’ that a text provides. An intellectual may not listen to the silence of the others since he/she is constituted within and or resides in this self-constitutive blankness. To listen to ‘the silenced others’ outside their complicit situated-ness requires the acknowledgement of the blankness and positive displacement of him/herself from the constitutives of their knowledge in default. Spivak wrote, “the postcolonial critics and intellectuals can attempt to displace their own production only by presupposing that text-inscribed blankness.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Spivak, *ibid.*, p.294

<sup>24</sup> Spivak, *ibid.*, p.294

Chambers analogically states that such ‘blankness’ is foreign land in us, in which we first “need to learn to represent ‘ourselves’” rather than talking about representing them (the other). Chambers writes,

To inscribe that impossibility into my language, understanding it not as a critical failure or closure but rather as something that exposes me to the interrogation of the presence of the other, and thus to the historical bonds, cultural specificity and political limits of myself. It perhaps means to live in another country where to confront the subaltern is not to represent them, but to learn to represent ourselves.<sup>25</sup>

The foreign land in us is the constitutive of “the archaeology of power” and the authority of the “intelligibility” in society, which hitherto refuses to listen to the voices of its other, the silenced subalterns.

Yun Jeongok’s initial archival work and field research into the Comfort Houses is an act of acknowledgement of the blankness, of the unsaid ‘silences’ in the politico-economically determined and patriarchic historiography and its textual institution. Yun conducted the investigation of the site of silence and attempted the historical identification of silence by which she radically reconfigured the ideological discursivity of neo-colonial and patriarchic Korean society. This makes us rethink what Spivak says, since the ‘silences’ do not reside in a pure silence, “a task of measuring silences” involves “the archival, historiographic, disciplinary critical and inevitably interventionist work.”<sup>26</sup>

Chambers further reminds us that in working with “silence” one should not merely register the silence. Denouncing the idea of pure “silence”, Chambers asks us to

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<sup>25</sup> Chambers, *ibid.*, p.59

<sup>26</sup> Spivak, *ibid.*, p.286

read “silence” as a space of struggle in which the subject refuses to participate in a vocal mandate. He wrote,

but sometimes we fail to hear and merely register silence. For our loss of authority is not usually the result of our benevolence (as opposed to the simulation of loss through patronage): it is invariably the outcome of struggle, contestation and a refusal on the part of another being to register our presence. So, silence can also be a maker of agency, particularly among women. Silence as a will not to say, or to unsay, as a language of its own has barely been explored. The refusal to respond can mark the refutation of a language in which one is being addressed. To reply in this mode is to adopt a voice that refuses to participate in the official record. The refusal of the vocal mandate disrupts the positioning of power through the irruption of silence.<sup>27</sup>

Yun’s text has paved the way for the women to speak about their past. But one may still want to ask, why were the women silent for 45 years? Why could they not speak out bravely?(This was the young documentary film maker, Byun Youngjoo’s initial question before she began to film the women.) One can rethink this question through Chambers’ insight that silence is not a mere silence but a space of struggle to the power, which might reveal the unwilling willingness of the subaltern subject not to be destroyed by the society or consumed where the patriarchic norm is dominant and destructive. They were perhaps waiting for the condition where their voice can be heard properly . And Yun’s work happened to provide the condition.

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As is well known, Spivak’s arguments in the essay ‘Can The Subaltern Speak?’ represent one of the most significant contemporary leftist theoretical positions on the possibilities and limits (not to say, “impossibility”) of the self-representation of the subaltern subject and the role of intellectual. In this, she relates the subaltern

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<sup>27</sup> Chambers, *ibid.*, p.51

speech and its absence to the role of the intellectual. The latter is beset by the system of desire, power, and interest, which determines, the spatial formation of the structure of speech and silence. Spivak's focal point suggests that the intellectual should reflect upon themselves first before hastily moving into the task of 'representing the other' in the light of her concerns towards "measuring silences." This allows us to see her concern towards the "representation" of silence and the silenced in society as a complex reasoning process of the interdependency between the subalternity(and silence) and intelligibility(and speech).

Her argument in this essay is formed against Foucault's and Deleuze's position in "new empiricism" as conveyed in "let others (the subaltern) speak for themselves" in the famous dialogue between them conducted in 1977.<sup>28</sup> In denouncing Foucault and Deleuze, she sees that the possibility of the self representative speech of the workers can not be presumed or guaranteed but it needs to be mediated by the intellectual. Foucault and Deleuze's position is "innocently positivistic" whilst irresponsibly promoting the illusions of the possibility of "direct" speech of workers and its immediate effect on the politics despite the uneven conditions of power and speech under "the contemporary international division of labor".<sup>29</sup> Spivak criticizes Foucault and Deleuze for engaging in an un-problematised presumption of a transparency of themselves(intellectual) and the subaltern(the workers) in promoting this idea. She demonstrates how Foucault and Deleuze propose a deliberate refusal of the task of the intellectual despite, their unavoidable involvement in the production of discursive "sign-power" systems in the society. And she goes on to argue that their position is not innocent but complicit with the new global capitalist re-division of labor.

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<sup>28</sup> Michel Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation Between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze", *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon tr., Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977, pp.205-217

<sup>29</sup> Spivak, *ibid.*, p. 287



By saying “let them speak for themselves” and “now the role of referee, judge, and universal witness is one which I absolutely refuse to adopt”,<sup>30</sup> as Spivak argues, Foucault and Deleuze dismiss the fact that their privileged status as intellectuals is directly and indirectly involved in defining the sign-power of society that regulates the speech/intelligibility and silence/subalternity. Foucault and Deleuze downplay their complicity to the unevenly bestowed power which predictably affects the condition of subaltern silence and overplays the capacity of subaltern subject regardless of the condition. Spivak argues that the opacity of the discursive-sign-power, by which an (in)audibility is determined. This does not allow such an optimistic position, but rather highlights the ‘responsibility’ of the intellectual. It is in this opacity, in which one reads and writes and also speaks and listens. Such “interested refusals”<sup>31</sup> as Spivak calls them promote disinterest in the function of the silencing structure and an imperfect self-critique by intellectuals. And it is also an “epistemic violence” since it appears to be the “recognition by assimilation”.<sup>32</sup> In this sense, Spivak states that neither of the intellectual themselves nor the subaltern in Foucault and Deleuze’s term is really “represented”; “S/subject [western male subject or native, women, other subject] becomes transparent in the relay race, for they merely report on the non-represented subject and analyze [without analyzing] the workings of [unnamed subject irreducibly presupposed by] power and desire.”<sup>33</sup>

In this line of argument, Spivak provokes that the subaltern subject is “a thinking subject” who is “neither *transparent*” nor “invisible”. This formulation defies any idealist and reductionist presumptions of the subaltern subject and their capacity for speech, by endorsing their existential function in function of *différence* in the society. Spivak allows us to contemplate both the subaltern’s potency of speech and the “opacity” of any speech in relation to the preexisting discursive structure. However, the attention to their potency and speech in opacity does not square with

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<sup>30</sup> Spivak, *ibid.*, p. 280

<sup>31</sup> Spivak, *ibid.*, pp.279-280

<sup>32</sup> Spivak, *ibid.*, p.294

<sup>33</sup> Spivak, *ibid.*, Unfortunately I can not find the page number.

the pronunciation of “let other speak for themselves” nor they can not speak for themselves but be “only represented by others”. But this evaluates their irreducible potency of speech of seemingly subaltern and silent subject wherein the silence does not mean the absence of a thinking subject. It also suggests that one can not conceive a pure speech of the subaltern due to its lack of capacity to represent itself at the level of legitimate political representation and their weakness in resisting the power of ideological discursivity.

In order to overcome the logic of “transparency” which is revived in this new leftist intellectual discourse, Spivak returns to the critique of “ideology” in which she finds a reasonable expression of “new empiricism,” that does not dispose the logic of responsibility. As for Spivak’s use of “ideological”, the term differs from its conventional meaning. This term has been reluctantly used in recent decades by contemporary political and cultural critics in Europe and North America, as it regarded as simplistic since its usage is to indicate the mode of immediate and oppressive imposition of the consciousness of the ruling class over the ruled as a “false consciousness”. But reviving the term in the Althusserian sense, she appeals to pay attention to the ideology’s institutional invention of a subjectivity and through the ideological discursivity. That is to say, Spivak re-invokes the term in the context of the “developed theory of ideology in the West” She notes that “the developed theory of ideology recognizes its own material production in institutionality, as well as in the “effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge.”<sup>34</sup> It is the context of institutionality that determines silence and speech of the subaltern, which I named as ‘silencing structure’ of a society. In this institutionality, the relationship between desire and ideology is not seen in oppositional categories but intermingled as it is complicit in this new genesis of understanding of power/desire/interest, and speech and silence. Spivak summarized this well, “ideology [as seen by Althusser] is not a false consciousness

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<sup>34</sup> Spivak, *ibid.*, p.274

[in the sense of being deceived] but they [the subaltern] desire within the ideological structure”<sup>35</sup>

I have previously introduced how Yun brought forth a new interpretable text, shedding light on silence in society, then the new speeches of the previously-silenced subjects are followed accordingly, in the unfolding zone of ‘intelligibility’. What is clear for us is that the question of subaltern speech and the silence now is not ‘if the subaltern can speak or not’ as Spivak posed and used for the title of her essay. Their speech can not be understood by the simplistic conception of absolute possibility or absolute impossibility any more, but only through the understanding of how they speak and the silence take place in the conforming and subverting instances in relation to the intelligibility, that equates with the institutional constituency of ideology.

Here, it is useful to think what Spivak says, that one should question in the moment of listening to the subaltern “with what voice-consciousness does this subaltern speak?” in relation to the task of the “interpretation” of the ideology. From the perspective of ideological discursivity, it can be said that the speech breaking the silence of these women appears to be conditioned by a temporally constituted intelligibility that Yun has conjured at the level of the society’s discursivity. This temporal intelligibility can be understood in the context of preexisting and also reconfiguring ideological discursivities of society.

One observes the dynamic modes of speech and silence of the former sexual slave women within/outside such social, ideological, and discursive constituencies of discursivity. This includes the speeches of subaltern women, which are not always bound by the ad hoc ideology that the intellectual would predominantly fabricate but also defy it and reshape it. This reveals the original heterogeneity of the voices that exceed the appropriation of power. However, this theorization of the “voice-consciousness” outside of the given discursive ideological system is subject to a

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<sup>35</sup> Spivak, *ibid.*, p.274

difficulty. Spivak's theoretical position in 'Can The Subaltern Speech?' essay provides itself to assure the "impossibility" of such speeches of the subaltern women without intellectuals and outside the given ideological environment of neo-colonial, patriarchic, and local nationalist authority. It is partly because her theoretical position in this essay is formulated through her observation of the culture of *Sati* in which women disappear. In here, "there is nothing to say, to see, to know".<sup>36</sup>

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The voices of the former sexual slaves I deal with here include that of individual victim women expressed in a formal public hearing and those expressed through the inter-subjective context of working together with other women. The voices of the Former Sexual Slave Women emerged throughout the 1990s are not only an individual utterance but also the product of the speaking together with others in working group. This recognition is especially significant for me to highlight the inter-dependency between the subaltern and intellectual in the emerging realm of new intelligibility and subaltern speech.<sup>37</sup> The zone of 'working together' creates a temporal spatial environment that allows the subaltern women who consent to the attentive listening culture created within this zone and which will be expanded to the wider realm of society. This signifies an intermediate space that requires our attention beyond the extreme conceptions that advocate that "the masses know perfectly well, clearly so "let them speak for themselves [Foucault and Deleuze]" and the "subject who is to be merely represented [Marx]". The voices I deal with

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<sup>36</sup> She continues to say, "the case of *Sutte* as exemplum of the women-in-imperialism would challenge and deconstruct this opposition between subject (law) and object-of-knowledge(repression) and mark the place of "disappearance" with something other than silence and non existence, a violent aporia between subject and object status". Spivak, *ibid*, p306; As for *Suttee*, is *sati*. It is the conventional transcription of the Sanscrit word for widow. The earlier colonial British transcribed it *suttee*. See Spivak's explanation on this in the same essay. Spivak, *ibid.*, p.297

<sup>37</sup> The question of "authenticity" that has been one of main preoccupations in the discourse of subaltern speech and discourse of testimonial speech that have overshadowed the aspects of interdependency between intellectual and subaltern speech is of less interest at this point. The overstretched interest in 'authenticity' derives from the idealist interest of individuality which perpetuates dichotomy between intellectual and subaltern. This often retains the lack of criticism on its hypothesis regarding any speech is already composed and configured as an effect of the multiple influences

here also include those which are not spoken but expressed in meaningful non-linguistic gestures in and outside of ideological discursive constituency. I hereby introduce the voices of these women as they captured my critical and analytic interest.

### **Not Prostitute but Slave**

The women's voice of negation against dominant ideology determined by economic-political power can be observed in the process of their fight against Japan's attempts to dismiss them as civil prostitutes. The women, along with civil working groups, have confronted Japan's efforts to deny its criminal wrongdoing. By denouncing the women's claims to years of human rights violations, the Japanese political authority insisted that the allegations are forgeries and that the accusers are mere prostitutes. The Japanese government has famously put it: "They were recruited as prostitutes by civil traders. They did it voluntarily and received the fares for the service they provided." Also: "The testimonies of the victims are anecdotal or even created to implicate the government in what is a matter which was especially a privately run, system of prostitution".<sup>38</sup> The Japanese government restricted all 'Comfort House' documents generated during the war, an act which allowed them to continually obscure evidence of the atrocities that were committed.<sup>39</sup> However, numerous testimonies were accumulated from survivors who are scattered around East and South East Asia, forming a strong body of

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<sup>38</sup> UN Report, R. Coomasraswamy, UN report. *Commission of Human Rights, fifty-second session. Item 9 (a) of the provisional agenda. United Nations-Economic and Social Council. Distr. General, E/CN.4/1996/53/Add.1, 4 January 1996.*

<sup>39</sup> According to the special reporter on violence against Women for the UN, by Radhika Coomasraswamy, in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution, the controversy about the recruitment is rendered as follows. "The most problematic aspect of attempting to write an account of the recruitment of military sexual slaves during the period leading to the Second world war and during the war itself is the lack of remaining or disclosed official documentation concerning the actual recruitment process. Nearly all evidence concerning the recruitment of "comfort women" comes from the oral testimony of the victims themselves. This had made easy for many to reject the testimonies of the victims as anecdotal or even created to implicate the Government in a matter which was essentially private and therefore, a privately run, system of prostitution. Yet the consistency of the account of women from quite different parts of South-East Asia of the manner in which they were recruited and the clear involvement of the military and Government at different levels is indisputable. It is wholly implausible that so many women could have created such similar stories about the extent of official involvement solely for their own purposes." Also see UN Report, R. Coomasraswamy, *ibid.*, p7

counter-evidence to the Japanese denial. On 4, August, 1994 the Japanese government finally changed its stance and admitted that the military was in fact directly involved in the establishment and management of comfort stations as well as the actual transfer of comfort women.<sup>40</sup> The Japanese government tried to appropriate its past wrongdoing by taking opportunity of the passing of time and the possibility that they called silence these women. The nature of truth in this conflict is deeply important to both parties. For the women, it is a matter of the restoration of their dignity and reparations to redress their long suffering. For Japan, by confirming them as “prostitute”, they can avoid moral contempt and political pressure from international society.

The ideological manipulation against this women’s claim of justice already started during the war by the Japan. Japan made the women to use the language such as “receiving customers” in the ‘comfort houses’ in order for the women to see themselves as prostitutes. This is alleged to have “crammed” a false consciousness into these women, who often came from poor families and were not very well educated. As the testimonies of the woman reveal, the women continued to speak using the ideologically modified terms suggested to them at this time, without the subject’s conscious awareness of what effect the speech makes. Sin Youngsuk, who has interviewed the women over a long period of time, pointed out, that she often felt perplexed by the terminology that the women were using during the interviews. “The women often use the expressions such as “the owner”, “the business”, “the customer” instead of the ‘soldiers’ and ‘military’. Listening to them, I found myself wondering if they were really in the military comfort house or red light district. For example, Jo Namrae (one of the victims) also used the expressions and it made me perplexed and wonder. But carrying on the conversation, I was finally assured that

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<sup>40</sup> Although the Japanese government had been denying its involvement in the “military comfort women” system for many years, many civil researchers and civil activist in both Japan and Korea solicited crucial historical documents showing the organization of the “military comfort women” system by Japanese military, made the government admit its involvement, and pressed it to the issue the apology. An organization of Japanese historians published *The Report On the Issue of Japan’s Military Comfort Women*. The name of organization is previously mentioned, Center for Research and Documentation on Japan’s War Responsibility based in Tokyo, Japan.

it was the Military Comfort House, because she also used expressions such as “being allocated”, “the military had sorted it out when one woman drowned in the water.” Another interviewer, Ko Haejeong adds that she also heard the expression “customer” many times during her interview. She also says, “I interpret that it may have resulted from the education that the managers of the comfort house had imposed on these women. They implanted such consciousness onto the victims, calling them “comfort women”, teaching them to call soldiers “customers”.

Fifty years after surrender of Japan in the war, the ideological expressions persisted in the language of the women, since they had no chance to remove it or adapt it. The way Japan manipulated the women’s consciousness during the war by prescribing inappropriate terms that are incompatible with the actual experiences caused a lethal confusion to the young generation who are chronologically and geographically distanced from the truth.

Japanese military also used problematic institutions like “pyo” (war payment slip or army note), alleged to be a payment for their “prostitution”.<sup>41</sup> But Jung Jinsung has written, “according to the research, the ‘pyo’ was not paid properly to the women, only 3 among 10 testify they has received it. Many testified they have never heard of that. Or some said that it was promised but never paid until the end of war”.<sup>42</sup> Ko Haejeong added that ‘pyo’, which is alleged to have issued to the women by Japan, as the women testify, was not received or had no value credited after war, also served its ideological purpose of the military authority.

The discrepancy between such “representation” through language and institutional material and the “real” has remained untreated by the survivors. This can lead us to think of what is subalternity again if it is not a silence. As many researchers have pointed out, in actual conversations, these women do not believe their experiences constitute a prostitution, although they may refer to themselves with inadequate

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<sup>41</sup> The Women’s Council et. al., eds., Witness 1, *ibid.*, p27.

<sup>42</sup> See the transcript of panel discussion in the end of the book, The Women’s Council et al.eds., *Witness 3’; Forcibly Drafted Korean Military Comfort Women*, Hanul Press, Seoul, 1998, p.355

language. The subaltern subject, hovering between improper sign-language and real-experiences, reveals one of the most problematic characteristics of the subaltern regarding the issue of self-representation. They often speak but speak in this “discrepancy”. In other words, the subaltern subject often lacks the capacity to “represent” his/her experiences in adequately interpretable language. As their speech is not “properly worded” they always leave themselves possibility open to the misinterpretation. In this weakness, they are easily exposed to power’s ideological manipulation.

However, it is also observed that the reflection of the victims themselves to repair this discrepancy persisted. For example, a former sexual slave, Lee Yongsu, ventured a question to another victim, Kim Bunseon in which she clearly indicated her acute consideration of a false consciousness against them that has been continuously manipulated by Japan, which Lee felt strongly obliged to test out and disapprove. Lee ask Kim how she was taken to the Comfort House. “Did you smile to the soldiers?” after Kim spoke about her memory when the Japanese soldiers marched into her village. Kim Bunseon replied, “no ... I was just scared.”<sup>43</sup> Then in the course of conversation, Lee found Kim using the expression, “received the customer” whilst recounting her life in the Comfort House. Lee rebukes, in anger, “sister please do not say that way, ‘I had received the customer’”.

### **“Comfort” Women?**

In the course of their struggle, the victim women, together with the ‘working group’, try to adopt the term “sexual slave” as an alternative to “comfort women”. This conscious effort was designed to adopt terminology which embodied the political perspective of the women and working group. How to aptly represent the victimization is of great importance to the struggle for an ‘international’ and ‘universal’ recognition of the human rights violation. Words often reflect the interests of those who invent them. The phrases ‘military comfort houses’ and

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<sup>43</sup> The conversation which is captured in the Byun Youngjoo’s film, ‘My Own Breathing (2000)’, which is her third film on the former sexual slave women, Docufactory Vista/Boim, Seoul, S. Korea. 1999



'comfort women' were introduced by Japanese historians in an effort to differentiate the associated military institution from other private institutions such as the civil brothel or red light districts, both of which also existed during the war. The term "comfort women" embodies the perspective of Japanese imperialists who perceived this type of violence against women as a positive "service" for soldiers offering their lives for the victory of the Japanese emperor. Once established, this term was propagated and during the interim period was internationally used as a way to refer to victim women.

But this terminology eventually became the subject of critical voices raised by civil groups, researchers and international lawyers looking into the issue. As Jo Heryun (an interviewer in 'The Korean Council') points out,

It was the Japanese military who called these women "military comfort women", and the place where the women had endured the suffering, the pain and ordeal as "comfort house" before the end of war. Calling the women who were forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese military as "comfort women" only recognises the perspective of the Japanese soldiers who were the recipient of the sexual "comfort". But for the women's perspective, the perspective of the women that the service to give comfort to soldiers was enforced, and it is the most horrific pain of the pains, is not considered here at all.<sup>44</sup>

The UN commission special reporter, Radhika Coomaraswamy, also acknowledges the problems that come with the widely used term 'Comfort Women'.

finally, for the purpose of terminology, the special reporter concurs entirely with the view held by members of the working group on

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<sup>44</sup> A essay inserted in Docufactory Vista/Boim, *The Production note of Habitual Sadness- InDependant From/On What?*, Seoul, 1997, p.181



Figure 44. Jeanne O'Herne, 1994. c. Chunghee Sarah Soh

contemporary form of slavery, as well as by representations of non-governmental organizations and some academics, that the phrase 'comfort women' does not the least reflect the suffering, such as multiple rapes on an everyday basis and severe physical abuse, that the women victims had to endure during their forced prostitution and sexual subjugation and abuse in wartime.<sup>45</sup>

Her report concludes as follows.

The special Rapporteur therefore, considers with conviction that the phrase "military slaves" represent a much more accurate and appropriate terminology.<sup>46</sup>

Concerning the inadequacy of the term 'comfort women', Jeanne O'Herne<sup>47</sup>, a Dutch victim, tells us that the term functions to conceal the pain of her experiences in a 'comfort house'. As she puts it, "'comfort' means soft and warm in English, but from my memory, these feelings were far from the experience I endured."<sup>48</sup>

### **"Historical" Granny**

To represent these women who were silent for more than 40 years in historically and politically appropriate term is an inherently difficult issue. Lee Youngsup, a member of the 'Daegu Civil Supporters' Group' set up for old survivors in Daegu,<sup>49</sup> commented on how difficult it was to find a name for their group which aspires to bridge the interests and needs of both the women victims and civil supporters themselves.

neither "sexual slave", nor "comfort women" was relevant to designate the link between us and the granny. We have been wondering how to

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<sup>45</sup> Coomaraswamy's UN report. *ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>46</sup> Coomaraswamy's UN report. *ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>47</sup> See Figure 44. Chunghee Sarah Soh, Jeanne O'Herne, 1998

<sup>48</sup> Korean Council et. al., eds., *'Witness 3-*', *ibid.*, p.339

<sup>49</sup> A South Eastern city of Korea

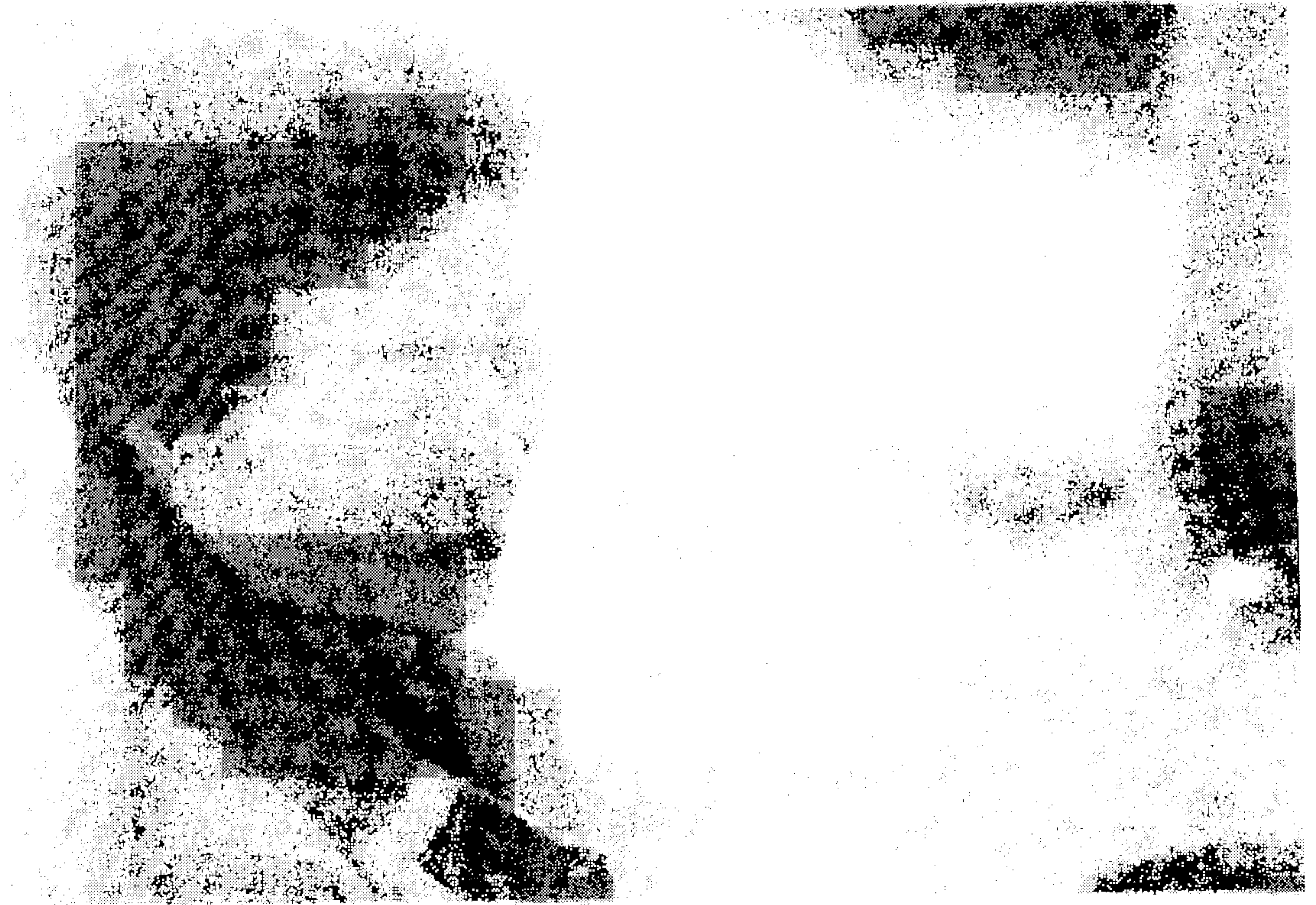


Figure 76. Lee Yongsu, 2000. Photograph. c. Boim. 2000

call our group. One day our member, Kang Insung, suggested calling the granny as “historical grandmother” and we liked it. But Lee Yongsu granny like us to call her “political grandmother....”<sup>50</sup>

The working group needed a fresh name to represent the aspirations of their affiliation for this work despite the given distance between themselves and the women due to the difference in the generations and the difference in experiences. While the historical truth of the women has not been considered for more than 40 years, the dehistoricisation and depoliticisation of the issues of the women had been normative so that it left great difficulties for anyone to rightly represent the implication of the matters of these women in relation to the young generation and also historically, politically relevant way. Here the suggestions like “historical granny” or “the political granny,” provide the possible link between the women and civil supporters. That is to say, these names represent the aspirations of the women who want to enter the field of history and politics for the redemption, which also meet the aspirations of the supporter’s group who try to find the space to engage with these women beyond the differences and difficulties.

### **I’m Lee Yongsu**

However, neither ‘comfort women’ nor ‘sexual slave’ is sufficient to signify the women as being attributed to complexity of their everyday life and as attuned for the future rather than the past, since both terms readily and only refer them to an event in the past. One day, Lee Youngsu\*<sup>51</sup> expressed with an intense anguish, “I’m Lee Yongsu. I do not want to be called as a *jeungsindae*<sup>52</sup> or comfort woman.”<sup>53</sup> Lee makes this remark for her irreducible individuality, which is not to be equated with the past events. She wishes to be identified not as the figure sealed

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<sup>50</sup> Lee Youngsup, *ibid.*, p57

<sup>51</sup> See Figure 76. Lee Yongsu, *Boim*. 2000

<sup>52</sup> This is a Japanese term, to call the mobilized workers from Japan and their occupied territories to conduct the imperial war. It is equivalent of ‘comfort women.’

<sup>53</sup> Lee Youngsup wrote, who is a member of Daegu civil supports group who work closely with the women victime including Lee Yongsu, “unlike other grannies who are shy a lot, Lee is outspoken on her past in the Comfort House...but in public hearings, she sometimes cries out, in high temper, “I’m Lee Yongsu. I do not want to be called as a *jeungsindae* or comfort women”, Lee Yongsu, *ibid.*, p.57

in the past but an individual living for the future. By pronouncing her individual name, Lee Youngsu, she attempts to assure her unique, differential and individuality in pursuing this. She also negates the tendency that the agent of a collective political struggle “for” the subaltern often too easily renders them in a predictable set of identity driven by the purpose.<sup>54</sup> Lee’s pronunciation is subversive and self-affirmative in this sense, which stands out from the often predictable conformism of a subaltern to the collective sociality.

Lee’s pronunciation of her individuality is haunting and powerful since it is uttered by one of the women whose individuality was radically denied and destroyed. The women were plunged in a horrific nameless-ness as slaves and drawn into a context where no one recognized their sovereign individuality. As Kim Yunsim wrote, “no name existed there. I was just number 32.”<sup>55</sup> Their experiences in postwar Korea was also, without the wounds being healed, that of the continuation of the nameless-ness where their home society has completely refused to recognise their suffering and the family tried to silence them. By “I’m Lee Youngsu”, she claims her sovereign individuality and demands the recognition which was never wholly enjoyed by herself. Although Lee continues to struggle for the redemption of herself in the collective name, ‘Sexual Slave’ which gives a common and collective identity with other victim women in the course of struggle, she reveals her awareness of the fact that her unique different individuality is not what will be guaranteed in the end of collective political movement but should also be actively sought for and often fought for.

### **Nationalism Versus Women’s Issue**

The former sexual slave women often speak with various degrees of nationalist sentiments, which I believe to be the result of their experiences as ‘the colonized’ in the occupied territory. But on this issue, some concerns have been raised by those feminist intellectuals and artists who work with the women, since they felt

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<sup>54</sup> The totalitarian and reductionist rhetorics and practices of the 1980s’ vanguard culture left much unease in the people in the struggle.

<sup>55</sup> Kim Yunsim, *ibid.*, p. 26

that the women's testimonies and gestures are often attuned, (if not appropriated by) with excessive nationalistic sentiments other than the issue of women's right. The feminists argue that this is quite inappropriate since post-independent Korean State did nothing to assist their redemption. As Spivak said, "the women, and the feminine are easily consumable to the Phallo-centric tradition, patriarchic and nationalistic speech."<sup>56</sup> Only naïve positivists would valorise the issue of these women in the scope of anti-colonial and revolutionary nationalism, dismissing all the important details. The issue of these women's devastated experience is essentially concerned with 'gender', and thereby differential to the problems that the logic of colonialism and nationalism can identify.

However, the nationalist sentiments in the voices of these women are there, deriving their origins from the anti-colonial sentiment of their generation, which require our reconsideration. For example, Kim Yunsim's poem written to commemorate Kim Haksun's death reads,

the name passed silently, You, who can never come back. With no resolution of remorse borne against the enemy, Japanese, your soul who left without word, how you can go without remembering. How you can go, forgetting the sonorous song of *mukungwha* (the national flower of South Korea).<sup>57</sup>

Kim's nationalist sentiment and voices are represented through her pronouncement of *mukungwha*. Her sentiment originates from a 'war time' consciousness wherein their dignity, safety and survival were under threat as they were members of a colonized country and sustained until this point. In her essay, 'Those Should Be Ashamed Are Not Us But You', Kim Yunsim wrote that in the Comfort House, "what they said when I try to avoid them [Japanese soldiers] as I was sick, was that "the name of your country disappeared, nobody care even if we kill you,

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<sup>56</sup> G. C. Spivak, *ibid.*, p287

<sup>57</sup> Kim Yunsim, *ibid.*, p. 66

*Josenjin*[朝鮮人, a Japanese term of abuse for Koreans used at that time<sup>58</sup>] and you disappear”.<sup>59</sup> Kim and the other women were abused and in danger of being obliterated with no proper recognition, they could not help identifying their survival with their disappearing nation.<sup>60</sup> Their nationalistic consciousness and voices represent the psychic historicity as a part of the genesis of anti-colonial consciousness. And also they reflect the legacy of the past colonialism which has not completely been resolved yet even at the time.

Another example is given by another victim woman, Kim Sunduk. Kim said that if she were born again, she'd be a soldier in order to protect her country against invasion.<sup>61</sup> Kim Sunduk determinedly stated this during a gathering of the victim women in the House of Sharing<sup>62</sup>. All the other women laughed at her and teased her, asking why she wanted to be a soldier. One woman teases her, saying, “is it because you want to sleep with women?” suggesting that she wishes to “rape women in the same way the Japanese soldiers did to her”. But Kim replies in a very nuanced and serious way, “No, not that”. Then she says, “it is because I want to protect my country because I'm feeling begrudged about what I had suffered in such a way since my country was not strong enough”.

The “nationalist” sentiment and voices vary across the groups in its degree and content. As many feminist critics expressed their concern over this, they can be very problematic in terms of the actual reality which the women need to comprehend and the consciousness the women need to embody for their struggle for redemption. However, extracting the purely women's issues independent from

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<sup>58</sup> Today Japanese uses *kankokujin*( 韓国人) to refer to South Korean today but before the WW2 it was *Josenjin* (朝鮮人). When the Japanese used it, it implied colonial resonance, a racially inferiorised terminology.

<sup>59</sup> Kim Yunsim, *ibid.*, p.24

<sup>60</sup> For that reason, the nationalistic speech is a commonplace in the testimonies of the generations who lived through the series of disasters such as colonial atrocities and Korean War in the former half of last century.

<sup>61</sup> Kim's voice is captured in the end of the Byun Youngjoo's second documentary film on Sexual Slave Women, 'The Habitual Sadness' (*Nazen Moksori 2*, 1997)

<sup>62</sup> The House of Sharing is their collective residence organized by a Buddhist organization in Kwangju in Kyungki-do, S. Korea



nationalism appears to be a veiled attempt since it is deficient of the consideration of historicity that the women's issue is involved in. A certain degree of nationalism in their voices is inevitable provided that their experience of the annihilating colonial period as seen in the case of Kim Yunsim and Kim Sunduk. They had no chance to revise their defensive consciousness once formed due to the hardship of their life in postwar era and due to the time-lag of the society whilst no recognition of their experiences had been made. Also it should be noted that the nationalistic voices of the women trace their desires to redeem their devastated individuality rather than it is an enunciation of the patriarchic nationalism (which the feminists are so much concerned with) as such.

Another issue of the women's nationalist voices was raised by Byun Yongjoo, a film maker, who interviewed and filmed the women over 10 years, in relation to their reticence on some part of their postwar life. Byun stated that "the victim women have a tendency obsessively to view themselves as victims of the Korean nation, of Korean people in the course of their speech". She sees that their speeches are to a great extent bound by "nationalist" ideology, although Byun herself once stated that a degree of "nationalism" in her film is inevitable (if it is intended or a interpretation by the viewers) due to the nature of this issue.<sup>63</sup> In detail, their issue lies upon the fact that the atrocities are imposed on the women as the part of colonial violence and that has not been resolved even today. It is inevitable that the women speak with the consciousness of nationalism as their defensive ideology against this colonialism. Byun herself points out, there is the possibility that her works can be read as 'nationalist', due to the fact that it deals with the issues of these women which are that of unresolved past as well as of an unresolved present which is still under dispute between Japan and Korea. But then, Byun continues to make a controversial but interesting remark on why the women keep silence on their vocation in a kind of a sexual or entertainment industry after their return home(not all of the women but many cases), while excessively claim to be victims

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<sup>63</sup> She said this when she was asked by other feminist critics if to what degree the voices of women are filtered by Byun's nationalistic position as film maker. In The production note of Byun Youngjoo's documentary film, *My Own Breathing*, *ibid.*, Pp. 68-70

of the Korean nation. She interprets this that the nation is, these women believed, the only strong bond through which they can prove their life is worthy of mercy from others. She says, it is “the sustaining power which the women rely on to be connected to the others in the society”.<sup>64</sup> Byun rightly sees the process of the reclaiming the devastated dignity of these women by acknowledging themselves as victim of the once devastated nation, that is, making the nation as a point of identification.

But as for the tone in which Byun speaks, implying that the women’s reticence on their postwar vocation as a factor of anomaly, I argue that this does not consider the significant fact of their reticence that derives from the complexity of the women’s situation and their resistance to be consumed in the omnipotent patriarchic consensus by the speech. The work they engaged in was not their choice, but inevitable at life or death moment. Their survival was threatened by the postwar Korean society, where no one welcomed or cared for them. The moral consensus of Korea in the 1990s was still based on little changed gender essentialism that renders women who were involved in such labor as essentially ‘improper’ rather than considering the situation where it could have been against their will. Although their survival is to be justified regardless of the work which they engaged, Byun’s interpretation is worrying since it does not question moral consensus of the society which conditioned the woman’s inevitable reticence. Their reticence has been plotted by women who sense that patriarchic morality would dismiss their appeal again if they say it. Spivak says,

For the “figure” of women, the relationship between women and silence can be plotted by women themselves.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> The production note of *My Own Breathing*. *Ibid.*, p. 88

<sup>65</sup> Spivak, *ibid.*, p.287

The troubling moment that the intellectual observes in the recurring reticence in the speech of subaltern can not be thought without considering the original context of the silence informed by the power relationship.

Going back to the issue of national speech versus the voices of 'women's right', however, it is fair to acknowledge the fact that there is a gap to be bridged in voice-consciousness of these women. Although colonialism has ended, no one was interested in their redemption. But the women still speak with the nationalism which often sounds undistinguished from the patriarchic nationalism that in fact devastated the women.(this is the point which the new generations of Korean feminists have been so much concerned with) This requires the subaltern women to contemplate the degree in which some sorts of nationalism are essential to their emancipation process. They must take account of the experiences they went through, that is, having gone through the collective disasters during the colonial period, the postwar dismissal by their postcolonial Korean nation and also the dismissal by the moralizing community. However, the unequal post-colonial power relationship still is at stake between Korea and Japan which has been preventing the issues to be resolved even 10 years after the issue was raised. This indeed unables us to interpret the nationalistic voices of these women solely as a product of their archaic consciousness from the war time period. Understanding the complexity of the mental landscape and the situation of the women and contemplating the ways to bridge the gap in order for them to speak for themselves must be the central concern of intellectual women who are listening to these subaltern women; rather than holding on to the binary scheme of 'nationalism versus women's issue'.

### **Patriarchic Speech**

The women speak against and also speak with patriarchal ideology. Many women say in their testimony, "don't remind me of my husband, He makes me sick." An interviewer recalls the case of Kim Kumsun as a typical story of the women who are deeply devastated by patriarchal norms in Korean society: "Kim met a (Korean) man in Singapore and they lived together after the war. They came back to Korea

together and had a child. But the man finally left her to live with other woman because of her past. It seems a standard consciousness of Korean man”.<sup>66</sup> I discussed earlier, how patriarchal rationality in Korea refused to embrace these women at every level of society including at family level. Numerous cases are reported of families abandoning their daughters and sisters. It is interesting to compare the case of a Dutch victim, Jeanne O’Herne, who was one of a small portion of European sexual slaves during the war. In contrast to the Korean women, she was understandingly embraced and cared for by her family and her society on her return. It is observed that the different treatment of the victims in these two different societies affects the manner of the speech of the women. As one Korean feminist pointed out, Jeanne’s testimonial speech is delivered in a relatively rational and coherent tone, with a great deal of calmness whilst those of her Korean counterparts are often interrupted by explosions of grief and anger.<sup>67</sup>

The victim women’s miserable and devastating experiences in patriarchal Korean society prompted a significant shift in their consciousness against the respective norms. For example, Sim Dalyen insisted to a young woman who was helping her out, “be careful about marriage”, when the young woman told her that she started dating a man. It is phenomenal speech for the women of this generation who had little power and opportunity to subvert the dominant norms that confined every one of them. She reveals the discontent in her consciousness against the dominant norms.<sup>68</sup> It is a conscious manifestation of their self-knowledge learnt through disasters which is ready ‘to tell’ and passed on to the women of next generation.

To what extent can the expression of desire of some former sexual slaves, such as “I want to conceive a baby”, “I want to have a wedding in white dress” be justified

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<sup>66</sup> ‘Korean Council’ et al., eds., *Witness 3*, *ibid.*, p. 362

<sup>67</sup> ‘Korean Council’ et.al eds., *ibid.*, pp 345-347

<sup>68</sup> “SimDalyen repeatedly mention to a ‘Youngrae’ (a female civil supporter working for the victim women) on the disadvantage of marriage although she just dated a men during the break”. See Lee Younsup, *The letter sent by a civil community*, Summer, 1999. in Production note of Byun Younjoo, *My Own Breathing*, 2000, Docufactory Vista/Boim, *My Own Breathing*, 2000, Seoul, p.58

as pure utterances or mere resonance of patriarchal ideology.<sup>69</sup> Some feminists argue that these speeches can be seen as the patriarchal ideology speaking through them. Conceiving a baby and having a white wedding are closely related to the romanticised notion that patriarchal society presumes that women fundamentally desire. Devastated in the Comfort House, and being barren, the women endured maltreatment by their husbands and his family without being loved and cared for. Not being able to conceive and being unable to marry and be loved in normal circumstances, the wedding in a white dress celebrated by family and friends is enlarged as ideal wish images on which their deeply wounded mind seeks compensation. That is, the “absence” of such experiences as childbirth and marriage from the extraordinary circumstances they endured become the criteria for them to see themselves as inadequate and ‘abnormal’ in their life. Here the images are the projection of desire or substitutes, through which the subaltern imagines a fulfillment of the happiness and normality of life which she has been radically deprived of.

Because of the substitutive values these dreams embody, one cannot simply dismiss the expression of the women’s dream to the projection of an ideology that is nothing to do with the ‘true’ desires and interests of the women. Although the fulfillment of the dreams may not simply heal their wounds, one still should take them as an important expression of the women’s wishes out of her lack and despair in relation to their hollowed ‘humanity’ together with their violated and destroyed ‘womanhood’.

Another example of patriarchic speech can be found in the speech of Jeong (a pseudonym).<sup>70</sup> This is a horrifying example of how a judgmental patriarchic ideology can speak through one of the victims herself, superceding her possible

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<sup>69</sup> They are spoken in the interview Byun Youngjoo undertook for her film documentary, *Habitual Sadness* (1997). She asked the victimised women what each of them would be if she was born again.

<sup>70</sup> I met ‘Jeong’ during my 5 days’ stay at the House of Sharing, S. Korea, 26-30, July, in 1999. She moved to S. Korea after she reported that she had been a sexual slave in a “Comfort House” in China. She is one of many slave women who were abandoned by the military on the surrender. According to her, she has three children and a happy family back in China.

compassion to the other victims. She unhesitatingly judges the other victims who do not have children of their own as “low women”. She told me, referring to barren women living in the House of Sharing, “they are ‘low’ women who can not conceive a baby” in our conversation in 1999. It is a striking but revealing example which deserves much critical attention to the lethal factors in the patriarchic norm. This can be deeply internalised in the subjectivity of the victim herself, making her a very active agent of moral judgment against other victims like herself. The patriarchic history repeats itself through producing such agent of judgment, who is incapable of reflecting own experience but repeating the dominant norm as far as it guarantees her higher self-esteem over that of the others.

### **Stumbling**

After a long silence, space for speech is opened up for these women. But the long subalternised women have yet mastered the ways to deal with the space which has suddenly opened and which demands their voices and presence often in unexpected manners, but which also closes itself precariously. Having broken their silence, however the speech has yet to be completed but is still unfolding in this space of vast uncertainty (due to the unstable political landscape and other unpredictable factors) and opacity in which she needs to speak and mark their presence until the day when they achieve the redemption.

The women’s speeches are often full of murmuring and stumbling whilst they are dealing with this ‘opacity’ of existing and reconfiguring discursive space. The truth of the women would not be spoken until a certain culture of listening assisted them to speak, even risking the dangers of not being properly understood. Because of the fundamental weakness of the consciousness that considers the rights of women in the East Asia, the voices of these women who made a remarkable case of ground-breaking testimonies are not unbroken.

For example, Lee Yongsu, as Lee Youngsup wrote, is still suffering from occasional stumbling, and incoherence in her actions and speeches despite her

exceptional outspokenness and her wish to view herself as a determined campaigner and coherent activist.<sup>71</sup> One day, Lee Yongsu and Lee Youngsup were selling tickets for a fundraising event with other members in the Daegu civil supporter's group, Lee Yongsu suddenly refused to sell tickets and hastily left when she realized that a group of her young colleagues from Kyunbuk Postgraduate School of Law were approaching the reception (Lee Yongsu is registered there as a honorary student as she wishes to become an international lawyer and then sue Japan).<sup>72</sup>

Lee's evasive act here in contrast to her generally militant attitude, as an interlocutor observed, presumably equates with the reticence Lee inevitably plots for herself when perceiving an opacity. Presumably, it can be said she plotted the 'disappearance' since she sees those students as her colleagues from whom she wants to be seen in an unsympathetic light, without reminding them of her miserable past. Or this missed act is caused by her sensing of an unpredictable opaqueness in encountering these students, where Lee can not happily allow transparent communication. Or she perhaps associates the students with her imagination of an ideal future where and when she does not need to be reminded that she was the sexual slave. That is to say, she constitutes a temporal rationality for this future where the forgetting is positive and possible.

This stumbling speech of the subaltern is where the involvement of an intellectual is indispensable in facilitating their speech in the most constructive way. Spivak's emphasis on the role of the intellectual in subaltern speech does not promote the idea of an 'objective' representation by a detached, benevolent, all knowing intellectual. But it proposes a different notion of "representation" based on a new empiricism, which I see as redefining the relationship between the intellectuals and subalterns whose role is inseparable in the reconfiguration of the silencing structure of the society and in opening a new listening and speech culture of subaltern. Lee

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<sup>71</sup> Lee Youngsup comments, agreeably, she is the most determined and the most outspoken witness among the women who came out. Production Note of 'My Own breathing'. Ibid., p.57

<sup>72</sup> Lee Yungsup, The Production Note of 'My Own breathing'. Ibid., p.57

Yongsu's speech act shows both the subversive and inherently difficult dimensions of the speech of subaltern women. That is, although Lee had predicated her irreducible "individuality" when she felt it was in the danger of reduction, this does not mean she speaks coherently all the way through with "representative-consciousness", as Spivak says, at the level of 'State Formation' and 'Law'.

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This new empiricism of silence and subaltern speech registers more than the indispensability of the intellectual's role in subaltern speech, which is interdependency between the subaltern and the intellectual. One observes an emerging pragmatic space of the opening of the speech of the subaltern in the inter-subjective sites of "working together", where there are people who are ready to listen to the speeches of subaltern women.

This constitutes a potential space of intelligibility in society in response to which the subaltern can activate the willingness and courage to speak. To highlight this point on the emerging inter-subjective sites, I introduce the voices of young feminists who have recorded the testimonies of the women and helped their rehabilitation since 1993. They reveal the characteristic yet unwritten consciousness and sensibilities of intellectuals in the interface with the subaltern other in this emerging space that brings the women of two generations and of different experiences together. They reveal a compassionate, intellectual and ethical arena of an emerging community in the 1990s in Korea. One says

I sensed that the women are so happy as there is somebody listening to them.

This voice reveals the intellectual women's sense of compassion towards the victim and also her sense of gratitude in providing the mediating space in which the women can speak the stories that would otherwise be forever buried. A hope of



redress for the women is revived as this story began to be told. Another interviewer says,

I sense that there are yet unsaid stories. I continue this work because I can not remove the idea that they were the women who were drafted instead of my mother.

A sense of commitment is enhanced by the formation of quasi-kinship relationship between these generations of women, like that of mother and daughter. The unspeakable stories of the old women are told to these young women whilst the young see the older generations as an extended 'mother' who has undergone the historical and collective disasters that her real mother also could have suffered. Beyond, the distance of time and difference in experiences, this quasi-kinship relationship constitutes a line of inheritance of the truth from the past to the present and future generations. Another interviewer says,

I had to consider the meaning of periodical silences and her deep sighs.<sup>73</sup>

In this work of listening, the young feminists have not remained passive listeners, but became shrewd observers of the latently unsaid, muted dimension of these women's speech. This young woman learns and recognizes the periodical silence, the 'norm' of silence in the victims' speech as she spends time with the victim women. Despite the fact that a rare possibility has been created, the inherent pauses and murmurings are always expected in this space of listening. Also it should be noted that this is related to the fact that this reconfiguring space of speaking and listening also produces the precarious black hole of silence in its economisation process of subject's utterance and delay.

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<sup>73</sup> "Why Has We Archived The Testimonies?", in 'Witness 3-', *ibid.*, 1988, pp. 349-352

Each of these voices signifies a powerful channel of the affiliation and understanding between the women of two generations which mediates the distance of time, the abyss between the traumatized subaltern and their others. This concomitantly constitutes a space of speech/cure for the victim and the space for a new knowledge and new historiography for the intellectual which is constituted in the conjuncture of two complementing desires. The victim women desire to speak to the others who approach them and are ready to listen to them, as they may open the path for their redress and redemption. The young intellectuals desire to know and commit to the truth of the women who are the prime witnesses of the history that they have no direct access to if not through the testimonies of these women. If on one side of the academic discourse, “the cure” and “the speech of traumatised” have too prescriptively rendered the rhetoric of “the impossibility”, the dismissed observation in this rhetoric would be the sites of inter-personal *rapprochement* and listening and speaking.

These constitute the inter-subjective spaces between the intellectual and the subaltern in the 1990s. Through these spaces, the subaltern overcome their subalternity to testify to the forgotten history and intellectuals listen to their own limits of knowledge within the lack of light in the abyss of history, and replace their sense of privilege with new pragmatism. A new culture has emerged from the realm of impossible silence. These inter-subjective sites which have brought out the sites of “transference” appear to constitute new sites of “representation” of subalternity in a society, which require us to revise the predominant dichotomy of speech and silence and the subaltern and intellectual in the previous theories of subaltern speech.

In the next chapter, I will look further at the inter-subjective spaces that Byun Youngjoo’s film-making and Lee Kyungsin’s art workshop have brought about, discussing the therapeutic and technological dimension of the intervention of these art practices. Through this, I will also further develop my theoretical model of “the pragmatics of representation”.

## Chapter 5

### Trauma, Transference, and Representation:

#### A Reading of Film, *Nazen Moksori* and Paintings of The Former Sexual Slave Women

A new space for representation of subalternity, based on ‘transference’ or the enactment of the repressed desire, emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. This required a very different attitude on the part of the artist engaged in the practice of the “representation” of subalternity. This emphasised pragmatic interaction and communication with subaltern others, as opposed to rationalizing them into a predictable set of identity. This pragmatic attitude is understood through the context and development of the realist art and culture project of the 1980s and 1990s but developed with a different ethos to the dominant “rationalist” trend.

The works of Byun Youngjoo and Lee Kyungsin, who were involved in the representation of the former sexual slave women and thereby helped to redress their suffering in the 1990s, are remarkable examples of such practice. Very little theoretical work has been done to take account of such practices, which places the emphasis on transference as a new method of representation. Byun Youngjoo made three documentary films on the former sexual slave women between 1993 and 1999. The first two are entitled *낮은 목소리/Nazen Moksori* 1 and 2 (the English titles are ‘Murmuring’ and ‘Habitual Sadness’). The principles of communication used in her documentary film led her to follow a completely different course of film making. That is to say, she used participation based film making to achieve transference and thereby a cure for the subjects. This differs to conventional realist documentary making, which is centered on the idea of the film maker’s detached position to achieve an “objective” representation of an “objective” reality. Lee Kyungsin set up an art therapy workshop with these women in 1993 and which continued for 4 years. Through this workshop, she tried to help the women as subaltern subjects to find the means of expressing themselves. This workshop facilitated conditions for their self-exploration and understanding of self through art. The transference of their

repressed thoughts and feeling and resulted in more than 126 paintings which record the women's innermost testimony beyond what can be intellectualized.

In this chapter, I will firstly set up the framework for theoretical consideration of Lee and Byun's practices of "transference", which involves a complete revision of pre-existing theory of the "representation" of the intellectual and subalternity. I argue that the pre-existing theoretical model is centered on an idealist presumption of individuality and otherness. By using the paradigm of "transference" as provided by Lacan, I attempt to show how the 'representation' of the subaltern takes place in a very pragmatic context wherein the intellectual and the subaltern are equally subject and object to each other, to each other's desire. Secondly, I introduce and analyse the details of her film making process and its outcomes, by reading Byun's production notes and the voices and performances of the women visualized in the film. This reveals how Byun's film-making practices are conducted as a self-critique of film making by her unlearning of techniques and by the establishment of her compassionate relationship with the women. Her film-making develops through the reactivation of the women's repressed memories and self-affirmative acts which provide the space for a cure. Thirdly, I introduce and analyse Lee Kyungsin's art therapy workshop through analysing the video recordings of 12 October 1993,<sup>1</sup> and also the paintings of Kang Dukkyung, Kim Sunduk, and Lee Yongnye to show the parallel dimension of the reactivation of repressed mind that the artist facilitated. I will also refer to my personal interaction with Kim Sunduk during my stay in the House of Sharing, as well as Kim's comment on Kang Dukkyung and her works (Kang sadly passed away in 1997) as a source of my speculation and the interpretation of the process of the practice and visibility. I will conclude with an account of what I call 'the pragmatics of representation'.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Art Class' Video, Oct. 12.1993 was made 3 months after the 'art class' had commenced for the archiving purpose of 'House of Sharing'-which was located in Heyhwadong, Seoul at that time in 1993. This is a collection in the archive of The House of Sharing, 65 Wondang-Ri, Toichon-Myun, Kwangju-Si, Kyungki-Do, South Korea.

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As already mentioned, Spivak has provided an exemplary theoretical framework for “the representation” of subalternity and the role of intellectual in contemporary leftist discourse. In her essay, ‘Can The Subaltern Speak?’ she introduces two different senses of the “representation”, that challenge Deleuze and Guattari’s “positive empiricism”, a theory diametrically opposed to her own. The first is related to ‘*vertreten*’ which means “speaking for the other” and is therefore, as she says, related to the field of politics. Secondly, ‘representation’ also means “re-presentation” as related to the ‘*darstellen*,’ the subject of predication, which is therefore related to the field of art and philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

As for the former sense of representation, it is undisputable that it is in this context that the term, “representation,” is most widely understood in field of political science and even of sociologically defined cultural studies. This “representation” is often concerned with the task of emancipation of the oppressed or minoritised class or group in the society. Here, on the one hand, the ‘intellectual’ is normally presumed to be the subjects who are endowed with a certain capacity to speak for others. He/she will undoubtedly be a coherent subject without being disturbed by his/her prejudices, and his/her limits of knowledge. On the other hand, the subaltern is understood as someone who is only represented by someone else, for instance, by this intellectual. As for this latter sense of ‘re-presentation’, the subject of predication in art and philosophy is also presumed to be a self-sufficient and self-knowing subject either embodied with a universal reason or special exclusive intuition.<sup>3</sup>

In any case, these notions of “representation” are heavily sustained by the possibility of representation by the disengaged observation of self-sufficient individuals, whose perception will be guided by objective truth. It is this self-sufficient individual who is capable of self-predication in the dominant thinking tradition of the West.

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<sup>2</sup> Spivak, *ibid.*, pp.275 -276

<sup>3</sup> Hegel said “for art represents the true universal, or the Idea in the form of sensuous existence, of the image”, in the *Philosophy of Mind*, *ibid.* p210

In such a self-sufficient image of the subject of the 'representation', the 'I' is always and already distinguished by the instability and uncertainty of 'the other'. The value and meaning is presumed to be created only by the 'I' whilst 'the other' (or those who are designated as 'other' by the 'I' s perspective) does not contribute anything. 'I' of the intellectual is presumed to be already a sufficiently knowing subject encountering the other, whilst the other or subaltern is forever designated as an "object" of this representation practice, rather than another subject, who is merely unknown to "I". In the dominant rationalist thinking tradition in the West, 'the other' is often represented as a state of "absence" and "nothingness" in contrast to the aggrandiosed status of the 'I'. That is to say, no fair ontological value is assigned to the other whilst it is believed to be somehow merely 'there' with an absence of any meaningful resources of idea, rationality, culture. For better or for worse, it is often otherwise regarded as a mystic entity. In this case, it is still not a being that affects 'my' being at a serious level. This epistemological structure determines the characteristics of how the "subalternity" has been theorized in the Western mind. That is to say that the state of the subaltern subject is often associated with the metaphors of silence and nothingness. In this line of conception, the work of the representation of the subaltern has naturally entailed a theoretical over-dramatisation and is overstretched, as it is already anticipated in 'I' s radically reductionist mind and its logical economy, which renders 'the other' as a non-substance. The representation of the other is believed to have no substantial meaning. On this basis, if one tries hard to do so, it would always be a great 'burden' like that of the "white man's burden".

In this concept of the subaltern other, we hear little of their potential for subject-predication in politics nor in the field of art and philosophy as a logical consequence of the fact that they are endowed with no substantial being or capacity to create. However, the fact that the subaltern does commit to meaning, has desires and the potential for the production of universally comprehensible ideas and values for themselves is not recognised. That the subaltern is also the subject-predicator within its own horizon and limits is not recognised. As Spivak said, the recognition

of potential does not mean that they can establish themselves at the level of State and Law. The subaltern subjects can be vulnerable to the ideological practices that operate against their utterances and which maneuver to overwhelm them. This creates an opaque condition for them in reaching the expression of their own historic view and asserting their own meaning.

If the subaltern is not a subject of nothingness or a self-sufficient representative subject, we must see how the subaltern subject engages in the enactment of self-expression which can be construed in the 'symptomatic' and 'actual' utterance with the assistance of a sympathetic intellectual against such an ideology. Does Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of immanence or vitality have any benefit in allowing a more balanced discussion that explains the time and space of utterance of the subaltern? Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy created a significant departure in thinking differently at this point in the development of an impoverished thinking tradition in terms of the vital presence of 'otherness' in the self, the other, nature and history. Their project aspires to bring forth a 'positive' thinking and practice with 'otherness' to tackle the limits of the critique of ideology they encountered in the 1960s. Their theorization of 'immanence', 'life' and the 'creative subject' is centered on the idea of the "resingularisation" of the previously defected subject, shedding light on the historical marginalized matter in philosophy, as the irreducible forces of the 'virtual'.<sup>4</sup>

But their philosophicization of the creative and affirmative formation of the "life" of the defected subject and the mode of "resingularisation" of the self from immanence creates the illusion that this 'immanence' appears in itself in a line of "pure" immanence. Advocates of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy seem to be content with their theoretical line, even when it is with no sufficient interest and critiques on the concrete context of the repressed conditions that prevent this immanent movement. That is to say, the specific political, economical, and

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<sup>4</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, "Subjectivities: For Better Or For Worse", in Gary Genosko ed. *The Guattari Reader*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1996, p.199

historical unevenness of power in the world indeed matters in this necessary movement if one is to be able to continue the movement which they called “becoming” (the becoming of the one who has been previously suppressed involves a struggle which can not be confused with the rhetoric of a “line of pure immanence”). As I previously discussed, this is the point where Spivak turned her back to Deleuze and Guattari’s positivist discourse as it lacked a concern regarding “the opacity” of the condition of becoming and speech. Moreover, this life philosophy problematically treats the elite and the subaltern as the equally free subjects of “Becoming”; as bound to the temporality of actual, as in the genesis of consciousness, and virtual, as in the genesis of unconsciousness, in this perspective of life-becoming in the intersection of the actual and the virtual.

The transference of the subaltern as a new model of the representation of the subaltern and the intellectual requires a radical revision of pre-existing ontological and epistemological assumption of the self and the other. It is not the intellectual who solely participates in the “representation” of the other as a self-sufficient subject. Nor is the other just to be represented. One must show the reactivation of the subaltern subject in the realm of self-representation, reinterpreting their submerged time by the repression of history through working process with intellectuals. A new model shows how the inter-subjective and inter-active instance of practical engagement should be centered in the discussion.

Apart from the relationship between the subject and intellectual, in the process of transference, the context of film and painting as “technology” cannot be ignored. Lacan explains the aspect of technology as the function of the Other, which is language. Technology is a non-human factor that plays a significant part in Byun and Lee’s art therapy and their reactivation of the women’s repressed desire and self-affirmative expression. The camera becomes a medium for the repressed subjects to imagine and materialize their transcendence beyond their enclosed everyday life. Painting became an intimate tool for the expression of feelings and



inner conflicts for Kim Sunduk and Kang Dukkyung that they could not fully manifest in words.

Lacan's theory of "transference" provides an apt model for developing this theoretical perspective in order to read Byun Youngjoo and Lee Kyungsin's practices that result in unique outcome of visual utterance, performance and speech. I will briefly discuss his theory of "transference" which is based on completely non-idealist notions of "the subject"<sup>5</sup>, "the Other"<sup>6</sup> and "the analyst"<sup>7</sup> in order to foreground the theoretical direction of my reading of Lee and Byun's practices.

### **Subject**

In Lacan's theory of transference, the subject is that which is constituted as the effect of language. In other words, the subject is inhabited and proves its being within the structure of language and by their speech act. It is an "effect" of speech on the subject that determines a subject as a subject.<sup>8</sup>

That is to say, the silence of the sexual slave women is also the effect of language. They are construed in the subject of "non-communicativity." Lacan says, "where the subject is concerned, the subject encounters limits, which are non-conviction, resistance, non-cure."<sup>9</sup> Here truth and experiences can not be represented by the structure of language.<sup>10</sup> The silence has designated the women in the state of, as idealists would term it, non-identity and nothingness.

On "non-communicativity", Lacan explains that this is the result of the subject being caught in the enigma of "logical time", wherein the encounter with "the real" is lost and then constituted in an irreducible subtext of elided subjectivity. Through this, he successfully explains that the "real" of the silenced and subalternised, which is at the kernel of the unspoken and uncommunicatable truth, is related to the

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<sup>5</sup> This is analogous to the repressed subaltern subject.

<sup>6</sup> Lacan features it as two different entities such as "object grand a" that constitute "the network of signifier", "object petite a".

<sup>7</sup> This is analogous to the intellectual and artists

<sup>8</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p. 149

<sup>9</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p. 40

<sup>10</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, pp. 37-40

function of time.<sup>11</sup> Time is subject to the controlling and appropriating power of the logical apparatus that the social agent operates. The subject is struck by the limit of time and logical space for their truth to be registered and communicated so that it causes a state of foreclosure.

In this line of argument, Lacan defines the unconscious as “the sum of the effect of speech on a subject, at the level at which the subject constitutes himself out of the effects of the signifier.”<sup>12</sup> The women in this study who are suffering from trauma can be explained as subjects stuck in the opacity of language. The outside-ness of the signifier which is seen as an opaque entity for the subject in non-cure and resistance is the cause of the trauma. In this light, Lacan has drawn our attention to the fact that the practice of cure of psychoanalysis aims to reestablish the subject in the network of signifier.

### **Transference**

For the subject who is constituted in the state of non-conviction, resistance, and non-cure, “transference” refers to the moment where the subject reactivates his/her repressed desires by projecting them to the ‘other’ figure, often an analyst in the psychoanalytic treatment, in the confusion between “reality” and “fantasy”. Lacan argues that this is the only way in which the repressed truth of the repressed subject finds a way to be exteriorized. As he points out, this projection-transference is an operational mode. It is clearly seen that it is in this “transference” that the subject of foreclosure breaks through the foreclosure that is initially suppressed by deceiving reality. This transference happens through constituting a fantasy on the other who is there for him/her to listen to what is to be uncovered, or as Lacan says, in “the light of the confrontation between a reality and a connotation of illusion attributed to the phenomenon of the transference”.<sup>13</sup> The former sexual slave women’s relationship with Byun and Lee can be explained in this context as the artists have become significant others for the transference.

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<sup>11</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p. 39

<sup>12</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p. 26

<sup>13</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p.133

### **The analyst**

In the process of this ‘transference’, the desire of Lee and Byun, the subject who are listening to the subject of non-communicativity and resistance should be considered as an important factor. Lacan said “the function of the analyst’s desire” is significant in the scene of analysis.<sup>14</sup>

The transference takes place from the subaltern women to these young artists and also vice versa. To make the transference possible, however, Byun and Lee needed to be perceived as sufficient objects of the women’s desire. On this, Lacan clearly states there is the transference only “as much as such a relationship is established.” Lee and Byun tried to establish the relationship with the wish to lend themselves and their techniques to the women to transfer their repressed truth from themselves via the media of camera and painting as possible methods of cure. To make this possible they should be able to establish themselves first as the subjects “who are supposed to know” for them to participate in their project, which the subaltern would evaluate, rather than other way around. Lacan said, “as soon as there is a subject who is supposed to know, there is transference”.<sup>15</sup>

However, the danger in this process is that, there is possibility of a fetishisation of the ‘other’ or the authority of the ‘other’ who is “supposed to know” which will counter-function against “transference”. Lee and Byun can be seen as the authority in a point of this relationship making process with these previously subalternised women, since the relationship itself always involves fantasy making from the subaltern side to these intellectual women. Byun and Lee can be perceived as figures of prestige in the hierarchy of knowledge, whilst the subaltern women project their “wish to be known” to Byun and Lee. However, as Lacan points out, it is where the ‘transference’ actually stops because paradoxically, transference has nothing to do with the “representation of absolute knowledge”. No one engages in transference under the myth of representation of absolute knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p.160

<sup>15</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p. 232

<sup>16</sup> Lacan writes on this in the context in which the authority of discipline of psychoanalysis is established in a form of professional fetishism based on the exercise of knowledge of existing

### ***Rapprochement***

This “transference” is a manifestation of what Lacan called the “nodal phenomenon of human being”.<sup>17</sup> In the therapeutic film making and art workshop, the nodal phenomenon of being is revealed where artists and the subaltern approach each other, meet, and negotiate their positions and knowledge, in need of the other. That is to say, it is a “phenomenon in which subject and psychoanalyst are both included”.<sup>18</sup> The concept of the “nodal phenomenon” of being suggests a significant ontological revision of ‘being’ or being and its other. Lacan engages with the question of representation of subaltern and intellectual rendering an inter-subjective alibi of the being of Being. At this nodal point, two subjects of desire converge, allowing the other to enter and flourish along the lines of becoming and entry into each other’s history and interest. It can be said, at this point, that a new common form of knowledge emerges whilst each one admits that a state of “non-knowledge” has struck them, somewhere between them. In other words, the process of mutual *rapprochement* is the bare moment wherein the fundamental interconnected-ness of being of Being is intertwined with the alterity of the ‘I’ and the ‘other’ to serve for the intersecting needs: the temporality of sufficient “I” and the equal temporality of otherness is acknowledged in this moment.

### **The Site of the Other**

The subject of non-conviction or non-cure should appear in language, in the site of signifier in the process of transference. Lacan states that ‘transference’ is the moment the subject transfers its power to the site “signifier”.<sup>19</sup> It also, as he says, is the site of “remembrance” and potentially the site where truth is registered as

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analytic models or in the figure in prestige. Lacan says “what does an organization of psychoanalysts mean when it confers certificates of ability, if not that it indicates to whom one may apply to represent this subject who is suppose to know?” (ibid. 232); “no psycho-analyst can claim to represent,..a corpus of absolute knowledge”. Freud was the one could presume to know that the subject of unconsciousness projected his/her wish (ibid. 232): “The function, and by the same token, the consequences, the prestige....of Freud are on the horizon of every position of the analyst. They constitute the drama of the social, communal organization of psycho-analysts.” (ibid. 232)

<sup>17</sup> One may note that this echoes M. M. Ponty’s notion of the “Chiasmatic”.

<sup>18</sup> Lacan, ibid., 231

<sup>19</sup> Lacan calls this signifier in various different names such as “signifying chain”, “enveloping topology”, and the “site of recognition” and so forth.

“truth”: it is the “highly significant moment in the transfer of powers from the subject to the other, which he calls the capital Other, *le grand autre*, the locus of speech and, potentially the locus of truth.”<sup>20</sup>

It can be said that the eventual aim of the subaltern engaging in interactive communicative practice with these artists is to “appear” in this site of signifier. The artistic and technical media of the camera and film that Byun has brought into the scene of practice, and the painting that Lee brought in take up the place of this site of “signifier,” the site of non-human, technological Other, that is I interpret as the extended human body. Through the course of Byun and Lee’s practice, the women increasingly realize the power of this medium and transfer their desire to this medium with this hope of appearance out from their privatized realm of silence and meaninglessness.

The signifying capacity of camera and the painting ironically are construed in non-linguistic sites of the Other, or non-linguistic signifiers. They are the media that would help the subject to reach their mind and that which causes the trauma. The media are construed as non-linguistic, visceral sites of the Other, as technology in operation, which gives more flexible scope than the function of “signifier” Lacan has described. According to Lacan, the desire in transference appears as a chain of signifiers. The signifier can not be lifted up by us as it only appears in the “play of chains” wherein the desire of subjects in transference is seen as fragments. Lacan, in this sense, sees the mode of transference of desire of the subject appear in this repetition and in the radical vacillation in these sites.<sup>21</sup>

This is the case with the appearance of the ‘subject’ in Byun and Lee’s practice with the women. This vacillation of subject also indicates the mode of subaltern subject that appears in the technological Other of the camera and painting. The gestures, both explicit and implicit, tears and speeches, broken and unbroken, in the

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<sup>20</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p. 29

<sup>21</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p. 239

films and the visual symbols in the paintings are all subjects of study of such manifestations of irreducible substance of desires. It should also be mentioned that this technological Other becomes increasingly the object of desire but also the obstacle of expression for the women.<sup>22</sup> The appearance of the subaltern's desire takes place at the same time, the 'disappearance' also there will be ascribed to the limit of the technology used.

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Byun Youngjoo's approach to the women with the camera is guided by her "desire to know" (analogous to Lacan's 'analyst's desire') the silence of the women for 45 years rather than by any politicised idea that sees the women as historical victims. The "re-approachment" is necessary to convey the long secluded time and space of the subjects. In the search for the truth of these women's silence, Byun once failed but learnt from her mistakes, continued and then facilitated the space of transference, with these women who deeply distrusted 'the other', having been abandoned for so long in a state of non-cure and non-convictions. ( I will explain this process later)

As Byun Youngjoo states, her documentary film is not a political representation, but "a way of speaking to" the women. She often says, "I am interested in 'communication' with my subjects in my documentary film making."<sup>23</sup> Byun's remarks on "communication" are the significant hallmarks of a documentary film maker with a very different approach to that of her contemporaries. She was interested in achieving the transference through her documentary film making rather than detached representation. She needed to participate in their lives rather than observe them. The detached approach was simply impossible to convey the depth of the women's long silence. She had to find a method that would soothe the

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<sup>22</sup> Lacan said, "If it is merely at the level of the desire of the Other that man can recognize his desire as the desire of the Other, is there not something here that must appear to him to be an obstacle to his fading, which is a point at which his desire can be recognized?" *ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>23</sup> In the film screening of 'Habitual Sadness' (Byun Youngjoo, 1997) and talk with audience in 1999 in Goldsmiths College, London see, *Nazen Moksori 2( Habitual Sadness 2)*, a-r-c (Journal of Art Research and Critical Curating), Issue 4, March, 2001, <http://homepages.gold.ac.uk/a-r-c>

process. Her method would need to be open to change and adjustable in the process in order to increase and attain communication with the subject. Byun says,

I believe there are two forms of documentary. In fifty percent of them, what and how the story is going to be told is decided before the shooting starts. Reporting and analysis are central in this as a merit of this explanatory documentary. Another is the documentary film which conveys the stream of time and space through the constant relationship with the subjects. ‘Murmuring(낮은 목소리)’ is centered in the latter character.<sup>24</sup>

Byun’s documentary materializes the stream of time and space between her and the women who re-approach and communicate each other’s interest and need. Byun pursues her desire to know, to hear, and to understand the lives of the women in this relationship. The women were sealed into the unrepresented subtext of the historical silence in order to emerge in the realm of recognition. The women accept Byun and her film crew’s approach and that of Lee as it increased the hope of a cure through the meetings with these young artists.

Byun Youngjoo recollected how she failed to create a relationship between herself and the women through her first approach. The women living in the House of Sharing refused Byun’s request, “I want to make a film about you.” They had been traumatised by the frequent intrusion of TV crews bombarding them with questions about their past and subsequent silence. As she understood what the causes of the women’s unwelcoming attitude were, Byun and her crews spent a couple of months with them, helping them to hospital and assisting with everyday needs. They also joined the Wednesday demonstration in front of the Japanese embassy. They increasingly became members of the House of Sharing. She waited and the women came to respond positively to her presence and her interest.

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<sup>24</sup> The Docufactory Vista/Boim, *How The Camera Waits-Making of Murmuring*, 1998. S Korea, p.37

She recalls that this moment of rejection was a significant point that made her to rethink the principles of her film making.

When I was rejected, I felt it was a natural response from the women, who, even after coming out, are still afraid of revealing all their wounds in front of the camera and to everyone. But the rejection was the beginning of my film. I continuously visited the House of Sharing. The elderly women who didn't give even a glance at first got used to seeing me around them, and the everyday life of the women who sat all day looking at ceiling blank in their rooms and who went to the demonstration in front of the Japanese embassy each Wednesday become my everyday life. A long time passed. One day, Kim Sunduk, who most strongly insisted that she did not want to be filmed at all asked me when I'm going to start the film; I set up a principle of production from this point.<sup>25</sup>

The principle of production that Byun set up was that "the most important audience is the subject themselves". This meant that the process where the subaltern subject transfers themselves in the filming process is important, as the documentary becomes their everyday diary. The result of this rapprochement is the first film, 'Murmuring (Byun Yungjoo, 1995).'

The camera is a powerful medium, the image and information produced by it can have a massive communicative impact on the public through its disseminating power. Film would be the most effective medium to deliver Byun's aspiration to convey the over-repressed and over-determined time and space of the women to the realm of communication into the public sphere.

But a camera is a machine that the women had developed a great fear of after their experiences with the TV crews. Byun as a feminist independent film maker was aware of the problem of the logic of commercial or institutional TV production and

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<sup>25</sup> Byun, *ibid.*, p.39





Figure 45. Park Okryun and Boim, 1995. Still From film. Byun Youngjoo, Murmuring



Figure 46. Kim Sunduk in House of Sharing, 1995. Still From Film. Byun Youngjoo, Murmuring



Figure 47. Residences in House of Sharing, 1995. Still From Film. Byun Youngjoo,  
Murmuring

the function of camera as subject to that logic.<sup>26</sup> For the purpose of transference of the women's repressed experiences, she needed to free the camera from its instrumentality as determined by the centralized production system of media authorities.

When a camera yields to the logic of TV production, it often establishes itself as an "authority" in the site where it meets the other as the way of making the subject objectified by speaking as quickly and efficiently as possible. The subject is pressed to speak as if told to do by an authority figure. It is surmised that here the subject has an illusion, that the camera is the symbol of an absolute social power. The camera machine connotes the power authority for the individual who does not own that power.

In contrast, Byun's camera serves the aim of "transference" by preventing the development of the camera as an authority, that can counter act the transference.\*<sup>27</sup> The 'transference' of the women through the camera machine does not take place in the existence of overwhelming authority. To encourage the subaltern women to be responsive and to use as Byun says a tool, or to make the camera the women's "diary" rather than an authoritative machine, she had to adjust the camera so that it become what I call a "soft machine". She had to reinvent the technological use of the camera, as it had yielded to the institutionality that regulates the utility and defined its limit. She spent every day of the next three months with the women and the camera. "How The Camera Waits" was the title given to Byun Youngjoo's production notes that she published after the first documentary film, 'Murmuring' was released. In these production notes, Byun talks about the "aesthetic" of waiting

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<sup>26</sup> Byun had constantly worked on the voice of the women in Asia since 1988 which has been little heard under its history of the patriarchal sexist sociality. Her emergence in 1988 with an independent documentary film production 'Boim' ('Boim' means both the act of "visualizing" and phenomenon of "being visible" in Korean noun) certainly could be regarded as an event in the impoverished history of independent film making. And in particular, the independent film making embarked on the feminist perspective and vision: the emergence was heavily inspired by the pro-democratic movement in S Korea in the 1980s and 1990s. There was an urgency to represent the women's voices in the movement, which were the repressed of the repressed matter in the course of movement. By that time, only a few pioneer independent filmmakers and the organization were in practice,<sup>26</sup> which however, according to Byun were limited by male supremacy and sexism.

<sup>27</sup> See Figure 45. Park Okryun and Boim

that could result in the creation of the space of common ground of understanding and relationship between the women and her film crews. By introducing the Japanese documentarist Ogawa Sinsuke's film making that is also set in this principle,<sup>28</sup> she emphasizes the importance of the "long relationship" in her film making wherein the film would achieve the state that "the subject is not a subject but appears as the part of production team. The production team at some points may find themselves deeply engaged in the actual situation of the subjects."<sup>29</sup>

Hence it must be stated that the documentary film making of these women cannot be attained outside the relationship but only inside the relationship, without entering into the other's life, as the understanding of the history in which the others are enveloped is impossible. Byun's camera is reborn for this relationship. The women exteriorize and transfer their desire to this camera. Byun wrote,

I'm reminded of the principle of the production of documentary film which is that it is impossible to understand the history of the subject without deeply entering into his/her life. The reorganization of the history through documentary can obtain the plausibility of truth by constant attitude of director which is to correspond the time and space of his/her present and space and time of film.<sup>30</sup>

Byun's camera aims to grasp the point of *correspondence* from which the documentary work is produced and opens up to all. This is the way, she continues to say, that "the work opens to all at the point of the entangled relationship."<sup>31</sup> She corresponds the cinematic time and space with the time of these women, whose relationship with the actual is deeply entrenched in the probing of the loss and the

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<sup>28</sup> Ogawa Sinsuke is a Japanese documentarist. He was called 'a friend of Japanese Peasants'. He completed the 7 Sanritsuka films Series from 1968 to 1977 which is on the struggle of the Japanese peasant against the government construction plan of Narita Airport. The title of the last film of the series is 'the People of Heta Village'.

<sup>29</sup> Boim, *ibid.*, p.38

<sup>30</sup> Boim *ibid.*, p. 38

<sup>31</sup> Boim *ibid.*, p. 38

work of mourning.<sup>32</sup> That is to say, the camera serves the transference of the women at the point of conjuncture of the women's, and Byun and her crew's horizon, a moment that Byun calls entanglement. The visuality of this film is the production of this conjuncture and correspondence between Byun, the women and the camera machine.

'Murmuring' begins with Byun Youngjoo's voice over, which tells us how women's matter transferred into her present and her project. She says that she was working on a documentary on sex tourism in Asia called *Kisaeng Kwankwang* in 1991. Around this time, she met a woman working in a bar who said her mother was a sexual slave during World War Two. She was working there as she needed money to pay for hospital fees for her ill mother. This shocked and prompted Byun to embark on the documentary of the sexual slave women. Through this, Byun explains how this film deals with the problem of present which is the generic tragedy inherited through the generations of women, juxtaposing the issue of sexual slavery with the inherently dehumanising conditions of women today.

The film enters into the everyday forms of living and space of the women in the House of Sharing, in Seoul. The voices of these women are heard by us. The House of Sharing is the place where the wounded, traumatized, and dispossessed women live together, and support each other's vulnerability, survival, and desperation. One can find the indirect eruption of the unsaid, everyday form of expression of desire of self-redemption as conveyed in the film.\*<sup>33</sup> For example, women cook\*<sup>34</sup> for each other, keep an eye on each other's health and prepare to go to the demonstration in front of the Japanese Embassy. Byun interviews Park Okryun who is a resident there. In the interview, Park displays her radically vacillating subjectivity. She manifests her will for the resolution of matters and truth. But it

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<sup>32</sup> However it should be said any documentary film is invoked in making a fictional time since it involves selective recording, editing, and repetition, which would result at reconstructing the actual time and space replacing it with cinematic time.

<sup>33</sup> See Figure 47. Residences in House of Sharing, Murmuring

<sup>34</sup> See Figure 46. Kim Sunduk in House of Sharing, Murmuring

reveals that she is still haunted by personal shame and the invisible gaze of interpellation which accuses her.

**Byun:** “What do you do at the demonstration?”

**Park:** “We manifest our demands. I want to see the solution while we are still alive.”

But in next stream of conversation,

**Byun:** “Why are you saying you are ashamed in public?”

**Park:** (unhappily) “People would say that they are the women who were such and such... How can I say how we lived to the others. I can not tell it to my mother.”

As the camera is set to record their everyday lives, the film records the traces of communication between the participants of the space and time, the women’s turbulent state of being and radically vacillating voices shifting between the desperation and hope are all revealed without purposeful modification. As another example, Park Doori’s ultimate anger and destructive speech yet self-salvatory practices of her everyday convey the characteristic case of turbulent state of being in ‘Murmuring’. She has been diagnosed as the most severe sufferer of Post Traumatic Syndrome Disorder by a Japanese psychologist in 2000.<sup>35</sup> Park Doori sits in her room in The House of Sharing and speaks to Byun and camera in deep desperation. Park says “I want to die, I have a daughter and brothers and sisters, but I have nowhere to go. I do not want food. I do not want money. I like nothing.” Park’s expression marks the case of the most destructive speech of the victim women conveyed in Murmuring.

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<sup>35</sup> Kuwayama Norihiko, The Diagnosis and Study of Post Traumatic Syndrome Disorder (PTSD) in the Korean Victim of The Forced Labor and Sexual Violence, in The Archive of House of Sharing. Kuwayama Norihiko is a Psychologist and practicing doctor in the Kaminoyama Hospital, Kaminoyama-si, Yamagata-hyun, Japan. She used Harvard Trauma Score, Hopkins Score, SDS, General Health Questionnaire Hasegawa Dementia Score, Ego-Gram for this study. And she diagnosed five former sexual slave women such as Park Sunbok, Park Sodk, Yang Kuduk, Lee Sunduk, Park Doori in 20 Jan 2000. In the end of report, she concluded all of them are very apparent PTSD patients and Park Door has the severest symptom. This study is conducted for the submission of evidence for the Hiroshima High Court.

Beyond this, *Murmuring* shares how Park continuously engages in small acts which can be interpreted as compensating for her loss and sustaining her life which she believes should be more than an unjust survival. By the virtue of Byun's camera being so deeply integrated in the women's everyday life, it exposes all the unpurposeful but meaningful voices and gestures Park had manifested. In later part of the film, a few women of the House of Sharing sat on the floor.

**Park Doori** (feeding rice to pigeons): We should do good to the animals as well as human beings. We committed wrong without knowing what it was. Who does not commit wrongs? We commit wrongs knowing it and yet without knowing it." (The pigeons peck the rice)

**Lee Youngsuk**: "No, no I haven't committed any wrong"

**Park Doori**: "Ok, I've committed a lot of sin. You are a good person"

**Lee**: "Why do anyone do wrong? Live up to my way and principles".

**Park Doori** (sarcastically): "The one who have not committed wrong live as it is and the ones who have committed wrong live as it is."

**Park Okryun** (with a cynical tone): "It is too late to do good. Should do it when you are young"

Although it is difficult to trace the exact contents of consciousness of each of the speakers, what is addressed here is that Park Doori sees the women as being engulfed in the lack of belief in a better life conducts a small (one might say, futile) act with a great insistence. She implies it is an act to compensate wrongs by doing good to others (here, we do not know who are the others. But she obviously refers to animals as well as human beings). No matter whether others approve of this act or not, Park's determination in conducting this is firm. She believes that acts of reparation for wrongs should be universal ways of reaching good.

'*Murmuring*' captures the scenes of the women's Wednesday demonstration at the embassy which shows the women's present as living in sharp conflict with political



Figure 48. Demonstration, 1995. Still From Film. Byun Youngjoo, *Murmuring*, c. Boim, Seoul

authority.\*<sup>36</sup> In the 100th demonstration in Seoul, in 1994, the old women are lining up outside and yell in the direction of the Japanese embassy along with supporters of the 'Korean Council' on a freezing cold winter day. The women's gathering creates tension by making loud noises in the street with microphones: the drum played by the supporters for extra attention from the somewhat indifferent and busy passers-by invokes solemnity. This scene is contrasted by the armed young Korean police men protecting the front gate of the embassy with barricades. The senses of irony, fear, and excess are invoked when the elderly women's voices are excluded from the protected zone of the state machine and repressed by that which is complicit with the political authority that dehumanized the women.

The Japanese authorities gave no response to the crowds, despite the demonstration continuing for a year. An official apology and legal responsibility for reparations by the government of Japan has been consistently refused despite the fact that the civil support groups and the victim women both inside and outside Korea are pressing hard for it. These women are in their sixties and seventies and their deaths are imminent. Their yelling invokes the sense of aporia.

In another scene, this time of the demonstration on 28 December 1994 towards the end of the film, the film records the voices of a young female supporter who encourages the elderly women not to give up hope. She states that the demonstration is poorly attended as few young women are present, only a few elderly women attend. She provokes the attenders and passers-by to see these issues in their wider historical and worldly context, addressing the new year 1995 as the half century of Korean independence in 1945. This young intellectual calls for the resolution of this matter, addressing the fact that the women's human rights have been treated as a secondary issue as it was in the past and still is in the present. With these older women perhaps feel that however this struggle is really a struggle with time for them, since they are aged and dying away. One of the victims yells

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<sup>36</sup> See Figure 48. Demonstration, in *Murmuring*



after this young supporter's speech. "Let's live 100 years." Other women join in with a chorus of "Let's live 100 years."

The women are engaged in the political and historical struggle for recognition and redemption which is trapped in an impasse caused by the politico-economic relationship with Japan. The film opens with an elderly woman who is talking to a middle-aged Member of Parliament at a dinner table. Some Korean politicians have tried to treat this issue as a political agenda whilst the government has hitherto been inept as it is afraid of a negative political impact on its relationship with Japan. The woman says to the MP, "The government is lukewarm on this matter. Japan wants all of us die...the government should do this." The MP replies, "it is trapped by the Japanese and Korean treatise of 1965."

By recording the testimony of the women who have emerged after such a long silence is as Byun conferred, the central preoccupation of 'Murmuring'. Kim Haksun, Kang Dukkyung, Park Youngsuk, Park Doori, Kang Dukkyung, Park Okryun, Kim Sunduk, Son Panim, Lee Youngsuk (the women living in South Korea), Hong Kanglim, Ha Gunja, and Kim Granny<sup>37</sup> (the women living in China) are the women who testify to their past in the "comfort house" and life in Korea and in exile afterwards in front of Byun's camera. In the interview with Kim Haksun, Byun asks if she knew that so many other women were in existence at the moment when she first gave her testimony. Kim replies, "No, I escaped alone, hence survived. But I have not seen anyone other than myself so I thought everyone died." Then the screen moves to a public hearing scene where Kim offers her testimony. Her face is filled with deep resentment and anger about the past and the society which has forgotten them. Kim speaks to the audience with an exasperated voice and acknowledges the injustice in history. Kim says "I was not treated as a human. I have not found anywhere to appeal to. "Yun Jeongok is here. She must have been horrified at that time. I went to her and wanted to tell her here I am...."

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<sup>37</sup> Kim has forgotten her name. People call her "Kim" granny. Byun Yongjoo, *Murmuring*, 1995

Through the women's testimonies, the viewer can see how Byun also traces the context of the women's relationships with other intellectuals as well as Byun herself. For instance, Kim talks about how Yun was crucial to her in order to speak. The intellectuals, herself, and the women come from various different localities and situations which in fact constitute the material condition of the transference: the process of enactment of the women's repressed subjectivity and process of speech.

The film moves to China, where a number of the women had lived since they were, as Yun Jeongok reported it, abandoned by the surrendered and retreating Japanese military in 1945. They have been "discovered" by researchers like Yun Jeongok after this long exile in another country. Thirty two Korean sexual slave women were estimated to have been left there and of these 18 women are reported to have survived. Byun interviews Ha Gunja, one of the survivors in *Muhan*, China. Ha attempts to speak in with her mother tongue, Korean, which here becomes broken and effaced while she testifies to her life out of the Comfort House. Her voice trembles from unresolved angst when she recalls the Comfort House and her life afterwards, but when she tries to speak Korean she becomes joyous. Her fragmented Korean which she excitedly tries to remember I interpret as pertaining to her memory of childhood innocence before her being enslaved and violated. Another story which shed light on the interesting encounters and connections in this film is that Ha's daughter is married to the son of another female Korean who remained in China, Hong Ganglim. Ha believed the ones who have shared the same suffering can help each other.

But in this encounter with these women in China, as Byun recalls, her principle of waiting to establish a relationship with them could not be fully followed. The Government of China refused to cooperate at that time as it also feared that the film would have a detrimental effect on Japan's economic aid to China. Consequently only a short stay and limited number of women were permitted by the government to participate in the filming .



Figure 49. Byun Youngjoo, Ha Gunja and Kim Granny, Kim's Daughter in China, 1995. Still From Film. Byun Youngjoo, Murmuring



Figure 50. Kim Granny And Her Daughter, 1995. Still From Film. Byun Youngjoo, Murmuring

But Ha Gunja's explosive and unreserved testimony to Byun and her film crews in such a short period is interesting. Ha projects her repressed dream over Byun and her film crew as they had made her think, "my home country has not forgotten me". It is seen that this is related to the effect of the hopes and dreams of the women in exile on the creation of a magical affiliation between these strangers and made the 'transference' possible.\*<sup>38</sup> Byun, the film crews and the camera became the object of desire for Ha. The lines of affiliation and hopes traverse the dark space of long lost historical encounters between them.

The strength of this 'transference' later caused Byun a "feeling of guilt and pity for the women who soon she heard had died". Byun confesses it is because "she was telling me her [Kim granny's\*<sup>39</sup>] life long hopes and asked me to help her to visit Korea before she dies."<sup>40</sup> Byun did not promise to help her but her sense of guilt derives from the fact that Byun had made herself a subject "who was supposed to know" in the filming process. The film is the evidence that the women presented themselves to her in order to be seen and heard for the needs of the other, in the hope that it will change their situation. Their dreams and deadly wishes are told to Byun, the other, in such circumstances that they are completely alienated and isolated from a possible realization of their hope. They imagine the power of Byun's camera as possibility bringing light to their long repressed wishes. On this charged relationship and transference between her and the women in exile, Byun states, "I hoped our film would help them as they held in their limits and desperation, but I did not want to hide my fear, the fear on the reality."<sup>41</sup> I could not promise anything to the women that would leave another wound."<sup>42</sup> The sense of this "hope and fear" is featured in the restaurant scene in *Murmuring with the*

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<sup>38</sup> See Figure 49. Byun Youngjoo and grannies in Ha Gunja and Kim granny, Kim's daughter in China, in *Murmuring*.

<sup>39</sup> See Figure 50. Kim Granny and her daughter, in *Murmuring*.

<sup>40</sup> In the Docufactory Vista/Boim. *Nazen Moksori-How Camera Waits*, Seoul, 1998. p.41. This is the director's production note.

<sup>41</sup> Byun has a limits also as she cannot immediately take the fulfillment of her wishes as her responsibility and thereafter pursue them.

<sup>42</sup> Byun, *ibid.*, p. 41



Figure 51. Hong Kanglim in Murmuring Poster, 1995

women and their families in China. At the dinner table, Ha Gunja, Hong Ganglim,<sup>43</sup> and Kim Granny express their wishes and ask favors of Byun and her film crew in helping their home-coming. Byun's hesitant yet clear voice says, "Yes, I would love to, but I cannot....but I will send the message to others who will work hard to help the grannies like you."

The laments of Lee Youngsuk, one of the victim women featured in *Murmuring*, on the subject of her illiteracy epitomizes the vulnerability of the women in coming to speak for themselves and she recognizes at the level of State, Law and the place of intellectual women, who are, the "learned ones" as she calls them. How can the women represent themselves if they were told that the language was not theirs? This question is inseparable from the question of what are the Byun's positions and roles of intellectual women in the need to activate the voice of these women who are struck by non-communicativity, non-conviction and non-cure. Lee Youngsuk speaks to Byun and other films crews in the almost the end of *Murmuring*,

if I had learnt as much as you have, I would not have been silent like this. I should have spoken out immediately after independence. As we never learnt the letters, it has been remained like this until now. If the learned women had suffered, such matters could not have remained like this.

She remembers her childhood, with deep remorse on how the illiteracy of women in her generation was caused by their parents' ignorance and prejudice against girls. Lee recollects,

At that time, no one taught letters to women as [they believe] it is unimportant. One day, I had shaken my sleeping father awake and asked him, 'father I want to learn the letters'. Then he said, 'you should work during the day time. But if you want to go to the evening school, you can

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<sup>43</sup> See Figure 51. Hong Kanglim in 'Murmuring' Poster. The background is the comfort house in China.

go.’ Then my mom intervened, saying ‘one should not teach letters to daughters as then she becomes somebody else’<sup>44</sup>.

She continues,

[her saying]don’t teach her letters [has been borne in my heart]...I have been thinking that women like us will die without resolving this *han*,... who are the learned ones and who can solve this problem?.

Lee’s pronouncement of “the learned ones” is a shrewd reminder to the one who is filming her. It promotes us to think of the role of the learned ones who we call, “the intellectuals,” as projected in Lee’s mind. The activities of learned ones are that of Yun Jeongok who has pursued significant archival and publicity works on the matter. Also they are those of the Korean Council who organized the political campaign on both domestic and international society. Byun’s engagement with the activation of the women’s speech and filming would be also construed in the domain of practice of the “learned ones” which assists and facilitates the representation process of the victim women.

In the last scene of *Murmuring*, Kang Dukkyung is singing a popular love song, and holding Yun Jeongok at the farewell party in 1994. It is a poignant moment of the solidarity between the victim women and the “learned women” at the intersection of hope, despair and struggle. The party was organized by the supporters of the Korean Council for the women who call each other “family”.<sup>45</sup> In this scene, the women feel that they have not achieved enough that year despite ceaseless demonstrations every Wednesday and their enormous efforts to publicise

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<sup>44</sup> The term, ‘someone else’ suggests that the girl would neglect her obligation as a woman to serve her parents, looking after family, raising children and so on.

<sup>45</sup> The sense of affiliation and kinship like relationship have developed between these women in the course of the struggle.



Figure 52. Kang Dukkyung, 1995. Still From Film. Byun Youngjoo, *Murmuring*



the victim's campaign by the women themselves and their supporters in and outside of Korea. The conversation began by words of encouragement between women. This soon leads to the time when everyone talks about what has remained in their heart through the activities of the old year and their hopes for the new year.

**Kim Sunduk:** "You[Yun Jeongok] have made a lot of effort but we should have some gains in the new year,

**Yun Jeongok:** "Yes, the year is changing....."

**Kim Sunduk:** "We always have lots of hopes...."

**Kang Dukkyung** (in a slightly scornful mood): "What hopes...?"

**Kim Sunduk:** "Yes, we have a lot of hopes, we made everyone knows this..but Japan does not reply.."

**Park Okryun:** "I should see the end and then die...we can not withdraw. But if we can not solve."

**Yun Jeongok:** "We can not even die.."

The conversation suddenly transmutes into the singing scene. Park Doori is singing as everyone encourages her to do. But this is soon taken over by Kang Dukkyung who is singing and holding Yun Jeongok, asking her not to leave the party early.\*<sup>46</sup> She calls Yun's name several times as she is drunk. The popular song she sings is called "Don't Separate Us Forever": The lyrics are "don't separate forever, at that time and at the era, I cry as I can not forget, I cry[.....]you and me promised to each other never separate....." Kang keeps holding Yun to make her participate in her singing. But she soon stops singing, her mood changes, she says, "I'm going away next year". The others ask, "what you mean?" Kang replies, "I'm going somewhere quiet." Nobody knew at this time that this was a sinister prophecy of Kang's death. She died the next year from cancer.

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<sup>46</sup>See Figure 52. Kang Dukkyung, in *Murmuring*

Some interpret this singing and Kang's scornful mood as the indirect expression of her scars as caused by the perpetual disappointment of an unchanging situation.<sup>47</sup> Apart from these scars, this scene also reveals her strong affinity with Yun Jeongok. This is the scene where Kang, a subaltern woman, transfers her sympathy to this intellectual woman, Yun Jeongok. Kang comments earlier in the film on Yun that she is different to them, but she has remained single, devoting her entire life to this matter. Kim says she gave up all comfortable courses of life that awaited her. But as Kang feels that they have not achieved much despite the sacrifice and devotion, she feels sorry and sad for all these "learned women" who have become involved in the resolution of this matter, and to whom she feels she has become a burden. She feels as if she alone is responsible for driving them all into this impossibility and hopelessness.

The episode related to the genesis of Byun's 'Habitual Sadness'(낮은목소리/2), her second documentary also reveals the dimension of transference. 'Habitual Sadness' indeed materializes the remarkable "progress" of the enactment of women's will since film making began in 1993. The relationship between the women and Byun has developed as the women were increasingly aware of the power of media for their redemption process. One day, Kang Dukkyung came to ask her to film her death from cancer. Kang had by then become close to Byun. According to Byun's director's notes, Kang Dukkyung asked her to record her life and death, saying, "I want to be remembered". Kang's wish and Byun's acceptance became the flesh of Habitual Sadness which was completed and released in 1997.

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<sup>47</sup> Byun talks about Kang Dukyung's singing scene in the farewell party of 1994. "He was firm and the one who were most ardent in demonstration and forefront of the fighting since her testimony. But [I guess] she was silently and deeply hurt by warmruke attitude of Japanese government attitude and weakening interest of media. She was singing embracing Yunjeongok and Lee Hyunja [co-representative of Korean Council] revealing her wound of the present indirectly. The filmed lasted for 10 minutes and I inserted it without editing. Because I thought if one can not correspond the filmic time and space to that of reality through the editing, one can not correctly convey 'her indirect revealing of the wound'." Byun, *ibid.*, pp.38-39

On Kang's request, Byun decided that the central focus of the new film was to stage the women as the subjects of affirmative performance for their redemption and life beyond their past. She decides to crystallise the women's life beyond the body of their testimony. Kang Dukkyung was not the only granny to ask her to make another film of them in their new House of Sharing.<sup>48</sup> Byun noted that 'Habitual Sadness' is written and directed by the women themselves. At this point, she rethought again the principle of film making. She decided to make the film the way the women wished so that the screen should show the women's appearance and performance as they desired it. It echoes the principle of Byun's documentary film making that she set up earlier in 'Murmuring', that the most important audience for her film is the women themselves. She says,

I have had the ever growing question, of in which situations, do the women like themselves the most. It was in this second film, when this principle is best employed and materialized. The grannies themselves planned and directed the film more ardently than our film crew<sup>49</sup>

This principle is established in the course of communication. Byun found her ideas about "what is the best to show to the audience" did not always correspond to the women's needs. The production team wrote,

We had an interest in the reaction of people who talk about the issue of sexual slavery in relation to today's sexual culture. But the grannies were interested in how their own situation had changed since the release of the first film, they [the grannies] sensed the love and interest from the people who have watched the first film. If 'Murmuring' is the work that is produced based on Boim's favor to the women, they believed

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<sup>48</sup> The House of Sharing moved from Haehwa-dong, Seoul(1994-1996) to Kwangju, Kyunggi-do (a provincial town in the outskirts of Seoul) on 6 Feb. 1996.

<sup>49</sup> Docufactory Vista/Boim, Byun's Production Note of Murmuring-How the Camera Waits. p. 39



Figure 53. Kang Dukkung, 1996. Still From film, Byun Youngjoo, Habitual Sadness, 1996



Figure 54. Kang Dukkyung, 1997. Still From film. Byun Youngjoo, Habitual Sadness

that the second one should accommodate what they want to say more about themselves positively.<sup>50</sup>

Kang Dukkyung was, as other women testify, the most intelligent, militant, and artistic one. She ardently participated in the demonstration and went to wherever she could to give her testimony. She also turned out to be an excellent artist. A number of very excellent paintings she produced through the art workshop with Lee Kyungsin, touched and moved the viewers across the world. On the one hand, 'Habitual Sadness' weaves the image of Kang who performs in the last light of her life as she moves towards her death. 'Habitual Sadness' records the context of her life and the disappearance of her body. Boim first records Kang's testimony of her entire life which lasted more than one hour in 2,090 feet of 35 mm film. Kang's testimony is inserted in the beginning of film.\*<sup>51</sup> Kang Dukkyung testifies to the fact that she was abducted, raped and made into a sexual slave when she was 14 and underwent a dramatic journey after her return home. The film then records the days of her cancer routine, that Kang goes to the hospital, and is seen by the doctor, and returns home with the help of others. It records that she fell asleep on the bus coming back from the demonstration.<sup>52</sup> And it records her intimate talk in her room towards the camera that she feels unbearably weak, and it is difficult to breathe.

The work of mourning instructed by Kang poignantly touches upon the aporia of her redemption and that of others on her impending death. Kang's death means the loss of a witness of this history of violence against women which was unheard for nearly 45 years. Her physical presence and life like that of other survivors has ironically been constituted as a body of evidence of this human disaster against the purposeful destruction and concealment of material, archival evidence by the Japanese military and government. 'Habitual Sadness' captures the temporality of presence and disappearance of Kang's body in order to overcome it. The film archives the women's bodies which will inevitably disappear, through this *techne*,

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<sup>50</sup> Boim, Production Note of 'Habitual Sadness', 1997, Seoul. p.23

<sup>51</sup> See Figure 53. Kang Dukkyung in Habitual Sadness

<sup>52</sup> See Figure 54. Kang Dukkyung in Habitual Sadness

this artifactual body. In other words, the film camera sheds light onto the disappearance which then will overcome the mortality of the being by extending its life through the electronic images and voices. This survives the inexhaustive will of Kang, the dying one through other bodies which will enliven until the material itself decays. The necessity of this archiving is that the stories of Kang and other women despite the little time left until their death, have yet to convict the criminal. The Japanese government denies its legal responsibility and does not respond to the wishes of these women.

Kang's expression in the film "film me a lot while I am still alive" and "I want to be remembered" certainly reveals her awareness of the film's power which will continue her unfinished project even after her death. That is to say, according to Byun, Kang and other women had experienced the power of film as themselves having been audience and observing the strong impact of the film in public sphere. At the talk at Goldsmiths College, London, in 1991 Byun said that the women often went to universities, grass-root local organizations, women's organizations and so on where the film was screened and met the audience outside the cinema who greeted them with delight and sympathy. From the reactions that they have received from others outside the film theatres, they felt loved and that their life is ultimately respected. In this way, Kang and other women increasingly overcame their initial fear of the camera and began to entertain the possibility of its magical power for their needs.

Kang had learnt and believed that this film would be transferred as the work of the other as it is circulated and seen by the younger generations. Kang like other women, had learnt that the audiences who witness their life became the potential subjects to whom her life and unfulfilled will can be transferred as much as they could identify themselves and their "present" with women's times. Kang's last will that 'Habitual Sadness', should capture this elucidates this point. Breathing her last, and lying in bed, she says to the visitors surrounding her, "I have been thinking about this film.., everyone should be able to see this later, later, I will pray for it

even in the other world, more audiences should be made and they will help us". She wishes to prolong her life through this film, which was to shortly come into the light after such a long time in darkness but then soon will end. Her wishes for remembrance and the unceasing struggle even after her passing away is the ghostly will attached to the film of 'Habitual Sadness'.

'Habitual Sadness' materializes these multiple moments of transference and witnesses the transferential effect. The film crystallises what is released from the substratum of mind of the previously subalternised engendering the ghosts through the spectrogenic process of the film's circulation as the potential heir of Kang and others.

For an analogous example of this film making as performing the mourning of dying ones and also of the living who observe the deaths of their beloved is discussed in depth by the American performance theorist, Peggy Phelan in her article on the film, 'Silver Lake Life: The View From Here'.<sup>53</sup> She notes that

I'm calling this thinking performance because it enacts the differential force of a grief which simultaneously mourns the lost object and ourselves. Inside and outside, we can perhaps touch the architecture of this blind grief by rehearsing the psychic substitutions at the heart of cinematic and sexual identifications.<sup>54</sup>

Phelan reads the film "Silverlake Life: The View From Here" in the context of the relationship between lovers when one dies. The film is the fusional production of the lover's erotic desire as well as the mode of political statement on the impact of AIDS this lover wishes to project towards the outside world. As Phelan well understands, this performance and visualization is the part of "talking cure" that

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<sup>53</sup> Peggy Phelan's article, "Infected Eyes: Dying Man With Movie Camera, Silver Lake Life: The View From Here", in her book, *Mourning Sex*, *ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Phelan, *ibid.*, p. 153

psychoanalyst talks about.<sup>55</sup> Tom Joslin who died of AIDS in 1991 asked his gay lover, Massi to film his death. The desire of this dying man is a desire to mark his own life in the public realm and his will to speak of the unacknowledged experiences hindered by social prejudices about their sexual orientation. Massi conducted his will and he himself also died from AIDS later. Massi's video footage is transferred into film by another friend of theirs according to Joslin's will. Joslin, Massi and this friend converge in a common psychic and political band of mourning of death, cure, and resistance. Phelan noted, "Tom Joslin began a video diary and plotted a film that would document his life and death. Intended in part as a love letter to Massi, and in part as a political statement about the impact of AIDS on the material, familiar and cultural body. The film is also a thanatography, a study of dying."<sup>56</sup>

As for the self-staged work of mourning through film, we find another example in the filmmaking of Derek Jarman in 'Blue'(1993). In this film, the director himself "films" his life memory and impressions of his surrounding as projected on his retina while losing his actual sight because of the AIDS related illness. The film Blue is strikingly devoid of any imagery except the singular ultramarine color screen and sound flows in which Jarman narrates his memory and life towards death, the world fading from his sight. The voices and Jarman's narration of his memory and imagination gradually replace the absence of visual representation, invoking a kind of spatial and temporal infinity. The static blue screen indirectly conveys the sense of abjection and transcendence of a dying man without the actual "representation" of the dying.

In 'Habitual Sadness', comparably, Kang and Byun are also preoccupied with the remembrance and continuation of struggle, which is intrinsic in subjects whose lives have been marginalized and scared by the very lack of representation and the violent imperative of the appropriation of unacknowledged life. Kang Dukkyung

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<sup>55</sup> Phelan, *ibid.*, P. 155

<sup>56</sup> Phelan, *ibid.*, p.154



asks to Byun to film her life and death and this becomes a compelling task for Byun. This work of mourning directed by the dying one and transferred to the living is possible on the basis of love. 'Silver Lake Life' is the product of love which is characterized as the transference of desire between Joslin and Massi whose mortality is common if not synchronous from AIDS. The lovers attempt to live out each other's life exemplifies the nodal phenomenon of being. One is going to live the life of Kang, the loved other who is dying, by remembering her life and will through the filming. Byun's saying, "my film is my love letter to the women" elucidates this point.

On the other side of strand of Kang's death and work of mourning, this film conveys the performance of the women living in House of Sharing whose life forces flourish beyond the wound of the past. The women in the film are determined to project their wishful profile of themselves into the filmic vision. In this way, 'Habitual Sadness' unlike its title, presents these aesthetic moments of the self-affirmative performance of the women. The women sustain their everyday life through the small reparative acts of their loss that sustain their healing. This persistent life force becomes a complementary line of this film's non-narrative narrative structure transcending the line of the death and the mourning of Kang Dukkyung.

Byun says in her production notes, "they asked me to film them in a certain way. I let them perform." In the talk at Goldsmiths, she said "'Habitual Sadness' became a talent show of the women." The women are working hard, laboring in the field, growing seeds and harvesting pumpkins and other vegetable. All these create the imagery of "production" in which the women wish to be seen as if they are saying "we are living today. We are producing these things. I'm proud of myself and self-sufficient. I do not need any sympathy." For example, according to Byun, Kim Sunduk in particular asked her to film her whilst "she is working". In the film, Byun asks the question to her "why did you ask me to film while you are working?"



Figure 55. Park Doori and Kim Sunduk, 1997. Still From Film. Byun Youngjoo,  
Habitual Sadness



Figure 56. Park Okryun and Lee Yongnye, 1997. Still From Film. Byun Youngjoo,  
Habitual Sadness

She replies that she wants to prove that she “has lived rightly”, which means she “worked hard all life through without any harm and nobody’s help”. Kim’s performance of labor is the way in which as Phelan says one deals with the grief in finding the substitute through which one can yield the grief to a manageable level.\*<sup>57</sup>

The substitutes that allow one to deal with grief vary from individual to individual. The laboring person as the imagery of Kim and other women’s ideal-ego confirms to the work ethics of their society. It is surmised that she tries to emphasize the normality of her life which she believes to have lost through her experiences as a slave.

It is Kim’s pragmatic attitude that appeals to the sentiment of the average *minjoong* by whom she wishes to be seen as a ‘normal, good’ person. A contribution to the community through “labor” is necessary for a subject to be approved as a member of the Korean community.

One may argue that her attachment to labor and production is slightly out of point since her sense of loss and injuries was not caused by their negligence of labor in her life. This can be regarded as too individual, subjective a solution for the historical, political and cultural implications of the disaster that these women have suffered and endured. However, this working scene undeniably enables the audience to appreciate the life forces of these women. The audience can see that the women are joyous and are full of pride in what they can achieve through their labor, i.e. on the faces of the women who harvest pumpkins, vegetables, sort seeds from the old branches.\*<sup>58</sup> Obviously, nature has been rewarding them by returning the

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<sup>57</sup>See Figure 55. Park Doori and Kim Sunduk, in *Habitual Sadness*

<sup>58</sup> See Figure 56. Park Okryun and Lee Yongnye, in *Habitual Sadness*



Figure 57. Park Doori, 1997. Still From Film. Byun Youngjoo, Habitual Sadness



Figure 58. Park Doori and Byun Youngjoo, and Boim, 1997. Still From film. Byun Youngjoo, Habitual Sadness

fruits in return for their investments, while history still has yet to grant such reward to the women's efforts and struggles. Their life forces are sustained and evolved through this labor. Their life is not only determined by their diabolical past but also the present of material production. Also, the healing process of these women can not be completed even when a political process of resolution is completed.

The film crew and director are not featured as mere observers of the labor and production since the film production is part of their relationship with the women. *Habitual Sadness* features Byun helping Sunduk to carry pumpkins on top of her head. Byun intervenes to help load the pumpkins when one of three women dropped one.

One theme of 'Habitual Sadness' is the scenes of the women's play and laughter in the House of Sharing. The film features the women drinking, singing and sharing laughter together. For example, Park Doori's singing of the old folk song about adultery and women's mourning of men's misbehavior is the most edifying moment of such laughter in *Habitual Sadness*.<sup>\*59</sup> She swears about everything and makes the other women laugh out of amusement, but it invokes the sense of transcendence of the anxiety that must be latent in their mind. In the scene where the women are cleaning the chicken cage together in the house compound, the women exchange black humor and jokes about each other's fates, complaining about the cage which is unbearably smelly. By bullying each other instead of continuing to complain about the smelly cage, they exchanged twisted expressions of concerns for and cares about each other.

The play and laughter of the women is shared with Byun and her film crew as well. In the drinking scene, the camera features Byun and the crew listening to the women, drinking, sharing the laughter with them.<sup>\*60</sup> In the chicken cage cleaning

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<sup>59</sup> See Figure 57. Park Doori, in *Habitual Sadness*

<sup>60</sup> See Figure 58. Park Doori and Byun Youngjoo, and Boim, in *Habitual Sadness*

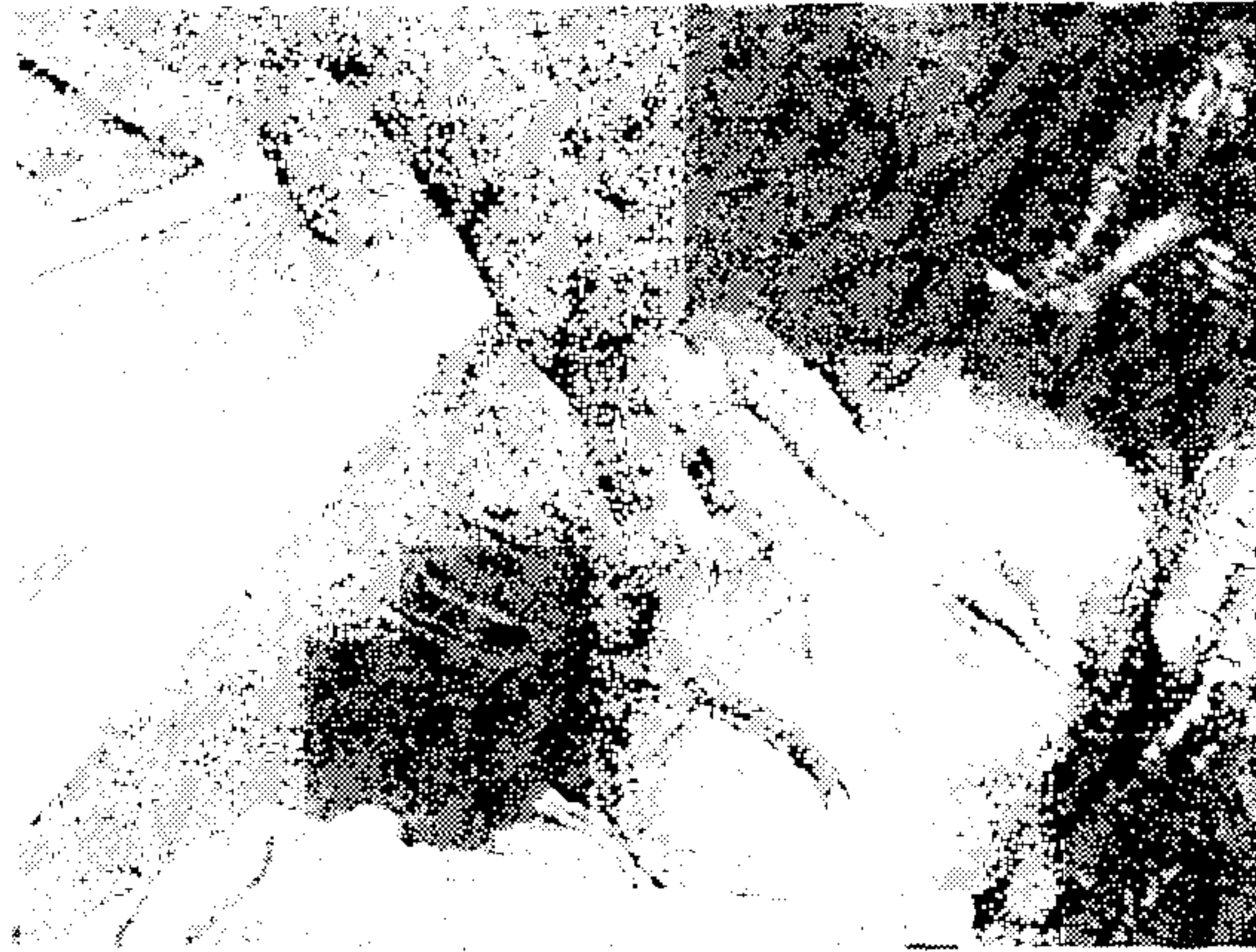


Figure 59. Death, 1997 Still From Film. Byun Youngjoo, Habitual Sadness



Figure 60. Yeam, 1997 in Habitual Sadness. Still From Film. Byun Youngjoo, Habitual Sadness



Figure 61. Women In The Field, 1997. Still From Film. Byun Youngjoo, Habitual Sadness

scene, where Park Doori's swearing never ends and her grumpy laments saturated with her tough southern dialect about what she is doing are futile and meaningless, unbearably excessive and cause laughter. And then Park suddenly looks at camera and shouts to the film crews, "give all the smelly chicken to the film makers to be eaten by them". The camera and film crew which used to be perceived as a part of a foreign and authoritarian machine for them, is now transformed into a tool to play with. The play becomes the source of much laughter which it reaches out to the audience. The viewers are enchanted by these scenes of laughter in a place where one thinks this is impossible.

Park Doori shouts to Kang who is about to pass away in the hospital. "Don't close your eye". "You are the best artist, you should continue to paint." Kang herself is waiting for the moment, surrounded by other women and young supporters. Then screen soon blacks out. The thanatology of Kang's death is filmed and the image is inscribed with no sound effect, by which viewers are affected by the heavy and uneasy absence of something.\*\*<sup>61</sup> The imagery of Kang, of her life and death appear in the film as still images. They are series of still images of Kang in the demonstration, testifying time, sitting in her room talking Byun's camera, her dead body, her singing at the farewell party of 1994, her painting of 'Lepaul Comfort House', and her empty room. And letters on the screen are inscribed "don't forget". The film plays the presence and absence of Kang in the juxtaposition of motion and still.

This is not truly the last scene of Habitual Sadness. Habitual Sadness returns to the life to begin again. The film is then followed by four or five women gathered in one room and talking about what they want to be if they would be born again. In this way, the film tries to point to the future through women's wishes and dream images although they might be impossible. Then this is followed by the truly last scene, where the women spread manure in the field.<sup>62</sup> The film space moves from the

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<sup>61</sup> See Figure 59. Death, 1997 and See Figure 60. Yeam, in Habitual Sadness

<sup>62</sup> See Figure 61. Women in the field, in Habitual Sadness

everyday, twilight of struggle, hope, despair, death to the field where the labor of the women will be honestly rewarded by the production in the autumn. In the field, Byun asks Kim Sunduk and Kim Bokdong, "What are you going to plant next year?" Kim Sunduk answers, "Many things and more than twelve kinds." Kim Bokdong, "We will be self-sufficient with these. We can produce by ourselves. But we would like to and should be able to share things...not just receiving."<sup>63</sup>

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One day in 1993, Lee Kyungsin saw an advertisement in a news paper The House of Sharing was looking for a teacher to instruct the resident in *Hangl* (the Korean language). She volunteered for the job with the will to extend her help since she thought that war can be more wounding to the women than men and wanted to be a small help for them to solve their *han*.<sup>64</sup> She started the language lesson for them but soon changed it to drawing and painting lessons that February, because the women found the language lessons tiresome. Their lack of confidence in *Hangl* could not sustain their interest. Lee knew well what she could offer the women instead of writing skill. The medium of paint.

Lee Kyungsin began to be interested in the aspect of art as a medium of therapy in the 1980s. Lee, a fine art student in the prestigious Hongik Art College in Seoul, like many young artists in the 1980s, was deeply disappointed by the incapability of academic art to respond to the questions posed by real life as caught in an enormous and prevalent political and cultural unease. She became sympathetic towards the realist art movement which was radically empowering itself outside of the academic and institutional art circles. But the idea of art as "therapy" still did not have a significant impact in the realist art movement until the early 1990s. The main stream consciousness of antagonist art movement was rather saturated with a rationalist mode of a critical and socialist realism where "emancipation" of the

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<sup>63</sup> She refers to the public who send money and donate everyday essentials to the House of Sharing

<sup>64</sup> Yu Sukyel, "the revelation of violence of Japanese imperialism through paintings", *Munhwa Ilbo*(Munhwa daily new paper), 28, Feb. 1997.



oppressed is understood to be guaranteed by the collective social struggle rather than individual psychic care.

But there was a tradition within the realist project of the 1980s that put the emphasis on the effort of intellectual and artists to transfer the means of expression to the subaltern subject through which they can “represent” themselves. For example, art groups emphasizing the doctrines of ‘everyone being an artist’ and of collective creation began to practice cooperative work between the participants. One such pioneering group is the *Simin Misulhakgyo* (Citizen’s Art School) project by the *Kwanngmigong* (Kwangju Artist’s Community) in 1980. To pursue her interests in art education and art therapy, she registered in an art education and therapy programme at the In-ha University Graduate School after graduating in Fine Art in Hongik Art College in 1992.

Lee Kyungsin’s workshop can be read as deriving from the traditions of the *minjoong* art movement but it brought the concept of therapy into the scene. This can be said to be a significant shift in the movement. It shifts the emphasis of art from its connection to the individuated collectivity to that of the collective individual subjectivity. According to the art therapist, Kim Jinsuk, art therapy assumes that every human individual has a different personality and sensibility, thereafter the creative process is fundamentally about letting the patient engage in creative work based upon that individual difference.

In the same way that Byun wanted to make her camera and the film the tools for the self-expression and diaries of the women, Kyungsin introduced the water color paints, brush, and sketch book Lee to the women to make them tools of self-expression beyond the means of language. As Kim Jinsuk wrote, art therapy is a discipline that aims to encourage the individual patient to reach self-expression, and the expression of their personal experiences. It aims to help the patient exteriorize their inner world through art and the creative process, by which they can achieve a cure. The exteriorisation here means the releasing of “the psychic and emotional



Figure 62-1. Art Class, Art Class, Video, Oct. 1993. Still From Film-Lee Kyungsin

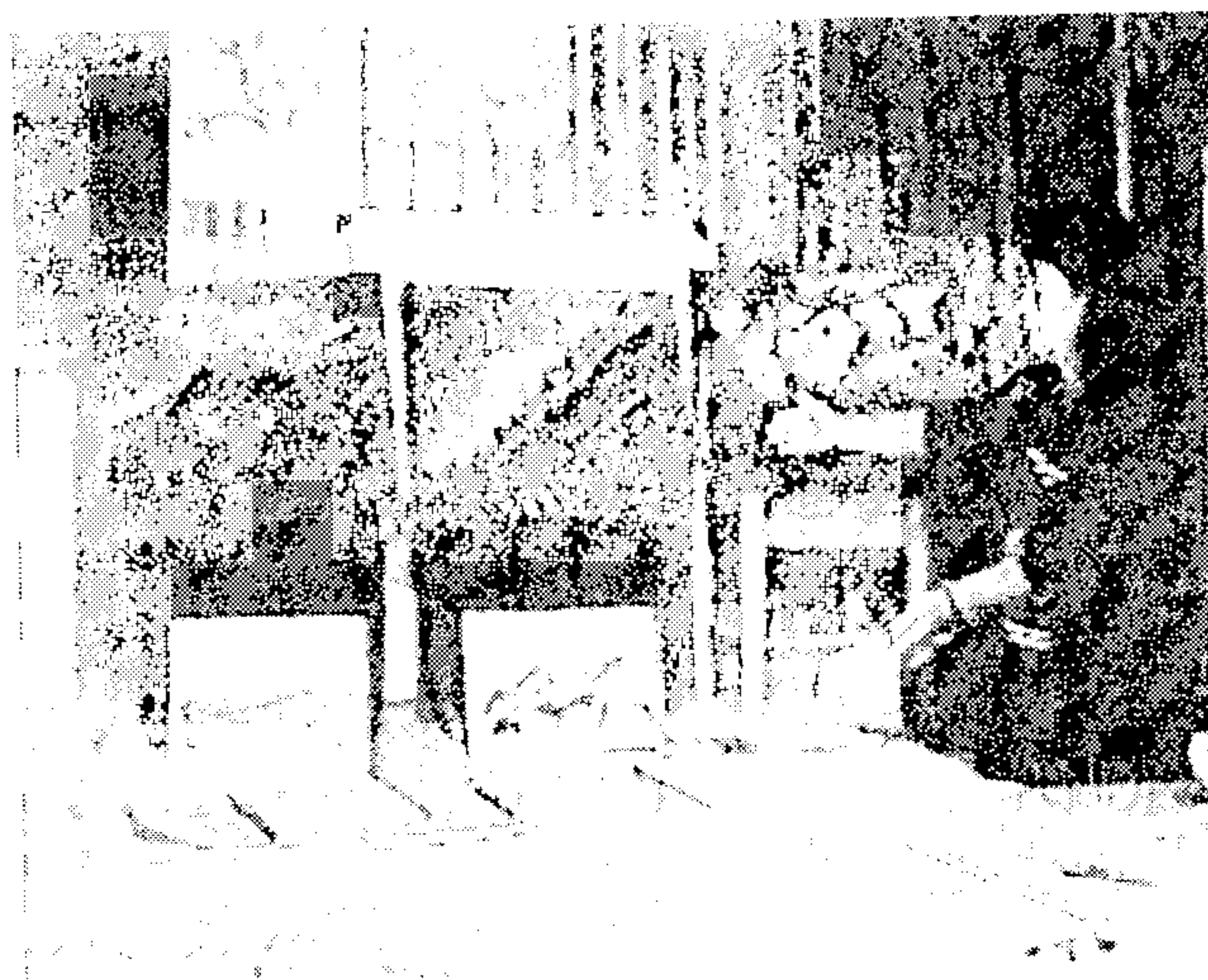


Figure 62-2. Art Class, Art Class, Video, Oct. 1993. Still From Film-Kim Yongjin



Figure 62-3. Art Class, Art Class, Video, Oct. 1993. Still From Film-Lee Kyungsin  
and Park Doori

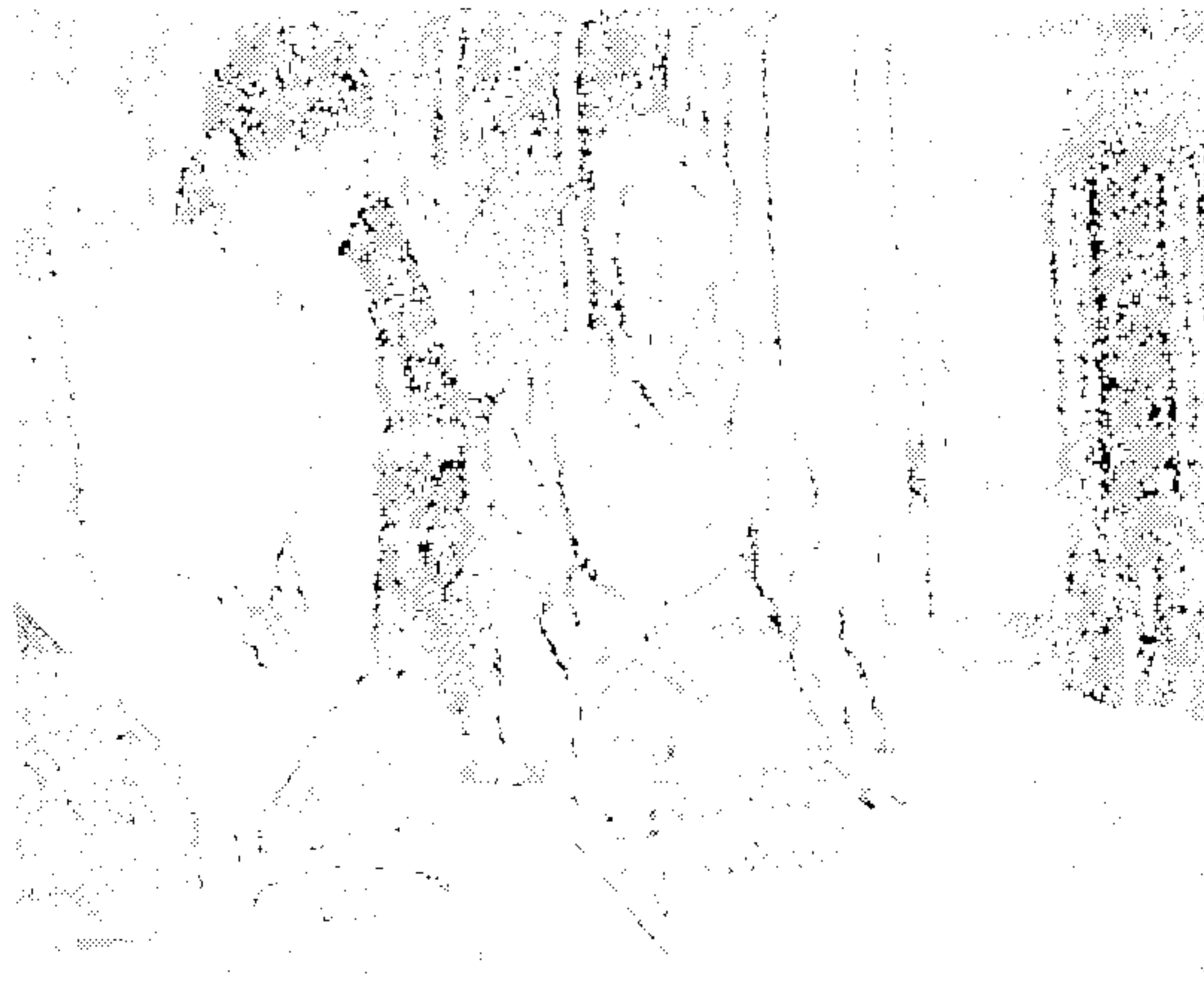


Figure 62-4. Art Class, Art Class, Video, Oct. 1993. Still From Film-Kim Youngjin and Kim Sunduk



Figure 62-5. Art Class, Art Class, Video, Oct. 1993. Still From Film -Kang Dukkyung



Figure 62-6. Art Class, Art Class, Video, Oct. 1993. Still From Film-Lee Yongnye

conflict through art, making them identifiable, and resolving the associated elements in conflict, which lead to the reorganization of pathological psychic structure.<sup>65</sup>

She continues to talk about how art therapy is different to language-based therapy. The common theories of modern psychotherapy of the personality and psychic problem, inform us that these are formed in the earlier stage of life, when the infant is engaged in non-linguistic communication. In this regard, she points out that the image can assist the resolution of the psychic issues that derive from the early stage of life, safely and effectively to reach the cure. By the same token, the problem of non-conviction, non-cure, and the resistance of the former sexual slave is formed through the non-vocalised genesis of the silencing structure of the society. In order for them to reach an objectification of such repressed elements and, images, the symbolic tools can be 'safe' and 'effective' means of achieving this. Kim also suggests that "the medium used in art therapy provide safe retrogression, clarification of unclarified matter, compensation of lack, liberation from the fixed idea, aesthetic insight, self-realisation through physical experiences."<sup>66</sup>

The therapist ideally has experience of creative work and is continuing with it, allowing him/her to be able to understand the creative process in the context of the psyche, according to Kim.<sup>67</sup> The initial plan of Lee, which was to teach reading and writing to the women turned into teaching painting, which is her primary vocation attached to her understanding of the media as a means of free expression. In this sense, in the Art Class video, Lee speaks to three women in the class in this context, "express your self through color, I do also often express myself through painting."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Kim Jinsuk, "What Is Art Therapy", *ArtWorld*, October, Seoul, 1995

<http://www.keapa.or.kr/keapa.htm>

<sup>66</sup> Kim Jinsuk, *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Kim Jinsuk, *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> See Figure 62. A Still image from, Art Class Video, Oct. 12.1993. This is a collection of the archive of The House of Sharing, 65 Wondang-Ri, Toichon-Myun, Kwangju-Si, Kyungki-Do, South Korea.

The first stage of Lee's Art Class was the practice of the depiction of objects such as hands, grass, flower and fruits for five months.<sup>69</sup> Then it moved to the practice of the expression of emotions such as joy, anger, sadness. What appears in 'Art Class' video, filmed nearly eight months later, is the class as involved in this second stage practice through color. Two instructors, Lee Kyungsin and Kim Youngjin, who joined Lee for a short term, had studied art therapy in US, explain and demonstrate to the women the potential of color that can translate the state of emotion. As if to turn the women's attention away from an obsession with imitating the object at the beginning of the class, Lee Kyungsin emphasises, "express your feeling rather than trying to mimic the appearance" in this session. Then it is gradually moved to the stage that the participants can express what they have experienced figuratively and non-figurative way. It took a long time for the women to be able to draw their feelings and experiences but thanks to the "empathic vessel" they found in Lee and the women, as well as "the facilitating environment", the expression of their long repressed feeling and mind of the women became possible.<sup>70</sup> More than 126 drawings and paintings have been produced through this class over four years from 1993 to 1997 with Lee and Kim and after the workshop.

Kang Dukkyung, Kim Sunduk, and Lee Yongnye are three women who continued to participate in Lee's 'Art Class'.<sup>71</sup> It is because they, as Kim Sunduk and Kang Dukkyong say, in common found a great emotional resort in painting since it gives them a self-indulging, pleasurable experience of expressing themselves with a temporal forgetting of all their resentful feelings in reality.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Yu Sukyel, *Munhwa Ilbo*, *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Kim Jinsuk, *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Lee Yongsu, Park Doori also in the members who started. But Lee soon moved down to Dagu so did not continue. Park Doori who still appears the Art Class video, did not continue since as Kim Sunduk recalls she displayed too much anxiety and crying when she to draw. A document in the archive of House Sharing, entitled "Painting Exhibition of Grannies in The House of Sharing", in the Archive in House of Sharing. This document contains a transcript of the meeting between Jung Wonchul(Print maker, Professor in art), Monk Hejin, Kim Sunduk, Lee Yongnye, in House of Sharing, in 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000. see p. 10. House of Sharing document( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000) afterwards.

<sup>72</sup> 'Art Class' Video, *ibid.*



Figure 63. Kim Sunduk, *Childhood 1 (Picking Mushrooms)*, 1995

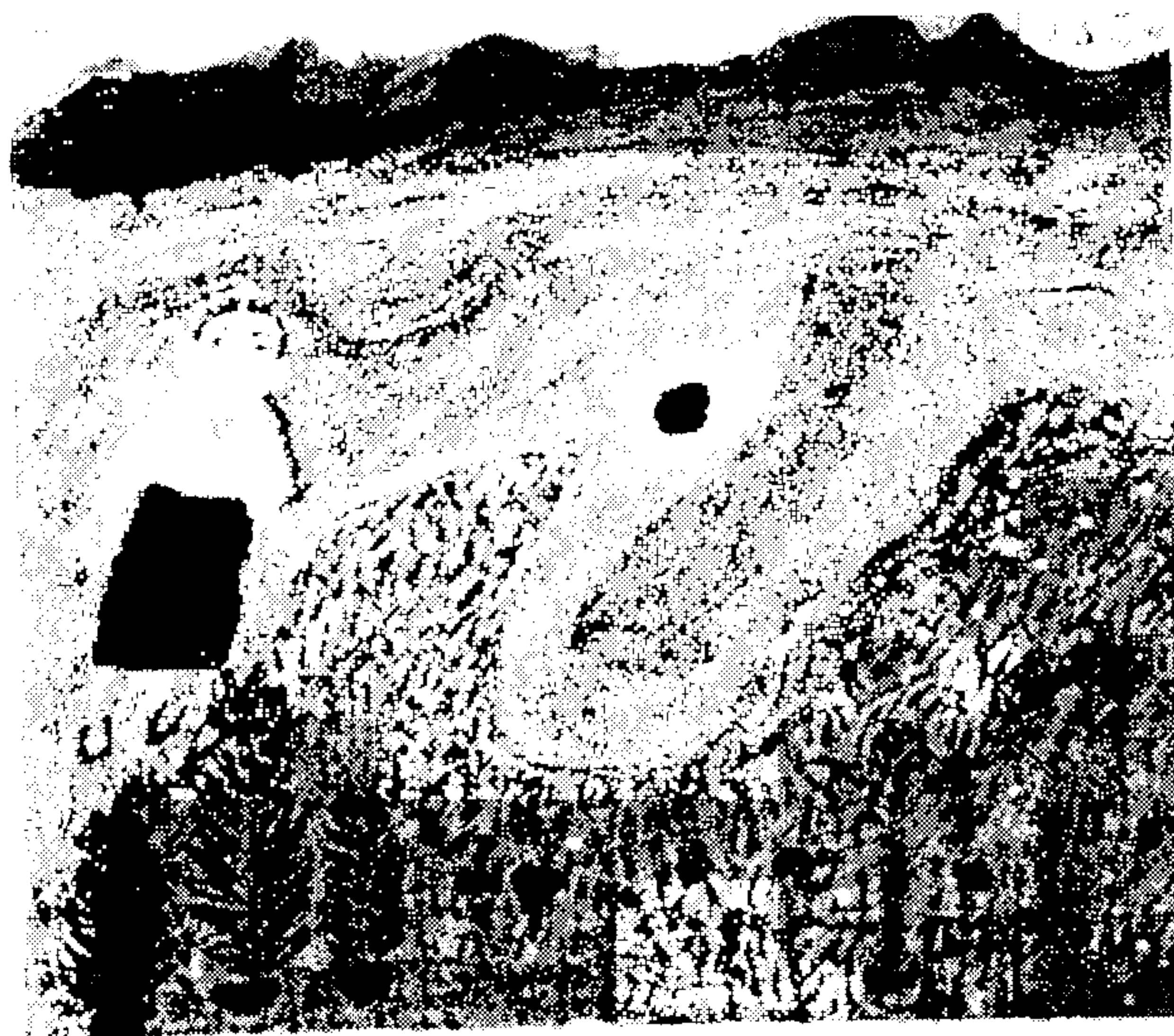


Figure 64. Kim Sunduk, *Cow*, 1996 Water Color. c. The Museum of Sexual Slavery,  
Kwangju

The women who started to practice depicting objects and expressions through color for many months started to paint their trauma related subjects. Kim Sunduk says, “While making picture like that (depicting object)..I thought.. no..I should not paint these things any more but should paint what I have been experienced and suffered.”<sup>73</sup>

When Jung Wonchul asked what is painting for her, Kim Suduk answered, “I indulge myself in working in the field then I do not think about the past. I always do this way. I was sewing just before I came here. Painting is the same. As I paint about what was buried in my mind, I feel a repressed feeling is resolved as I devote myself in that. Dukyung said the same. She was awake all night with her painting book when she was feeling oppressed, stifled and could not sleep.”<sup>74</sup>

At that point Lee Kyungsin had taught painting for a year and a half as she testifies to Byun’s camera in ‘Murmuring’. She says, “their approaches to painting are like an adolescent girl’s.....the colour and the symbols that they use often shock me.”

Kim painted a lot of images of her childhood at her home town before she was abducted. These paintings do not immediately speak about her trauma but are the images that reveal her memory of the serene reminiscent images of her in the landscape which is associated with colonial exploitation that she and her family experienced even in the remote country side. Kim talk about these childhood paintings, “I did not express much through painting. But Japanese did so many bad things. The houses were burned [...] there were so many sacrifice of Koreans...”<sup>75</sup> For example, her work, ‘Childhood 1’(Picking Mushrooms, 1995)\*<sup>76</sup> presents her memory of childhood as working hard picking the mushrooms in a forest in the remote country side. She says “I was working and working like a cow [she also made a painting called ‘Cow’<sup>77</sup> (1996)] like today.”\*<sup>78</sup> But then it is only when she

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<sup>73</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), *ibid.*, p12

<sup>74</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), *ibid.*, p.6

<sup>75</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), *ibid.*, p7

<sup>76</sup> See Figure 63. Kim Sunduk, Childhood 1’(Picking Mushrooms), 1995

<sup>77</sup> See Figure 64. Kim Sunduk, Cow, 1996

<sup>78</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), *ibid.*, p.7

talks about her picture to others that she reveals the context of colonial history as if she suddenly remembers, she adds, "we sent a lot to Japan. We had a lot of mushrooms in the mountain at that time. But even though we sent a huge amount to them, only little amount of salt will return to us. Not only one or two years but we did it for many years."<sup>79</sup>

'Childhood 2'(Seeds Exploitation, 1995) is in the similar line of the way of remembering in which a serene childhood memory usually associated with labor hides the fact of colonial exploitation. Kim says of this painting, "this reminds me of my childhood the most. The Japanese exploited the seeds which we harvested....I was told....they squeezed the oil out of them and used them for airplanes and factories."<sup>80</sup> Kim's 'childhood' paintings seem to be representing pure childhood picture memories which have been filtered through her defensive psyche. Kim does not allow much emotion in remembering this in relation to the ordeal she experienced later. She does not attempt any reinterpretation of the memory through her later traumatized rationality but depicts it with the innocent perspective of a child, the innocent emotion. It is the image of her childhood when she indulged herself in those works without being fully aware of the political and historical air of the colonial period in which she was implicated in and 'witnessed'.

This plentitude of 'childhood' painting seems to be a manifestation of their predisposition to indirect/detour exaltation of their self-love rather than directing the attention to the other (who she hates or accuses) in order to find the equilibrium through this painted expression. As Kim says, she did not mean her childhood was particularly beautiful or more so, than that of others, but she would go back if she could.<sup>81</sup> In depicting them, she attains a self affirmative effect on her life as she confirms, but in a very disinterested manner, herself as a characteristic individual ("I was a hard working girl"). Monk Hejin asked Kim Sunduk, "you distinctively have more painting on your childhood than others. Why?" Kim Sunduk replies,

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<sup>79</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), *ibid.*, p.8

<sup>80</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), *ibid.*, p.7

<sup>81</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), *ibid.*, pp. 9-10





Figure 65. Kim Sunduk, *Dragged*, 1995. Water Color. c. The Museum of Sexual Slavery, Kwangju

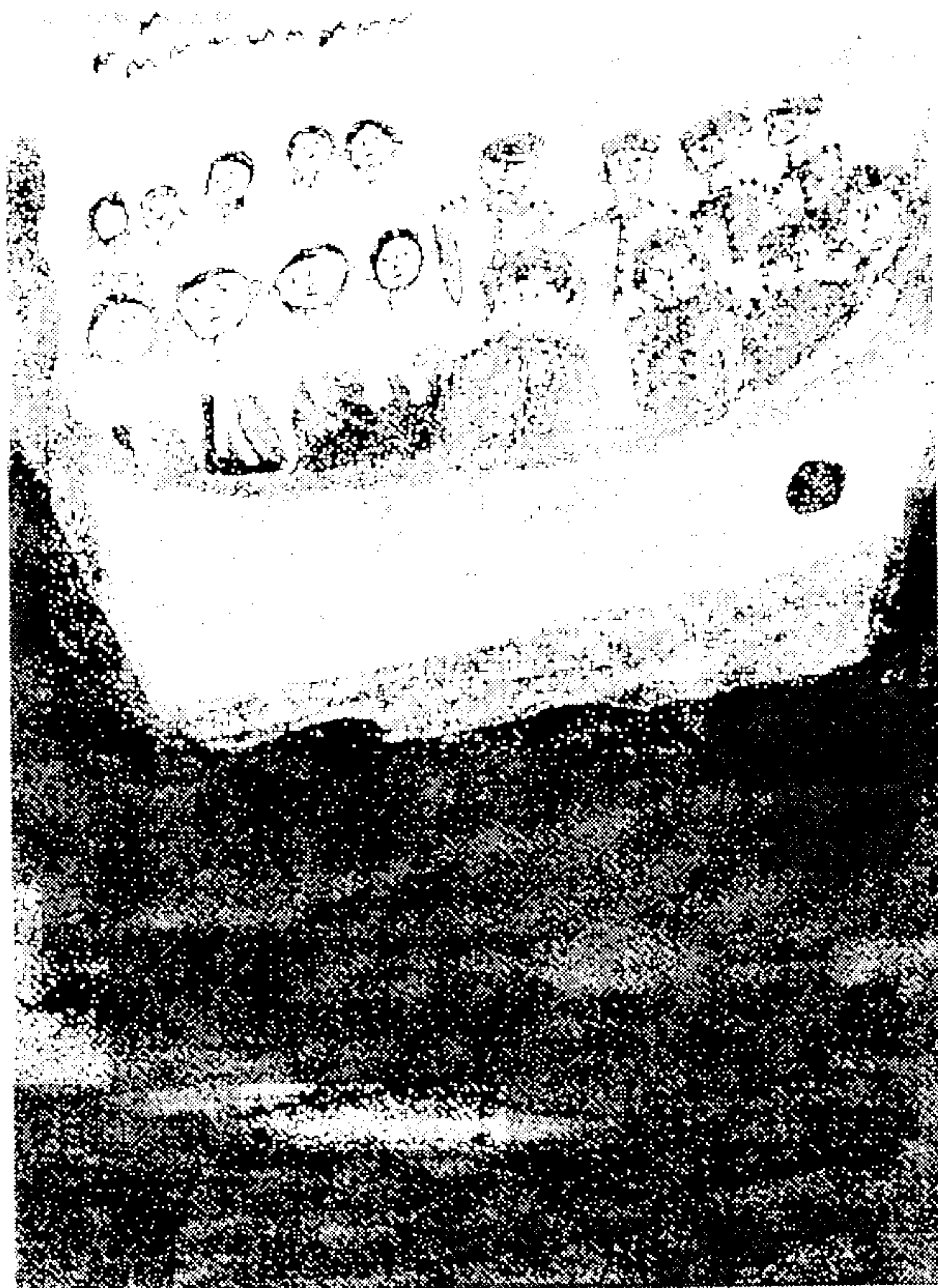


Figure 66. Kim Sunduk, *In The Boat Being Coerced*, 7 Nov. 1996. Water Color. c. The Museum of Sexual Slavery, Kwangju



Figure 67. Kim Sunduk, Then, In The Place 2, 15. Feb, 1995. Water Color. c. The Museum of Sexual Slavery, Kwangju



Figure 68. Kim Sunduk, Unblossomed Flower, 15. Apr. 1995. Water Color. c. The Museum of Sexual Slavery, Kwangju

“This is the way I have lived, in the course of my life, I have done all this ”<sup>82</sup>

However, these serene paintings clearly gain a critical effect due to the events in its own way since this affects the viewer in the ways in which the innocence and serenity of her childhood depicted here make such a contrast to the times she went through later.

Kim’s other group of paintings present her memory of her abduction and violation. ‘Dragged’(1995)<sup>83</sup> is also a serene and innocent depiction but she renders her situation in a symbolically explanatory way. A girl (Kim herself) is frightened and she is being dragged away by the arm. The background is deep blue as if it is sea, her body is dragged into it out of her land. A group of white sea birds are flying in the sky. Kim says, “This is Korea. I was dragged out of it.”<sup>84</sup> The flowers are Mugungwha[the national flower of Korea]. I was 17 year old.”<sup>85</sup>

‘In The Boat Being Coerced’<sup>86</sup>(7 Nov, 1996) is a visual testimony of the situation in which she was taken. Future Korean scholars could verify the women’s testimonies about the Japanese military involvement once again through this painting. Taken out of her pictorial memory, she depicts the scene that she was taken to somewhere with so many other young Korean girls as their white and black dress shows by Japanese soldiers. Kim adds on this painting, “There are three women in the boat. One of them is me. I asked two of my friends to go with me. I tempted them by saying ‘become a nurse and earn good money to send home’. I still feel deep pain thinking about them.”

In the painting, ‘Then, In That Place 2’<sup>87</sup>(1995, 15. Feb), she revealed the unforgettable moment when she was raped and violated on her arrival in China. She says of this painting, “Somebody [in the exhibition] asked me why the soldiers look

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<sup>82</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), *ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>83</sup> See Figure 65. Kim Sunduk, *Dragged*, 1995

<sup>84</sup> She was deceived by the co-operator with the Japanese military who told her to go to Japan as a nurse but finally she was taken to the Comfort House in Shanghai, China

<sup>85</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), *ibid.*,

<sup>86</sup> See Figure 66. Kim Sunduk, *In The Boat Being Coerced*, 1996

<sup>87</sup> See Figure 67. Kim Sunduk. *Then, In That Place 2*, 1996

disabled with strangely shaped legs. Well, I am answered I probably not a good artist but [...] they did not look like a human being for me but a beast or a ghost who came to eat me up.”

‘Unblossomed Flower’\*<sup>88</sup>(15 April. 1995) is Kim’s self-portrait. She found an abandoned decorative screen where balsam flowers are embroidered. She brought it back home. She initially wanted to restore it but then found the cost was too great. Then she brought it back to the place where she found it. But then she kept thinking about it, she went there again and took it and decided to use it for her painting. She found that the letters embroidered in the left corner of the screen mean the ‘flower of infinity’. She integrated her portrait leaving the flowers as they are. She was thinking of a title. She was wondering if she wanted “trampled flower”, or “unblossomed flower,” thinking about herself. Then she asked the opinion of Kim Youngjin. Kim said she prefers the latter since “trampled” suggests that the flower is forever dead but the “unblossomed” implies that there is hope in the future. Recalling this, Kim added, “when I was young, the Japanese uprooted and pulled off so many balsams, but they always came out and grew again.”<sup>89</sup>

Paintings of Kim serve not only her self-redress but, as the women themselves are increasingly aware, they form testimonies which complement her oral testimony. Jun Wonchul asked Kim, “how do you resolve and express your *han*? Kang made a lot of pictures to express hers but you do not do much?” Kim replies, “I did not express much through the picture but I think it all the time inside. The dead are dead but I think there should not be such ordeals again in the future. I’m not afraid of death now. The reason why I paint and leave them behind me is to not let such things happen again to the next generation. That’s reason why we ask them to build the commemorative tomb stone for the women who died, to correct their history text books, to apologise and to compensate...”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> See Figure 68. Kim Sunduk, Unblossomed Flower, 1995

<sup>89</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), *ibid.*, p10

<sup>90</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), *ibid.*, p13

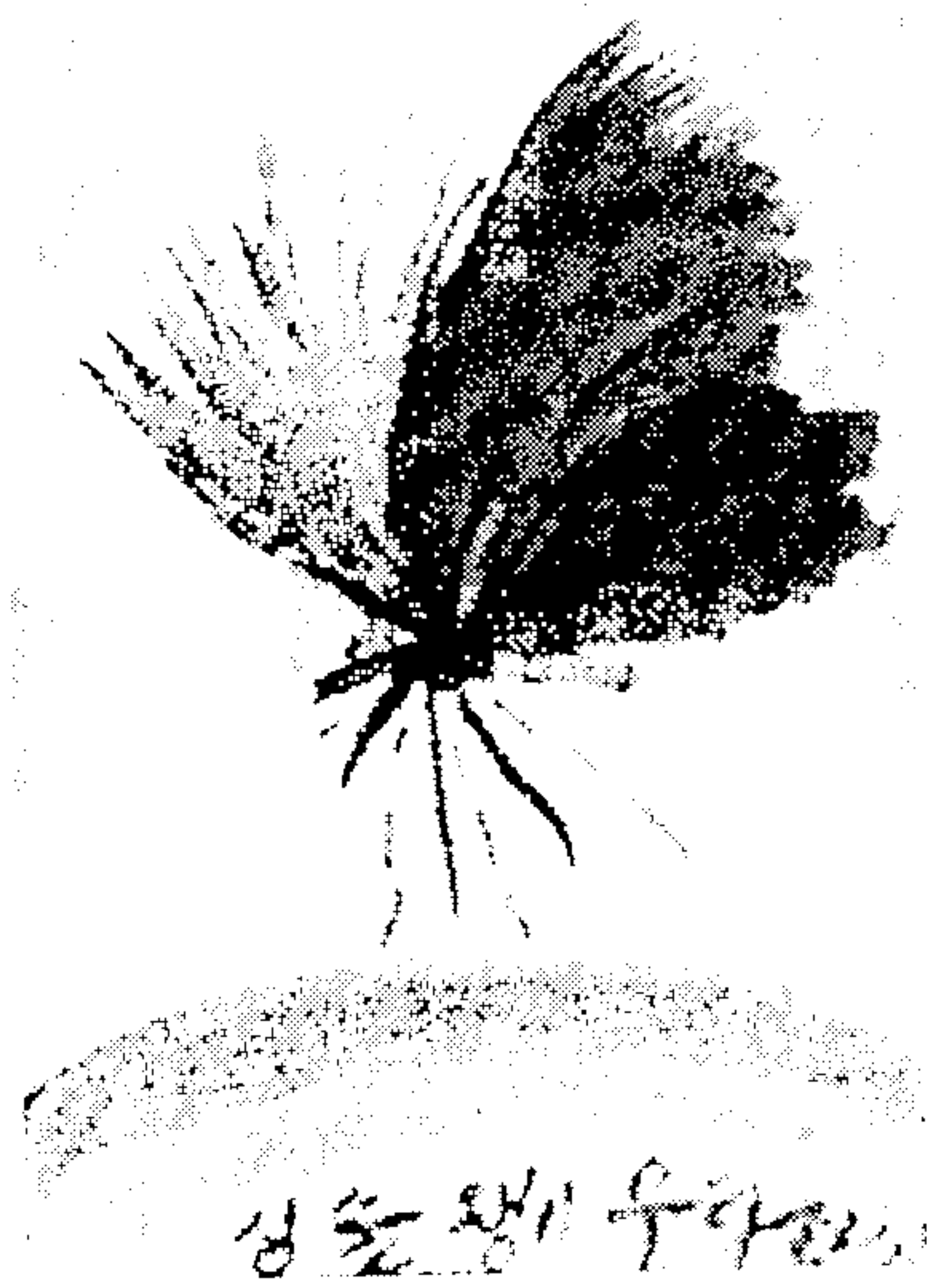


Figure 69. Kang Dukkyung, Annoying My Teacher, 1993. c. Chunan Independent Museum, Chunan

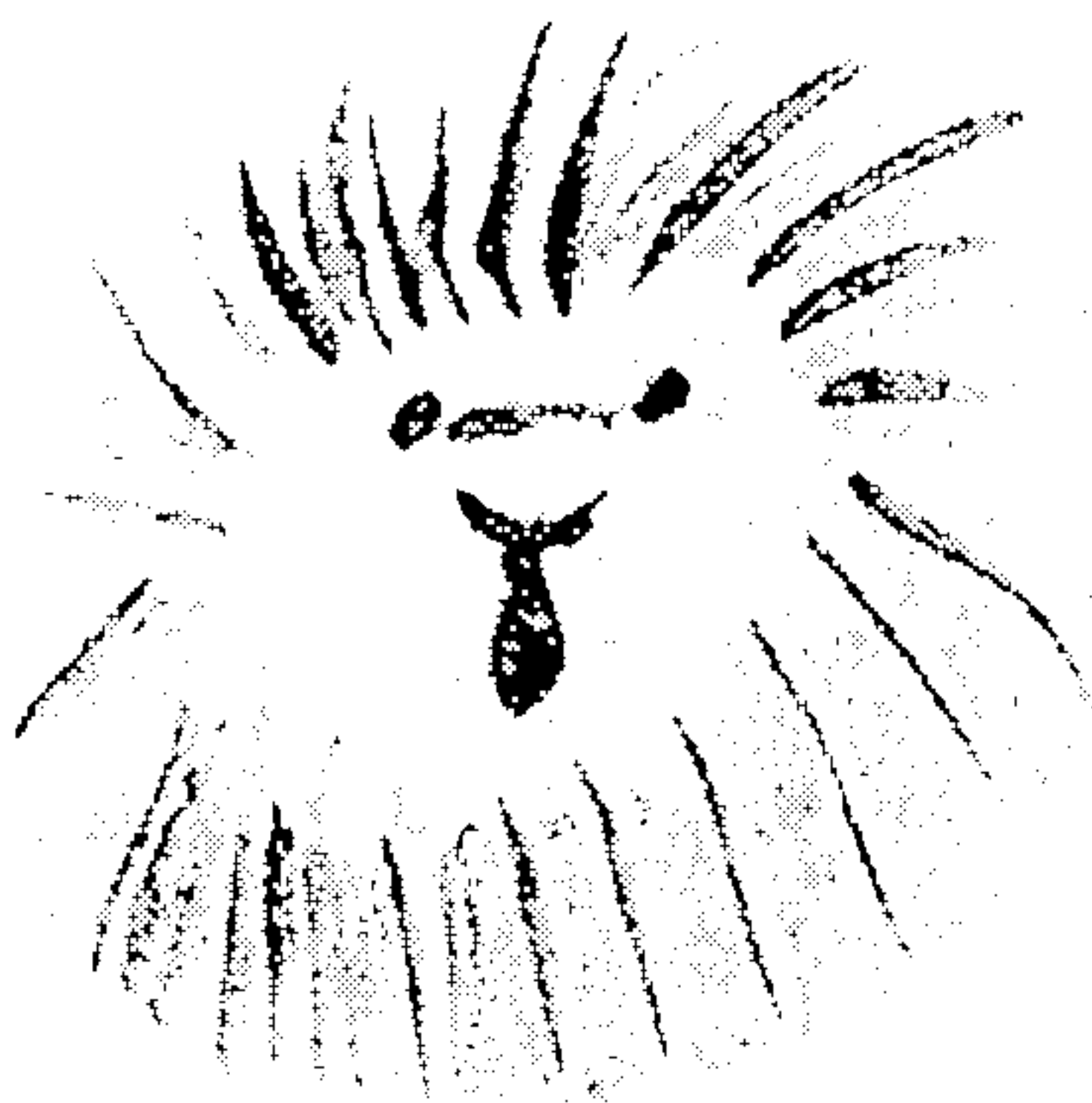


Figure 70. Kang Dukkyung, Blood Boiling Over-Puppy, 19.Oct. 1993. Water Color. c. Chunan Independent Museum, Chunan



Figure 71. Kang Dukkyung, Nightmare, 16. Feb. 1995. Water Color. c. Chunan Independent Museum, Chunan

Kang Dukyung's paintings are produced in her quite different predisposition and aspirations to Kim. In short, she is more outrageous and direct in her expression of antagonism against the one who made her suffer and yet does not recognize his responsibility. Unlike Kim's modification of her emotions, Kang expresses her anger and her vengeance. She boldly stages the most traumatic scene entrenched with full of horrific emotion through her paintings. Kim Sunduk remarks that Kang's approach to painting is "strong" and "aggressive" whilst hers is "calm" and "serene". "She was not afraid of the consequences. She was very direct. I guess it is because she does not have children like me."<sup>91</sup> Kim's remarks are interesting since they indirectly reveal the fact that she had rationally modified her works since she is afraid of displaying her anger and vengeance towards the assaulter due to her concern that they may harm her beloved ones even today. Kim expresses her concerns about Kang's directness, recollecting the incidents during their visit to Japan to exhibit their paintings. Japanese right-wing figures called and threatened to burn all the paintings. She said, "I was worried they might harm my family."

'Art Class' video shows the uncompromising nature of Kang Dukkyung, who displays her strong individuality rather than consenting to use the setting provided for her during the class. For example, when Kim Youngjin and Lee Kyungsin introduced the range of color they have to the women in the class, Kang Dukkyung said, "I cannot find the color I like here". This interestingly marks Kang's reaction to the limit of the technical Other-the color- for her expressive needs. In the class, as Lee Kyungsin and Kim Sunduk both agree, Kang soon proved to be very good at painting. She learnt the possibility of the medium quickly but not without resistance to the teacher who changed the date of class without discussing with her and other grannies. Kang made a painting called, 'Annoying My Teacher'(1993)\*<sup>92</sup> about which she says "here I am angry toward my teacher".

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<sup>91</sup>The conversation with me, during my stay in the House of Sharing, 26-30, July, 2000.

<sup>92</sup> See Figure 69. Kang Dukkyung, Annoying My Teacher, 1993

A group of Kang's paintings show her state of emotion in an expressive and metaphoric way as being produced as an outcome of the work to release repressed emotions. 'Blood Boiling Over-Puppy'(19. Oct. 1993)\*<sup>93</sup> is one in which she projects herself as a vulnerable puppy, trembling with anger depicted through sharp, abstract and expressive lines of red strokes. She talks about this painting with Byun in 'Murmuring'. Kang says, "this is a picture I made when I am angry as if my blood is boiling over." 'Nightmare'\*<sup>94</sup>(16. Feb.1995) is another work of such kind. Kim Sunduk recalls, "Dukkyung painted her suffering, the nightmare [...]every night like this[...]being drowned in the whirled sea."

'Lost Virginitv'\*<sup>95</sup> (1995) is a striking picture that depicts the day Kang was first raped and violated by the soldiers. In the film, 'Murmuring', Byun's camera is with Kang Dukkyung in her room in House of Sharing at late night. Kang shows this to Byun explaining that this is the imagery which recur and trigger her every night. Kang says, "This is the Comfort House. These are the soldiers...and there were three pine trees. ...This is the terrain of Asia occupied by them...in short, they are Asian people. And these are the women who committed suicide." Byun asks, "Dead women?" Kang replies, "the dead women were virgins."<sup>96</sup> "They become birds and fly everywhere alone. I painted it as I think about this every night." Kim Sunduk recalls of this painting, "Dukkyung painted the day she was first raped under the tree. The skull in the bottom represents the dead Korean girls. And she meant the Sakura[Cherry Blossom Trees] prosper by sucking the blood of the girls."<sup>97</sup>

Kang also made paintings of the comfort houses. They have a beauty which is entrenched in sadness and a strong element of standing witness. 'Lepaul Comfort

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<sup>93</sup> See Figure 70. Kang Dukkyung, Blood Boiling Over-Puppy, 1993

<sup>94</sup> See Figure 71. Kang Dukkyung, Nightmare, 1995

<sup>95</sup> See Figure 3. Kang Dukkyung, Lost Virginitv, 1995

<sup>96</sup> The women in the comfort House were brought there as virgins. Japan wanted a "pure" virgin women than professional prostitute or married women since weary of their soldier will be affected by a sexually transmitted disease. Many of such women committed suicide since they could not stand the shame and the abuse. There is no official statistics but it is commonly reported by the survivor's testimony.

<sup>97</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), *ibid.*, p.7



Figure 72. Kang Dukkyung, Lepaul Comfort House, 1995. c. Chunan Independent Museum, Chunan



Figure 73. Kang Dukkyung, Matssiro Comfort House(The comfort house I used to live), 8 Nov. 1996. Water Color. c. Chunan Independent Museum, Chunan





Figure 74. Kang Dukkyung, Punish The Responsible Ones, 1995. Water Color. c.  
Chunan Independent Museum, Chunan

House'(1995)\*<sup>98</sup> two young women sit on the steps of a huge station- like Comfort House. Soldiers are approaching them and the house from a distance. The surroundings are as she remembers, surrounded by the tropical vegetation of South Asia where Kang was taken to and enslaved. 'Matssiro Comfort House'(8, November, 1996)\*<sup>99</sup> is another one. She depicts the comfort house and the leafy scenery around the house with mountains in the back ground. Kang's imaginary screen is added to the roof of the comfort house. A red round moon is floating where a young Korean woman encounters a white bird. Kim says "this is Kang's wish that one day they [Japan] will apologise and compensate like the way in which a bird delivers news and peace." <sup>100</sup>

'Punish The Responsible Ones'(1995)\*<sup>101</sup> is the representative work of Kang about her trauma, in which she displays her eruptive inner emotion which was stifled with anger and vengeful feelings towards Japan. This painting was made four years after the women first demanded resolution. Kim Sunduk recalls "this is the first work in which Kang reveals her mind long after she was merely sketching other things. The Japanese emperor was bound to the tree and [the victim women] point the gun at him. Birds symbolize peace. It means the emperor should be responsible for peace." <sup>102</sup>

'Apologise Before Me'(1995)\*<sup>103</sup> is the most aggressive work among Kang's paintings. A young Korean woman, probably herself, wearing black *Chima* and white *Geogori*<sup>104</sup> stabs a knife at *Hinomaru*. *Hinomaru* symbolized the emperor, the war, the violence she had suffered from. Kim Sunduk comments on this work with her great concern for directness. She says she feels most worried about this painting among Kang's paintings. Kim says, "I do not want to make paintings like this. You

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<sup>98</sup> See Figure 72. Kang Dukkyung, Lapaul Comfort House, 1995

<sup>99</sup> See Figure 73. Kang Dukkyung, Matssiro Comfort House, 1996

<sup>100</sup> Hino Sunzo et al ed. Kangmulchiorum tr., Ibid., p.14

<sup>101</sup> See Figure 74. Kang Dukkyung, Punish The Responsible Ones, 1995

<sup>102</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), ibid., p.7

<sup>103</sup> See Figure 75. Kang Dukkyung, Apologise Before Me, 1995

<sup>104</sup> the traditional woman's costume in Korea

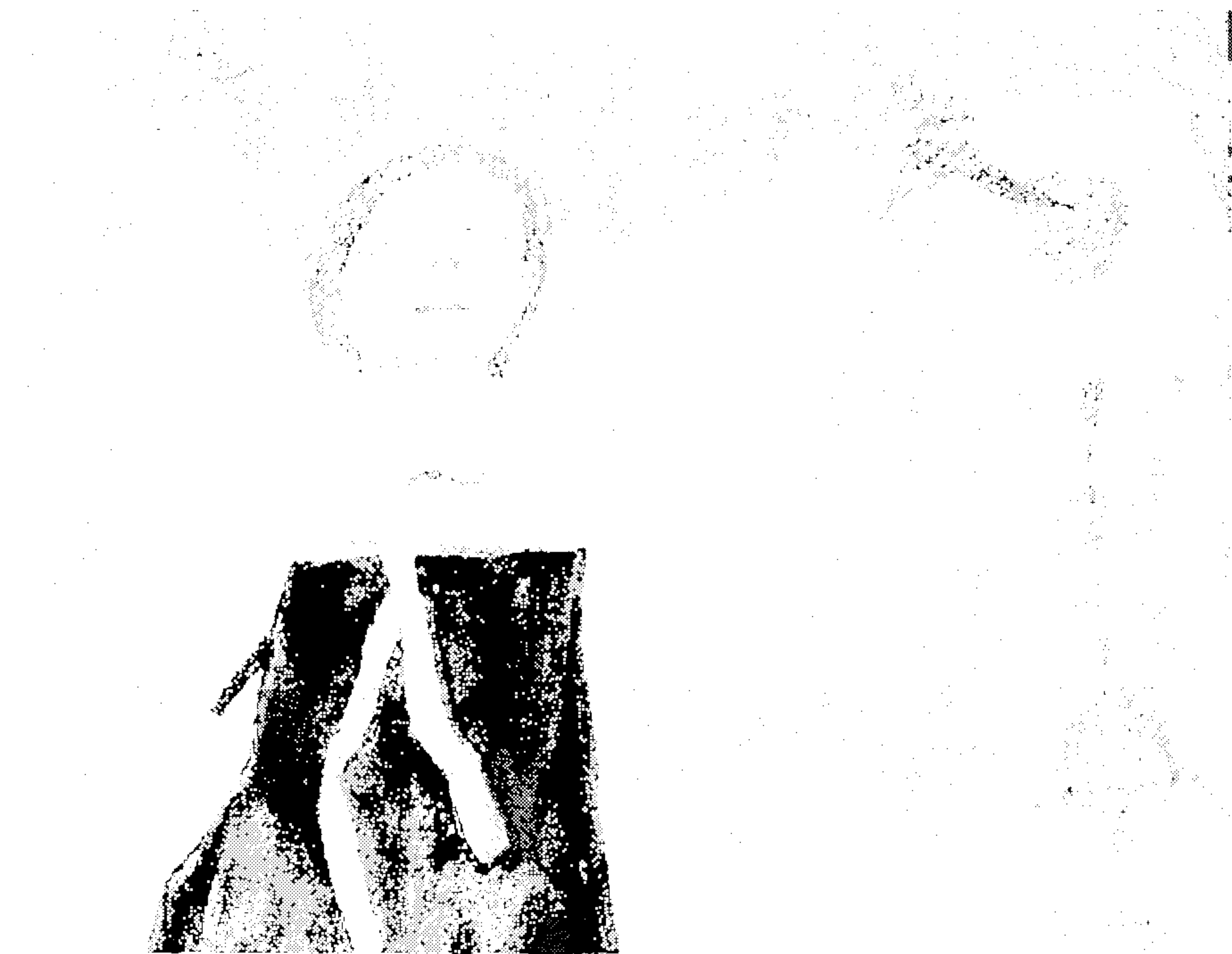


Figure 75. Kang Dukkyung, Apologise Before Me, 1995. Water Color. c. Chunan Independent Museum, Chunan



Figure 77. Lee Yongnye, Cheongchun(My Youth),1993. Water Color. c. The Museum of Sexual Slavery, Kwangju(from the Video, Art Class)

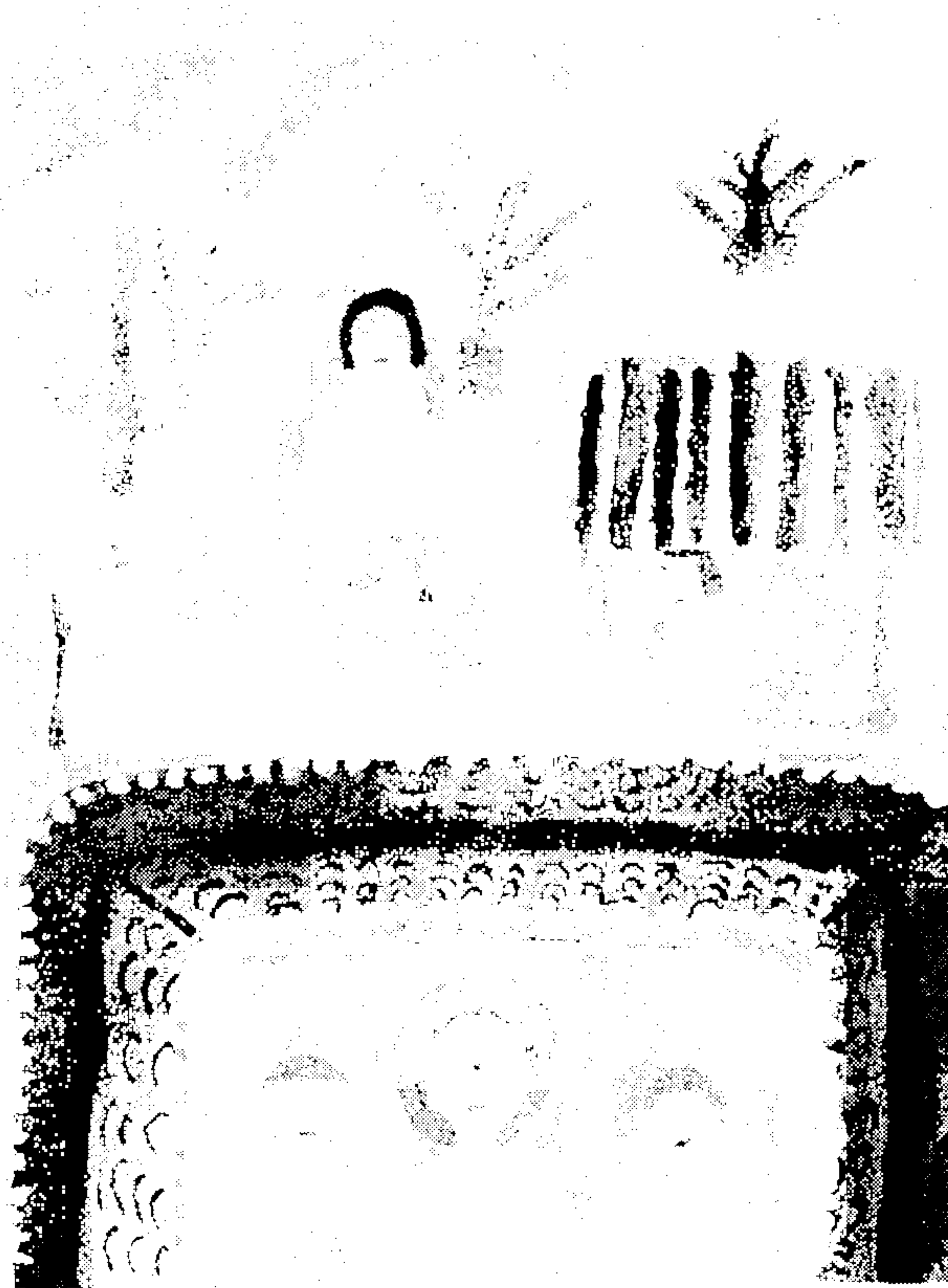


Figure 78. Lee Yongnye, Bathing Virgins, 4 Aug. 1995. . Water Color. c. The Museum of Sexual Slavery, Kwangju

should be responsible. Imagine a woman of an other country doing the same to the Korean flag?”<sup>105</sup>

Lee Yongnye did not leave many paintings.<sup>106</sup> As shown in Art Class Video, her attitude in the art class was a very unstable and vacillating one. She one time said with doubt and resistance, “why should I draw these things?” and also “We mustn’t say what I want to say.” But then she changes her attitude, “But.. no I must say [what I want to say].” One of most striking pictures among those the women produced is her painting-more of drawing-of a bleeding vagina which she named *Chungchun* (my youth).<sup>107</sup> She says, in Art Class video, “This is my life..the women used to be bleeding a lot....see .. this is bleeding womb”. Her ‘Bathing Virgins’(4 August, 1995)\*<sup>108</sup> is a work which has a strong element of testimony on the Comfort Houses she was taken to. Lee was also deceived and taken on board in a boat with many other young Korean women. She was taken to a Comfort House, which she later found was in Burma. She painted her memory of the place where there is a temple and tropical vegetation. The young women were bathing in a washing facility next to the temple whilst a Japanese soldier observes them with a gun.

The painting has been the medium through which the repressed memories, feeling and wishes for Kim Sunduk, Kang Dukkyung and Lee Yongnye have been reactivated. Through the paintings, they have engaged more thoroughly with their inner time, helping their individual psychic cure and rehabilitation while materialising their mental conflict and turbulence caught in an unforgettable past, transient present and unforeseen future. And they also have become a visual testimony which complements the oral testimony.

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<sup>105</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), *ibid.*, p7

<sup>106</sup> Only six paintings are recorded and kept in House of Sharing.

<sup>107</sup> See Figure 77. Lee Yongnye, *Chungchun*, 1993

<sup>108</sup> See Figure 78. Lee Yongnye, *Bathing Virgins*, 1995

Kim Sunduk often recalls that she could not draw and paint without any help from Lee. She says it was Lee who encouraged her and made her continue without expecting her support. The paintings of the women in the Lee Kyungsin's art workshop are the product of the transference between the women and this young artist where Lee becomes the trusted, significant Other for them to share their deep emotions with. One may say that these paintings are the products of the pure subjectivity of them free from the intervention of the others, comparably to its counterpart, the film the production process of which can be subject to the desire of appropriation of one who edits. But the women's paintings are not the products of such a pure subjectivity. As Kim says without the effort of the Lee Kyungsin the paintings could not have been produced, one can say better, the paintings are the products of the trust, and love, that is the basis of the transference between the others. This relationship mutually accomplishes and engenders the incorporation of ghosts of the Other in the minds of the victim women and that of Lee Kyungsin.

These paintings have become the appealing and informative expressions of these historical victims which have shocked and moved both the older and younger generation, in Korea and Japan. Painting has been a reminder of the scale of the devastation and suffering in the past and the present which were beyond intellectualization and language.

A twenty-year old Japanese viewer from Tokyo wrote, "I became sad because the title of the picture sounds too serene. I think the red of the Hinomaru is the color imbued with blood. To overcome the grievance, anger, and *han* of many people and how to compensate the guilt of Japan in the past is, I think, is the responsibility of our young."<sup>109</sup> A Korean viewer wrote, "*Jongsindae*[laborer for the emperor's war], *Yyuanbu*[comfort women]..., I [I thought] knew that but did not feel much except a

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<sup>109</sup> Hino Sunzo et al ed. KangmulChirum tr., *Confessing to the Balsam: Meeting between Painting Exhibition of The Victims of 'Military Comfort Women' and Japanese Citizens'*, Kipeynjaju (Deep Freedom), Seoul, 2000, p.52. This book is based upon the translation of Hino Sunzo et al., *The Grannies of Painting Exhibitions et. al., Paintings of Grannies*, Nashinoki-sha, Tokyo, 1999. This book collects 2000 notes from the Japanese public who saw the exhibition. It went on tour in 10 Japanese cities between September 1997 to September 1998. This also collects the notes of the guest book from the Korean public who visited the House of Sharing and Museum of Sexual slavery where the paintings are exhibited. Between September 1998 to July 2000

hint of anger only through words. I realized how wrong I was not to have known[properly] and felt it together.[...]looking at paintings red like blood, I could feel how much suffering they have endured. Anger, grief, and exhausted *han*, the color contains such emotions. I wish the Japanese government would apologise and compensate them as soon as possible so that the grannies can get an emotional redress”.<sup>110</sup> Monk Hejin also added, “the grannies’ paintings are powerful and appealing. I know it is not easy thing to do, revealing such wounds of the past. Furthermore, it was when there was a social gaze which saw the ‘comfort women’ in a negative light. Then, if they had thought this is only their matter, they could have just buried them. But through painting, they had learnt to see the wider context of the situation while objectifying themselves. That is the reason why so many people were moved by the paintings which then could become a power to change the world.”<sup>111</sup>

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What I term the pragmatics of representation traces the origin of the visuality of the Nazen Moksori 1 2 and the paintings in the grain of the relationship between the artists and the subaltern women and the transference, which evolves and emerges through ‘process’ of the filming making and the workshop. The participating subjects transfer into the technological possibility of film and painting. The desire for the representation of both the intellectual subject and subaltern subject is equally chained and negotiated in these medium. The film and painting become the sites where desire and the *informe* experiences converge, rather than a descriptive and explanatory flat surface.

The theoretical model of the pragmatics of representation sets in the “interactive” and “communicative” context and ground between the intellectual and the subaltern who are equally in “need” of the other to fulfill their desires. Lacan depicts it as the relationship between psychoanalyst and his/her analysand. The artists and

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<sup>110</sup> Hino Sunzo et al ed., KangmulChirum tr., *ibid.*, P124

<sup>111</sup> House of Sharing document ( 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2000), *ibid.*, p.6

intellectuals are the ones who want to cure the other and know their truth. The subaltern women are the ones who wish to be known and cured. The fragmented signification and unsublimated symptoms in the film's visuality are obtained at the conjuncture of continual negotiation between these two desiring subjects. That is to say, the subjectivity of 'I' (of the artist and the intellectual), 'you' (the other, the subaltern other, the women) and in reversed perspective, that of 'I' (of the subaltern, the women) and "you"(of the intellects and artists) are endlessly negotiated. It is also a negotiation of their power, as they are endowed in differential power in the world of representation and truth in distance.

The negotiated relationship and desire between the women and artists are incorporated, mediated, and manifested through the illusion of the technological Other. One fantasizes the alterity of the other in relationship to the site of the signifier which Lacan called the site of the Other. The transference of the individual subjects to the technological Other is part of a primary function that orients one to fulfill one's need to be itself in the space of the Other. Borrowed from the expression of Lacan, it is "to associate a signifier in so far as the experience is instituted with the cut that may be made in the organic organism of a need."<sup>112</sup> In this association, the fantasy is central. The visualizing practice mediate Byun and women's fantasy who try to deal with the "gap" or "cut" which determine their non-communicativity and silence out of her need, located in the prime cut of history of modern Korea.

In the pragmatic scene of the "representation", the artists and women together engage in the game, *fort da* (hither and thither) which is the compelling and purposeful play of transference in relationship with this technological Other: it is highly likely that efforts of Byun and Lee and the women are to be perceived, conversed, and evaluated through these products. This game evolved through transforming the potential of the technological means while engendering the enactment of the women's repressed mind and self-affirmative performance. After

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<sup>112</sup> Lacan, *ibid.* p.237



Byun and Lee approached to the women with the technology such as film and painting, the women gradually internalized the technology and began to desire to speak and perform through them. The camera and painting are seen as a fantasmatic tool for the recognition in which they become active users rather than a passive object. Byun and Lee's pragmatics of transference witness the 'representation' which functions to pose a question (rather than giving an answer) in public where there is no guarantee of the self-knowing subject and of certainty and the transparency of the other, but which is provided by the intersubjective realm of listening, speaking, learning, and revealing at the heart of ambiguity which is filled with desire of long lost ones and the empathic ones for their place in history. *Nazen Moksori* and the paintings materialise the question on the status quo the women lives reveal and disseminated them. *Nazen Moksori 1 and 2* have been screened within Korea and in Japan, US, Germany, France and the paintings have also been exhibited in numerous cities in Korea and internationally. This makes the viewers in different location and circumstances revisit the present we live and demand a serious consideration of what to do with these matters.

## Chapter 6

### The Work of Memory and Progress

*Enlightenment must examine itself, if men are not to be wholly betrayed.*<sup>1</sup>

Progress in history has set the memory of negativity as its antithesis. The historical progression that is underpinned by the omnipotent idea of economic progress has radically configured our world today, and reassured its postulate by repressing the representation of its negative consequences. However, the discussion of the effects of such an idea of 'progress' has not been foregrounded as much as it should have in postcolonial studies, in terms of regarding the excessive symptoms of the stagnation of political and cultural democracy that penetrates the postcolonial developing nations today.

The popular *Minjoong* insurgence in South Korea in the 1980s and 1990s challenged the technocrats who drove the entire nation into their relentless project of economic progress. It then evolved by attaining a different notion of 'progress', while taking account of the nation's unacknowledged sites of negative memories of the repressed and alienated people, the *Minjoong*. As I have discussed earlier, in the 1980s the expressions of negativity – by which I mean that grievances and discontents – were a taboo in Korean society. The population was heavily intoxicated by the omnipotent social imperative of self-sacrifice and conformity to the national project for the economic growth. The individual *minjoong* were forced to internalize a collective dream of Korea becoming a fast growing industrial and technological utopia in the future. 'Happiness' and a 'sense of victory' regarding its rapidly achieved economic success were the only emotions allowed to be expressed in public. Any discontented, individual voices against this norm were regarded as being associated with anti-progress, regressive, and subversive. But through this

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<sup>1</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W, Adorno, John Cumming, tr., *Dialectic Of Enlightenment*, Allen Lane, 1973 (the original book was published in New York in 1944) , p15

*Minjoong* movement, a huge number of Koreans, who were previously repressed under this self-oblivious and repressive sociality, elected themselves as the historical agents by demanding a change, and subverting society's taboos.

The contesting drive of the 'other' progress to that of economic progress was informed by these dissident people who arose in this new space of resistance. However, it has been less discussed theme that the problem of the representation of the voices and visions of these insurgent people by the intellectuals during the period, especially, by the vanguard Marxist intellectuals, who took up the role of "representing" the people. Despite their significant role to sustain the movement by giving the weight to the voices of antagonized people, they problematically projected their optimistic or utopian vision of the revolution to the *minjoong*. I earlier called this "politics of sublimation". That is to say, as for 'minjoong subjectivity', the intellectuals put forward the notion of the revolutionary subject who leaps into history at once by absorbing a revolutionary ideology. As for the prevalent idea of 'progress' among the vanguard Marxist intellectuals in the 1980s and 1990s was isomorphic to the materially defined notion of 'progress' that the modern technocrats endorsed and that the *minjoong* very much wished to dismantle. As I will show later, it is due to the fact that the leftist intellectuals uncritically subscribed to the Marxist idea of linear history (progress) defined by the historical materialism. This consequently failed them to contemplate the alternative notion of progress brought out by the *minjoong*.

In this chapter, I firstly introduce the critiques of Enlightenment and progress proposed by the intellectuals of Frankfurt school and other contemporary thinkers in the West. For instance, through the dialectics of enlightenment, the critical theorists attempted the critique of negativity in an industrialising modern world by studying its implications for the context of regression in humanity and history. This also constitutes an effective critique of mechanical Marxism, which was in danger, as Walter Benjamin put it, by its "vulgar materialism". Their contention is useful to discuss how the alternative notion of history/progress has emerged in Korea, where

the memory of the negativity became the forces of new history. To highlight this point, I also introduce the discussions of contemporary critics, Arthur M. Melzer et al who propose an alternative concept of progress by taking account of the notion of interminable struggle for human progress as opposed to historical progress.

Secondly, I critically examine what were the limits of Korean Marxist critics in representing the different vision and drives of the *minjoong* for the progress. I point out how the critics' vision of politics of sublimations, conveyed in the ideas of the revolutionary subject and the linear progress of history, allowed little scope for understanding the methods of de-sublimation and alteration and vision of non-linear history that *minjoong* brought out. The Marxist critics consequently failed to grasp the *minjoong* ethos of progress and their value which did not dissolve the dialectics of memory and history but rather united them.

On this note, finally, I attempt an alternative reading of the *minjoong* ethos of progress as the *minjoong* realist artists of the 1980s better materialised through their works. The artists visualized the ethico-aesthetic-visionary politics which underlie the *minjoong* movement, by incorporating the dimensions of 'negative diagnosis', 'cure' for the present and 'communicative and reciprocal community' of the repressed for the future. I explain this dimension in the terms of a vernacular philosophical ideal, *Haewon*, which translates as the resolution of anxiety and *Sangsaeng*, which means co-habitation or the state of 'reciprocal-life' between living beings, which has yet to come, as they are captured in some visual works produced 1980s and early 1990s.

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A modern history that is heavily intoxicated by the idea of material progress produces a realm of negativity in society. From the early of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the intellectuals of Frankfurt School embarked on a study of the negative consequences of an industrializing, progress-driven modern world. This work promoted the development of a free and self-determining society by dispelling the illusion of

ideology.<sup>2</sup> For example, in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno, discussed how modern history was developing barbarity and regression, resulting in the ‘self-oblivious’ production of negativity in society. They witnessed the fall of modern men in this state. They attributed the cause of increasing regressive aspects of society to modern man’s unexamined obsession with the related ideas of Enlightenment and progress, which prioritized the degree of man’s “domination of nature” above all.<sup>3</sup> Observing the paradoxical outcome of such a history, they stated that “progress becomes regression”.<sup>4</sup>

According to them, modern man is characterised by his desire to master nature and this is linked to his obsession with the growth of economic productivity. In order to be able to master nature, men invent “apparatus”. A small group of technocrats emerge who control this apparatus and attain its mastery by making the rest of society yield to this apparatus. ‘Negativity’ is characterized by men’s subjugation to this technical apparatus of the social institution they invented. This “growth furnishes the conditions for a world of greater justice, but the technical apparatus and the social groups which administer it grow with a disproportionate superiority to the rest of the population”, which is deeply regressive.<sup>5</sup> It is a state where “the individual is wholly devalued in relation to economic power” and “the fall of modern men” at the height of historical progress is observed.<sup>6</sup> Through this study, Horkheimer and Adorno successfully warned that an obsession with the idea of ‘progress’ can result in anti-democratic features within society. ‘Progress’ has been an over-coded monstrous ideology in the modern era. If the self-destructive forces of progress are unexamined, the idea eventually turns the promise of possibility into destruction and impossibility.

The situation that the Korean *minjoong* felt from the 1970s and through the 1980s was the unease regression (than progress) of their humanity and impossibility while

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<sup>2</sup> David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, 2000. p 75

<sup>3</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *ibid.*, p.15

<sup>5</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *ibid.*., p 14

<sup>6</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *ibid.*., p 14

the social agents of 'national economic growth' and 'integration' would ruthlessly push the population to their end and despite of its human cost. The *minjoong* increasingly felt that they were wholly betrayed by their hopes and the promises they were given by the society they served. A member of Frankfurt School, Walter Benjamin also contributed his thoughts on the antinomies of progress which grows into a destructive negativity within its own procession. In his celebrated essay, 'The Theses on the Philosophy of History', he writes:

Our consideration proceeds from the insight that the politicians' stubborn faith in progress, their confidence in their 'mass basis' and, finally their servile integration in an uncontrollable apparatus have been three aspects of the same thing. It seeks to convey an idea of the high price our accustomed thinking will have to pay for a conception of history that avoids any complicity with the thinking to which these politicians continue to adhere.<sup>7</sup>

Contemporary apologists of the 'idea of history' and the notion of progress have echoed the concerns of these critical theorists in taking account of the world after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Many are concerned that the world now is fraught with tension between the neo-conservative logic of progress as exemplified by Fukuyama's voice in his infamous article, 'The End of History?'<sup>8</sup> and its discontents. Fukuyama's article is saturated in the sense of the triumph of one history, the world as led by the US-style liberal democratic model. He argues that history, and therefore in his terms, progress, has come to an end, to the point where the success of liberal democracy proves its superiority over others, in particular, communism, its long-time opponent. He sees that progress in history has been achieved here and has therefore ended. Fukuyama implicitly suggests that any discontented voice against the procession of this superior economic and political model should be discredited. Arthur M. Melzer et al wrote in the introduction in *History and The Idea of Progress* (1995) that this book was a response to the recent

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<sup>7</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Thesis On the Philosophy of History(1950)" in *Illuminations*, Pimlico, 1999, p 250

<sup>8</sup> Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History", in *National Interest*, Summer, 1989

debate on the 'idea of history' that has been fired by Fukuyama.<sup>9</sup> They point out that Fukuyama's idea of progress that is conveyed in the excessive tones of western triumphalism provoked many questions on what constitutes such progress. They problematise the fact that his idea of history is expounded on a notion of the "linear progress" which disregards the scene of "histories" where the drives and struggles for "human progress" continue to flourish. In this regard, they pose questions such as: is liberal democracy triumphant because it answers the human drive for justice and happiness? Or is it the best practical answer? Or more generally, whether one must distinguish between the radical doctrines of history found in Hegel or Marx, the proponents of the notion of the linear progression of history, and other traditions that use progress in limited terms, that is, as a possibility but not a necessity; hence, that it does not remove responsibility from human actors, nor does it promise an end to history. They continue to ask if liberal democracy does represent some kind of peak or culmination, it is still important to ask, is progress the result of the "historical process" or of an uncertain and endless struggle for "human progress?"<sup>10</sup>

The prevalent idea of progress in the world today still appears to be tied to the same problematic notion of progress provided by the tradition of Enlightenment. It accompanies the notion of linear history as associated with narrowly defined materialist belief and promise. In the Korean experience of modernity, the logic of economic productivity and the conformity of the individual to the social apparatus are inseparable which then perpetuates the binary between economy or democracy (which means democratic civil society that observes human values, such as social equality, human rights, individual freedoms and so on). Fukuyama's logic attributes progress to an outcome of a single economic social model rather than the accomplishments of individual emancipation and the collective attributes that those achievements would have for a society. The logic dangerously lends its uncritical license to the power of a technocratic institution which demands that individuals submit to its operation, by imposing the belief that this submission is the only valid

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<sup>9</sup> Arthur M. Melzer et. al. ed., *History and the Idea of Progress*, Connell University Press, 1995, p 3

<sup>10</sup> Arthur M Melzer et., al., *ibid.*, pp 2-3

action for progress. The individual who is involved in an antagonist relationship is deemed to be regarded as inadequate. The discussions of the relationship between the historical progress and the autonomy of individual are simplified.

On that note, Arthur M. Melzer et al bring out an interesting study on a different notion of progress, looking away from the predominant econo-centric model and the linear progression of history. They suggest that progress may not be thought as a singular ideal, which compels us to achieve it at all human costs. But rather, progress can be thought of as a process where individuals and social groups seek and struggle for themselves, for their own terms of human progress. This alternative idea views progress from the perspective of an interminable and endless struggle of the human individual for their self-referential progress: where the “end” of history is an impossible affair.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Korean *minjoong* struggled for their terms of human progress and this emerged out of their criticism on the technocrat who insisted the devotion to national economic progress - which was suggested as a way to bring happiness for all. Away from the Korean authority's condemnation of their expression of antagonism as anti-progress, and also the view of today's revisionists who undermine the significance of this movement in Korean history, one must see the *minjoong* movement as a positive step towards the progress of the hitherto repressed people, of their democracy. The *minjoong* were seeking for a different progress which would define their happiness, by proclaiming anti-dictatorship, anti-imperialism, unification; the developmentalist dictator, the US aid and intervention, division of North and South were all essential factors in the rapidly developing South Korean capitalist state. The *minjoong* challenged the social authority, which imposed submission and conformity on every individual *minjoong*, preaching that such are the only way to bring progress in the nation, and claimed itself as the sole agent of progress.

The *minjoong* movement was a struggle for human progress and demand of



redemption which marks an example of an unending struggle for human progress in the late 20 century. This is a site of politics where, as Melzer et al. proposed, the different notion of progress can be discussed. Melzer et al trace the idea that introduces the space of the contestation and struggle of individuals for human progress in history as the site of progress back to the non-Hegelian traditions of western thinking. For example, they introduce Machiavelli as an early example of those who invented the idea of progress, as pertaining to the notion of ‘the turbulent arena of politics’.<sup>11</sup> This idea derives from his observation that progress bases itself openly in the “amoral” truth that all men are motivated by the harsh needs of acquisition and security. Away from the classical conception of history as a cycle as well as the Christian notions whereby the natural course of history is meant to lead to redemption, he suggests that redemption is key in the turbulent arena of politics. Politics is accredited as a field which emerges and manages the clashes between those who dispute good and justice as they are perceived from different perspectives. Machiavelli discerns that human progress is not proportionate to the degree of the mastery of nature or socially measured growth of productivity. It is the opposite since it is a process ever implicated in the production of amorality. He discerns that the desire for redemption is inherent in this state of humanity in relation to nature, or that politics should mediate in the name of human progress with regard to the harsh truth of history.<sup>12</sup>

As Melzer et al also introduced in the book, Kant’s view on progress is formed with a slightly different view of human motivation to that of Machiavelli, but culminates in a similar concern on the increase of amorality in progress.<sup>13</sup> In his well known article on ‘Universal History’<sup>14</sup>, Kant stated that he believed that everyone has “a moral duty to hope that moral virtue will be rewarded and thus to hope that history is the progressive and yet infinite approximation of a universal civil society that administers law or justice”, departing from slightly different ground to

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<sup>11</sup> Melzer et. al.,ibid., p5

<sup>12</sup> Melzer et. al.,ibid., p5

<sup>13</sup> Melzer et. al.,ibid., p5

<sup>14</sup> The famous article of Immanuel Kant is “The Idea for a Universal History With a Cosmopolitan Intention”, which is written in 1784

Machiavelli's premise on amoral truth. He continues to argue that everyone "looks for the sign that history establishes the conditions in which the human faculties can flourish and in which morality and happiness will be united". However, this somewhat idealized moral belief in progress, as Susan Shell points out, is revised later by Kant himself.<sup>15</sup> According to her, Kant later set the tone for our abiding discomfort with universal, progressive history, because in the end, he could not accept the fact that progress sacrifices the happiness of earlier generations for the sake of later ones and thus affronts the moral worth and autonomy of every individual. Faith in progress is ultimately not a moral faith.

Rather than focusing on the polemic whether the belief in progress is intrinsically 'moral' or 'amoral', I argue that, it is important for us to note that both Machiavelli and Kant's discussions of progress pertains to the rather significant vision of how historical progress can be in conflict with the idea of human progress. According to Kant, progress is a condition in which the human faculties can flourish and in which morality and happiness will be united. Synthesizing Machiavelli and Kant's contentions beyond polemics, one learns that no progress can ever be innocently believed and sought without consideration of the decay of morality and the redemption of individuals and generations. Politics finds its meaning in the arena of people who seek terms of autonomy, justice, and redemption. The struggle of the *minjoong* in the 1980s and 1990s in Korea is a manifestation of their desire for human values radically denied in the procession of the modernity. They transformed their unease sense of unhappiness and injustice into the arena of politics. It is a manifestation of their autonomy and ethics against the increasing amorality in a society obsessed with the idea of economic progress. *Minjoong* expose their desire for the "human progress" in history by engaging in politics, which enables the redemption of the repressed past and concretizes their vision for the better future.

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<sup>15</sup> see Susan Shell's article, "Kant's idea of History" , Melzer et. al., *ibid.*, pp75-96

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Before I move on to discuss the *minjoong* vision for the redemptive human progress as cultivated through the movement, I briefly discuss the problem in the representation of this *minjoong* movement by Korean leftist intellectuals<sup>16</sup> in the 1980s and early 1990s.

The leftist accounts of motivations and visions of *minjoong* in insurgency were provided by their uncritical subscription to the notions of working class and historical materialism of Marxist theory, which initially formed within the tradition of Enlightenment thinking. Their conception of *jinbo* (translated as ‘progress’) exposes a typical materialist misconception which transposes human motivation to that of material acquisition and sees history as the linear progress of material consummation. As I discussed earlier, the empathetic and critical intellectual’s involvement with the movement of *minjoong* is to provide and reinforce the condition wherein the *minjoong* power can be activated and consolidated. Historicising and representing the motives and the need of struggle of *minjoong* in the positive and constructive term of *jinbo* is to sustain and support *minjoong* struggle against the destruction of power.

However, as the intellectuals conducted this representation of *minjoong* power and role in history under a huge influence of Marxism adopted as a supreme revolutionary ideology, they failed to translate and theoretically substantiate the

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<sup>16</sup> The majority of critical intellectuals in South Korea endorsed Marxism as their ideology of change, and revolution of South Korean society for its subalternised people, although there are difference among them in terms of their interpretation and practices of the theoretical doctrine. There were unceasing attempts and demand to theorise Korean *minjoong* history and the political ideology other than through Marxism and many revisionary positions within Marxism acknowledging its limit. But the dominant theoretical paradigm was always provided by those who see themselves as a ‘faithful’ Marxist. However, there was always a weighty consensus of “the gap between reality and theory” among the participants of the movement. This brings us to the problem of the theoretical practice by Marxists. A kind of anti-intellectualism was prevalent during this period, which, on the one hand, understandably refers to people’s discontent against intellectuals who are often seen as being estranged from the actual reality. On the other hand, this problematically dissipated the efforts to produce comprehensive theory among activists who prioritized practice over theory. Meanwhile a wide spectrum of activities and practices emerged during that period was un-theorised. To name a few, the representative of the Marxist in the 1980s is Kim Munsu, who has written for activists outside of academic institutes and Kim Sugaeng, Lee Jinkyung, Kim Sekyun, Jo hyeeyon who taught in the universities and acted as political commentators.

differential and other meaning of progress the *minjoong* put forward. Specifically, Korean Marxists critics tried to identify the potency of *minjoong* and the ideal consummation of the *minjoong*'s historical task in terms of narrowly defined Marxist notions of labor power and historical materialism. The power of *minjoong* is thought through a very mechanical version of Marxist notion of the proletariat that advocates their contribution to history is measured by the degree to which their labor power exploits and masters nature. Walter Benjamin discerned the danger of such a conception in the German leftist politicians who were deeply embedded in this view of labor power. In 'The Thesis On The Philosophy of History', Benjamin put forward his critique of the Marxist conception of the "nature of labor", which identifies man's labor power as his primary value.<sup>17</sup> Benjamin discusses this as a misreading of Marx's original view and is mere incarnation of the "old protestant ethic of work".<sup>18</sup> Benjamin also anticipated the association of this materialist belief with technocracy and fascism in the future. In the same thesis, Benjamin said:

This Vulgar-Marxist conception of the nature of labor bypasses the question of how its products might benefit the workers while still not being at their disposal. It recognizes only the progress in the mastery of nature, not the retrogression of society; it already displays the technocratic feature which was later encountered in Fascism.<sup>19</sup>

The idea of progress and men of labor is measured and rendered one-sided in the context of the "mastery of nature", which translates into a great misconception of the project for the comprehensive, spiritual and cultural process of emancipation of workers.

The parallel reductionist reading of the *minjoong* by Marxist critics in South Korea gave rise to the leftist technocracy that led the antagonizing population into another form of authoritarian politics. Benjamin stated that the concept of the "historical

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<sup>17</sup> Benjamin recites Marx concerning the corruption of view of labor in the German socialist party, Gotha Congress. "Smelling a rat, Marx countered that '...the man who possesses no other property than his labor power' must of necessity become 'the slave of other men who have made themselves the owners.....' Benjamin, Ibid., p. 250

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin, *ibid.*, p. 250

<sup>19</sup> Walter Benjamin, *ibid.* "The Thesis On The Philosophy of History", 1950. p. 251

progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogeneous, empty time”<sup>20</sup>. The *Minjoong*’s aspiration for *jinbo*, that is to say, the human and redemptive progress could not be fully realised in the development of such a technocratic political apparatus which was again instrumentalising the *minjoong*. The technocratic authority of the movement advocates that the individual devotion to their homogeneous politics of the left can resolve the problem for all and propel the revolution. This is because the Marxist intellectuals imagined the *minjoong* subjects as faithful actors in an ideal consummation of the revolutionary course of historical materialism. It hence urged the individual to sublimate their past and follow the collective objectives of the political front or party. They often justified their technocratic politics by the logic of historical urgency: to sustain the front line of struggle by the devoted militant subjects who served the historical mission. An anti-democratic culture in the politics and the organization of the left was quite serious problem and doubtlessly exhausted the many participants who initially thrust themselves into a struggle for implementation a democratic culture and society. By discouraging the activation and consolidation of the democratic faculties within its politics, this aspect of the left politics contributed to dissipate the hope of the observers and the participants for the democratic culture in the future. Furthermore, the vision for the *minjoong* future represented by the leftist intellectuals was lack of reference to the Korean history and the *minjoong* experience and deeply tainted by a leftist version of ‘universal history’. This had an impact on undermining the *minjoong*’s sovereign vision of the future and guided the *minjoong* to a direction which is completely unexamined. Some doctrinist Marxists imagined and proposed that the future of *minjoong* is in the preexisting “socialist utopias”; the imaginary utopia that the Korean leftists endorsed varied according to the different political factions which existed in the 1980s, the already collapsing USSR and North Korea being among those ‘utopias’.

In conclusion, the dominant theoretical representation of *minjoong jinbo* by leftist

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<sup>20</sup> Benjamin, *ibid.*, p. 252

intellectuals in the 1980s and early 1990s failed to take account of the specificity of Korean *minoong*'s experience and neglect the task to invent new theoretical language of antagonising subject and their history. My interpretation of this problem is as follows. The critics also began from *the site of negativity and felt the need of theories of the negative history of minjoong* and their future. But their theoretical disposition heavily entrenched in a form of idealism, the optimist prognosis of a Marxist ideology quickly transposed them to transcendentalism, a politics of sublimation; which encompass theories of revolutionary proletariat, historical materialism, and socialist utopia. This allowed little space for them to conduct a thorough diagnosis of *minjoong* wound and wishes. This hastiness and unsubstantiated optimism of *jinbo* of the leftist technocrat often left a sense of unease in the participants of the movement.

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The vision for progress, *jinbo* derives from the Korean *minjoong*'s specific 'structure of feeling'<sup>21</sup> that is constituted through, enlivened by and endured throughout their historical life under repression, grievance, resistance, death, and resurrection. The insurgence of the 1980s erupted from the grave of redemption and human progress. Although the representation of *minjoong* by leftist intellectuals turned out to appropriate and lose the significant core of Korean *minjoong*'s own notion of *jinbo*, the vision was captured in different representational media, especially through the visual arts without being completely lost.

The ideal of the progress and future imagined by Korean *minjoong* was tied to the concept of cure of the wound and the realisation of their unfulfilled wishes, which can be explained through the deep-rooted vernacular philosophical terms of '해원'

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<sup>21</sup>see Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London & New York. It is initially a concept invented by Raymond Williams that highlights his unique of cultural materialism. But instead of admittedly slippery definition given by Williams himself, this book introduces Anthony Barnett's more substantiated definition of the term in 1976. Barnett says, the structure of feeling is "designed exactly to restore the category of experience to the world, as a part of its mutual and various social history". pp.53-54

*Haewon*’ (which can be translated as cure or wish-fulfillment of the repressed people, the people of *han*; in detail, *Hae* means ‘fulfillment’ or ‘resolution’ and *Won* means either ‘desire’ or ‘anxiety’. ‘*Won*’ can be another expression of *han*. So *Haewon* can mean the resolution of *han*). ‘상생 *Sangsaeng*’ (which can be translated as “reciprocal-existence” or “co-habitation”; *Sang* translates as togetherness or reciprocity and *Saeng* translates as living, life), which is a ideal image of the future community. *Haewon* and *Sangsaeng* are known as central principles of the indigenous *Donghak* philosophy emerged in the 1890s, and the ghosts of the concepts were hovering around the Korean *minjoong* who arose in the 1980s. *Donghak* philosophy was never systemically rewritten as a revolutionary social science or social ideology during the 1980s and early 1990s,<sup>22</sup> although it had a spectral power to inspire the poets and artists of that time. For instance, Oh Yoon was deeply interested in *Zungsan-do* (the philosophy or religion, or the way of meditation which has survived over 100 years after it was invented by Kang Zungsan, one of the spiritual leaders who were involved in the *Donghak* uprising)..

Lim Oksang and Oh Yoon’s realism, the symptomatology of ‘the real-s’ is good examples that constructed an aesthetic arena of ethico-politics of *Haewon* and *Sangsaeng*. Their works are the unwritten sites where various utterances and specific cultural values are manifested and visualized and through which we can trace the micro-scopic dimension of *mnjoong* psyche in the movement. What I mean by ‘ethico-politics’ combines the insights of *Haewon* and *Sangsaeng* and that of Machiavelli and Kant which I discussed earlier, which refers to an ethical human arena and is posited to repair the abundance of symptoms of social malaise and human regression in the course of progress. *Haewon* and *Sangsaeng* are vernacular ideals of happiness, justice and community. Here the politics is not opposed to the ethics but it is regarded as arena where people’s ethical desire can be accomplished. Machiavelli discerned that happiness can be disproportionate to the socially measured growth of productivity since progress is a process ever implicated in the

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<sup>22</sup> This the “cure” and “resolution” was presumed to be an automatic outcome of radical revolution by doctrinist leftist intellectual and *Sangsaeng* to be the socialist state that Marxist theory has rendered



Figure 79. *Durung* Launcing *Yellim Guk*(Opening Exorcism), 1984





Figure 80. Yoo Yyenbok et al, *Sangsaengdo*, Wall Painting(in Jungrlng), 1986

production of amorality. Kant observed that the belief in progress increases amorality although everyone looks for the sign that history establishes the conditions in which the “human faculties can flourish and in which morality and happiness will be united”. The ethico-politics of *Haewon* and *Sangsaeng* is the processual locus where the morality and happiness is united in order to attain a human community.

As I have discussed earlier, Lim and Oh’s realism in particular distinguished from other realist works since it instigates the “opening”<sup>\*23</sup> of long foreclosed space of *Han*, which is ultimately for *Haewon*(the resolution of anxiety). Lim and Oh worked on traumatic memory and repressed wishes of *minjoong*. This is to seek out the *minjoong* terms of happiness and justice from within the *minjoong* themselves, from within the deep-seated history of *Han*, the unique form of cultural codification of which Korean Marxist intellectual did not delved into. Since *Han* is culture of ghosts, the invisible imperative, Oh and Lim’s works made a haunting vision machine of *han* in relation to the *minjoong* viewers. This vision machine not only reveals the culture of sorrow but also urges resolution in the viewers, agitating their sleeping, tamed consciousness and provoking them to act.

*Haewon*, the resolution of *han*, is for a community of the previously repressed people in which they can heal and appreciate ethics of the reciprocal existence, *Sangseang*. ‘*Sangsaengdo*’, a wall painting of Yu Yyuenbok made in 1986 is an example of many visual works produced on this theme.\*<sup>24</sup> A man and a woman are dancing together in face to face. Their reciprocal status and position or movement on the background of *Taguk*<sup>25</sup> (which means a state of balance of different forces

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<sup>23</sup> See Figure 79. *Durung*, Launching *Yellim Guk*(Opening Exorcism), 1984 *Durung* is a very renowned collective artists group who aimed to realize the spirit of collective or of co-habitation of *minjoong* from their art production to the stage of appreciation. This photo captures the launching ceremony of this group practiced in conjunction with the folk ritual of *Mudang*(a mediator who is believe to bridge the dead and the life and also believed to open the door between the two to solve the illness or disaster, the suffering the living ones endures). This is an example that shows such a notion of “opening” was central in the mind of the participant of the movement.

<sup>24</sup> See Figure 80. Yoo Yyuenbok et al, *Sangsaengdo*, Wall Painting(in Jungrlng), 1986

<sup>25</sup> *Taeguk* is a symbol that illustrates the cosmological philosophy of East Asian. This basically symbolizes the balance between Yin and Yang. This is also understood as a state that one needs to



Figure 81. *Durung*(Kim Usun, Yang Enhee, Jang Jinyep, Jung Jungyep), *Tongilyemwondo*(Wish Painting of Unification). Acrylic on Fabric. 1985

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attain to stand as a genuine subject. When this philosophy comes to consider its end, it teaches the infinity of the process where different forces moves to reach an ideal balance. I write it as it is popularly understood in East Asia rather than citing any scholarly investigation.

without asymmetry and high and low) delineates the principle of *Sangsaeng*. Or it implies the man and woman's attempt to reach such a condition. *Durung's* (a famous collective artists group) *Tongilyemwondo*\*<sup>26</sup> (Wish Painting of Unification) is another example that illustrates the idea of *Sangsaeng* which is incarnated as a visual mantra of unification where the multitude of people converge into the center of Taguk. This conveys the characteristic color or the structure of feeling of "the unification" as the Korean *minjoong* imagined, which seek out ideal form of *Sangsaeng*, which the political and cultural movement is expected to bring out.

Let me discuss the implications of *Haewon* and *Sangsaeng* philosophy further in relation to language of psychoanalysis. To accomplish *Haewon*, one is required to engage in a double edged process that is both internal and external. To extend this further, the language of psychoanalysis can be useful for conveying the proximate meaning of this internal process. *Won or Han* is firstly a state of anxiety induced by the subject's unfulfilled wishes in the world. *Won* indicates the existence of this negativity in the individual *minjoong* which is prompted by their irreducible desire for something which is not immediately attainable. The subject of *han*, or *won* or anxiety is characterized by "haunting". Haunting is a perpetual experience of *minjoong* in which they are constantly taken back to "something other" which determines it "without its knowledge."<sup>27</sup> According to psychoanalytic studies, this implies an unexpected return of "historicity" to the subject. As I have discussed in an earlier chapter, Lacan explained the imperative image of "something other" with the term "the real". He defines the real as a symbolic formation of the return of the "missed reality." The real is associated with the wish image of an individual *minjoong* which has a generic relationship to an innermost selfhood. In other words,

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<sup>26</sup> See Figure 81. *Durung* (Kim Usun, Yang Enhee, Jang Jinyep, Jung Jungyep), *Tongilyemwondo*(Wish Painting of Unification). Acrylic on Fabric. 1985

<sup>27</sup> The "ethico-politics of *han*/Uncanny" I try to envision here may well find its theoretical vocabulary in the text of psychoanalysis that embarks on the investigation of new "historicity", dissolved by the language of rationality, ideology and modern technocracy. Michel de Certeau has effectively summarized this aspect of psychoanalysis in his essay, "Psychoanalysis and Its History", Brian Massumi, tr., *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, Manchester University Press, 1986. pp.15-16

the real is a psychic image that occurs in a tense gap between the perception of reality and the fantasy of a redemptive future. This haunting real urges one to focus on and investigate what is the problematic core of his/her own anxiety/*han/won*.

To realize *haewon*, the cure by the resolution of anxiety and fulfillment of desire, one needs an externalizing process of the negative psychic condition and incorporation of the ghostly real which involves the opening of foreclosure, transference, reparations. Again, borrowing from psychoanalysis, transference and reparation indicates a process that opens the possibility of the resolution of anxiety in a subject. Lim and Oh's realism and many other realist works was related to this externalizing process of anxiety and among them, Lim and Oh's works are the especially focused on the transference process by inviting the viewers to the dialogue of *han* rather than prescribing an answer to the problem. Transference in psychoanalysis means the enactment of repressed wishes in relationship to other objects or other figures, which means, in a therapeutic context, cure.<sup>28</sup> In other words, at the moment of transference, a subject reactivates their repressed desire beyond repression, creating a relationship to the realm of the Other. The need for the Other opens up the way for us to consider the terms of reparation. Reparation, according to Melanie Klein, is a creative process which refers to one's effort to repair wrongs and losses. This is normally accompanied by a great deal of anxiety.<sup>29</sup> In other words, it is a creative process that accompanies the process of repairing the loss or the wrong which may transform anxiety into a positive direction for resolution. The field of the Other, which can be said to be a realm of an object, can be the field of language<sup>30</sup> as psychoanalysis suggests, and also can mean the field of history, which all stand for the external realms of outside the enclosed space of the self. Many artists, during the 1980s, actively pursued this work of reparation through their art, which is perceived as the field of the Other, emerging into the scene of *minjoong*. For instance, Lim and Oh's works, by

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<sup>28</sup> J, Lacan, *ibid.*. See pp. 123-124

<sup>29</sup> Melanie Klein, *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945*, The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London, 1975. pp 306-343

<sup>30</sup> Lacan says, language is "where one introduces into his/her sequence a whole chain in which one's desire is animated." Lacan, p. 250

revealing the uneasy psychic and historical strata of *han*, involved a critical and creative politics of reparation and transformation, turning the negative into positive by what I called earlier desublimatory alteration.<sup>31</sup> The desublimatory alteration is an aesthetic *modus operandi* of the Lim and Oh's ethico-politics of *Han*. This aesthetic-political space evolves with *minjoong* from where they are and transcends itself with the *minjoong* rather than representing *minjoong* condition or ideal as an already known and fixed entity. Also, as I discussed that their works then engender a space where the suppressed historical subjects (caught in *Han*'s negativity) enter into a process of collective subjectification by incorporating the world outside themselves by meeting others who speak of *han*, its history and vision of a future; this indeed elucidates how their works are involve in creating the space of *Sangsaeng*. The critical historians of the 1980s engaged in this practice by restoring the lost people and repairing the ideological rendering of the history through their new historiographical writing. As I have said, individual *minjoong* engaged in this movement through subversive expression and acts which would amend the wrongs and losses of history.

*Haewon* is for *Sangsaeng*, which means state of reciprocal-life and reciprocal community. To be more precise, *Sangsaeng* is a process as well as an ideal. This elucidates the pragmatic association of *minjoong* with the other *minjoong* who are aligned in the community of *han* in seeking for *haewon*. *Sangsaeng* is the principle of compassion and co-operation among the repressed *minjoong* in struggle. The individual *minjoong* alone can not work out *Haewon* since it should take place in the realm of the Other. The repressed wishes of *minjoong* converged and met with a collective subjectification in which the individual *minjoong* identified their own desires and needs in relation to that of the others in the 1980s. This mode of identification and connection provides the necessary condition of opening, through the inter-subjective space of transference of the repressed wishes and sharing of the vision of resolution. That is to say, possibility of *Sangsaeng* as a practically

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<sup>31</sup> Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, An October Book, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 1995, p113

imposed condition of opening lies upon the fact that one's repressed wish image finds unexpected commonality in that of others, in which one finds a communicative ground to tell their long-hidden stories and dreams to others. Numerous reciprocal openings and transference took place in the cultural political sphere of the 1980s and 1990s. While the participants in the movement become each other's object of transference, or of love (borrowing the terms from psychoanalysis), the previously un-narrativized potential historicity in one's mind, which is primordially chained with that of others in the collective history of *han*, provided a space of compassion and reciprocal communication that is ever-growing and excitable.

The *sangsaeng* appears to be a potential feature of a pluralistic politics the *minjoong* continued to believe in the movement, in opposition to the control of the central technocratic political organization imposed on them. This politic behold a convergence of heterogeneous desires and wishes of people, activating their own repressed narratives and resistance. It witnessed endless chains of the projection and introjection of desires, wishes and dreams among each other. In this, each segregated explosive molecular body of *han* overcome the repression in order to seek a resolution individually and together, manifesting their desire for sovereignty and community. They invent the possibility for his/her *Haewon*, the human progress together.

The space of compassion, communication and alliance in *Sangsaen* translates in an emergence of new autonomous political community, based on shared experiences and the horizontal vision that derive from the participants, previously isolated in a state of *han*. For long time, Korean *minjoong* were treated as a mere component of the national production team under the dominant imperative of economic progress. A fabric factory worker, Jeon Taeil, protested against the exploitative factory owners in 1970 by committing suicide through self-immolation. Since Jeon's striking protest, the Korean workers' movement had developed into an independent organic body of *minjoong* struggling for *Sangsaeng*. At the same time, their

engagement in anti-capitalist and anti-dictatorship struggles in the 1980s and 1990s was the activation of their revolutionary and redemptive will of people who have been victimized. The participations and alliances were made possible through inter-subjective understanding of *Han*, the anxiety consolidated through the years of repression and exploitation where their autonomy, redemption, and justice had been incapacitated.<sup>32</sup>

In the same line of progress, it is observed that the politics of *Sangsaeng* include the subaltern *minjoong* and the equally repressed intellectuals in the society affected by a vulgar capitalist technocracy in equal measure. The ethico-politics of *sangsaeng* brought out the multi-class cooperation between subaltern groups, intellectuals and students. This politics bases its assumption of what is *minjoong*'s motivation and course of emancipation on a principle of reciprocity rather than that of an end or ideal. This politics engendered a reciprocal, correlative and connected participation of *minjoong* and intellectual. Taking the example of cooperation between the intellectual and subaltern, I have discussed how the artists Oksang Lim and Oh Yoon worked, creating a horizontal interface with other *minjoong* and the cases of how other artists and intellectuals worked with the subaltern groups, civil groups and individuals during the 1980s and 1990s, based on this very principle of reciprocal empowerment. In this, artists, *minjoong*, and intellectuals collaboratively project and experiment with their wishes for *Haewon* and a future of *Sangsaeng*, that is the community of reciprocal liberation away from the technocratic politics in which a privileged subject objectifies the other into a singular and imagined end in history.

In conclusion, the visual arts witness, sustain, and engender the ethico-politics of *Haewon* and *Sangsaeng* that the history of *Han* taught the *minjoong*, by

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<sup>32</sup> I do not discuss this issue in detail in this thesis but for your further interest on this subject, see Koo Hagen, *Korean Workers: The Culture and Politics of Class Formation*. Cornell University Press, 2001 The author explores persistent spirit of resistance and pursuit of own identity of Korean workers in the history of unprecedentedly fast and intense industrialization process. In doing so, the author bring out a significant perspective that formation of consciousness of Korean working class can not be understood without understanding of cultural factor, especially, the culture of *Han*.



engendering the opening of *han*'s foreclosure and creating the chain of inspiration and alliance among those connected with and connecting to the community of *Han*. The visual arts enhance the process of sharing of the ghostly imperative of change and alteration and lead the viewers into a phantasmic and common vision of a resolution, further reinforcing alliances and empowerment among them.

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The forces of resistance and insurgence of *minjoong* for the human progress were born in the process in which the *minjoong* actively reinterpreted their lived experiences and, in particular, the negativised sites of their memory to transform them into subversive expression and politics. They actively engage in remembering, speaking and materializing their wishes and visions. They enacted their long repressed work of reparation of individual losses and malaise of the society without conceding to the logic of tolerance that social technocrats imposed on them.

In pursuit of *Haewon* and *Sangsaeng*, the *minjoong* resume their commitment to their own history and that of others in the place wherein they were radically expelled. The *Minjoong* seek their constructive presence and constructive future history in this process. This effort can be said to be a humanizing practice of history in which the *minjoong* press for the progress of redemption, and for their happiness and that of their beloved, through the subversive embodiment of their own history of *Han*.

After the mid 1990s, the ethico-politics of *Haewon* and *Sangsaeng* are still actively pursued through various civil right movement groups and other social, political and cultural movement in Korea. However, the social voices of economic progress, the sacrifices of *minjoong* and the postponement of democracy still haunt us today while the nation tries hard to survive in radical configuration of world economic order. Globally, the neo-imperial fiction of globalization inhabits and is triumphant in a haunting imperative of progress, spoken from everywhere and maneuvers to

evacuate the memory of its others from its progression. The work of *Haewon* and *Sangsaeng of minjoong* (of themselves, for themselves, and with the others) should continue by dissociating our minds from the obsession with such technocratic belief of progress and by paying continuous attention to the negative human effects of all these obsessions. The idea of progress must examine itself, if we are not to be wholly betrayed. The consciousness for human progress, that accommodates the work of cure, redemption, reparation, and reciprocal community, can also be shaped in this way.

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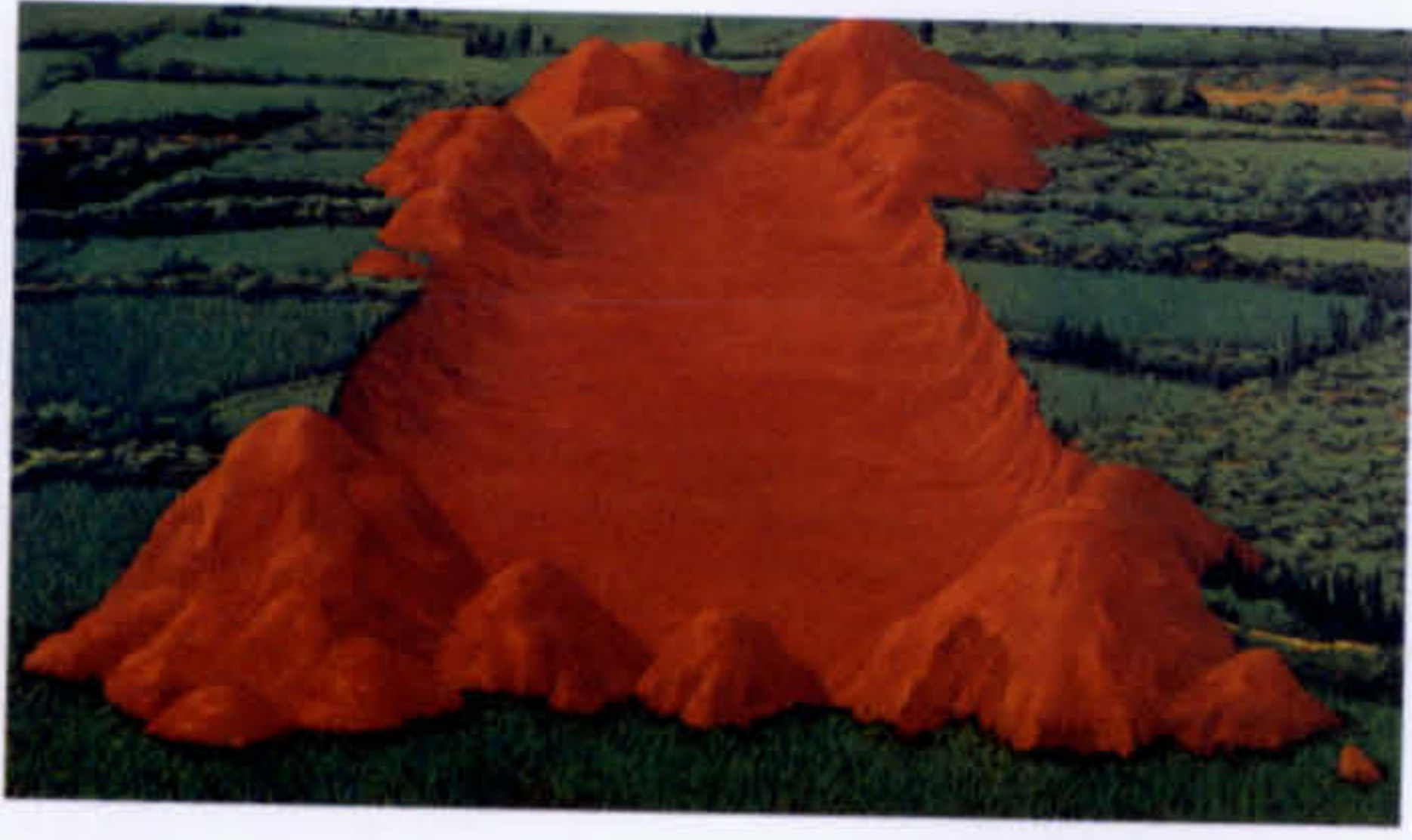


figure 01



figure 02



figure 03



figure 04



figure 05



figure 06



figure 07



figure 08



figure 09



figure 10



figure 11

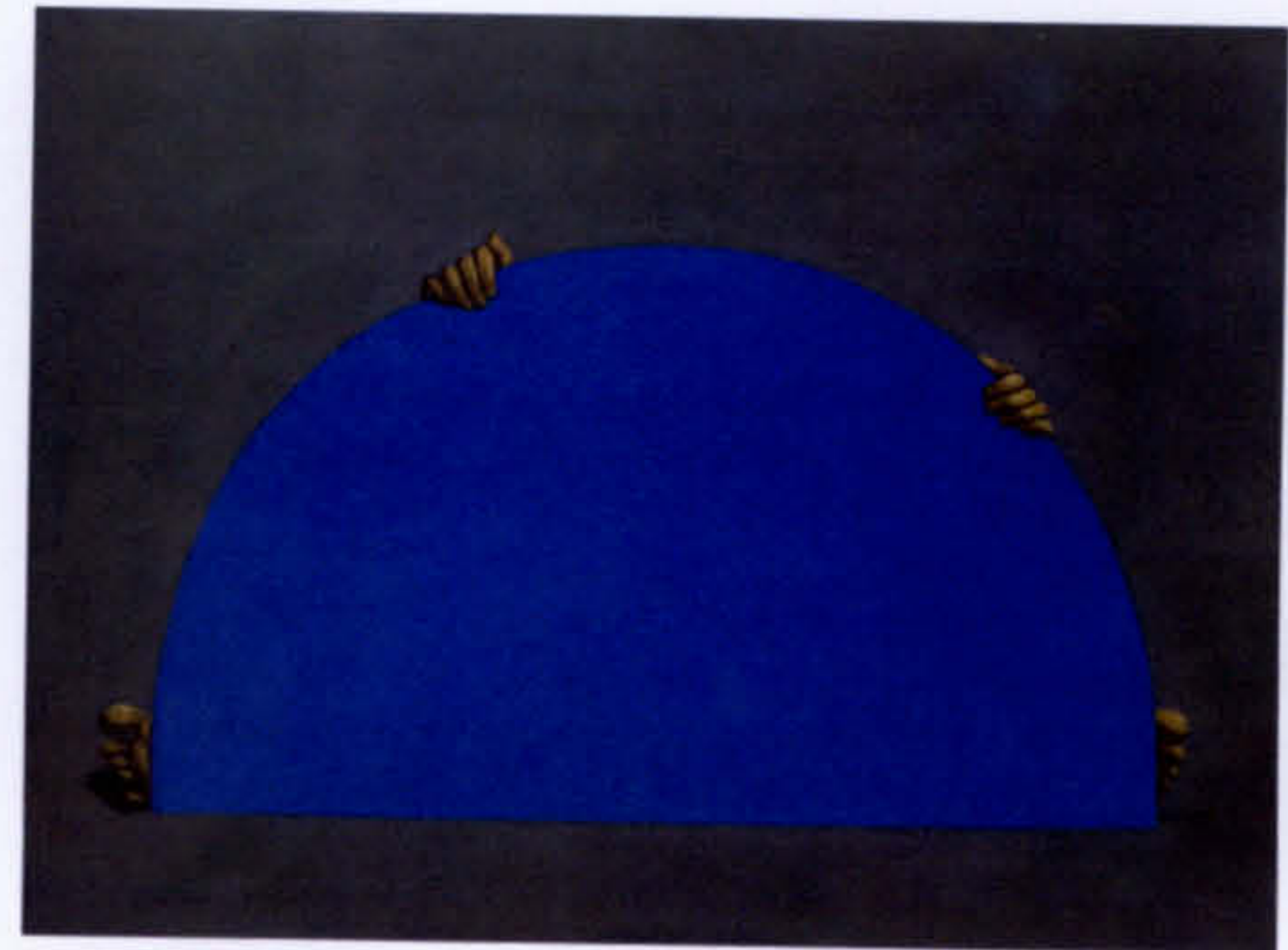


figure 12



figure 13-1



figure 13-2



figure 13-3



figure 13-4



figure 13-5



figure 13-6

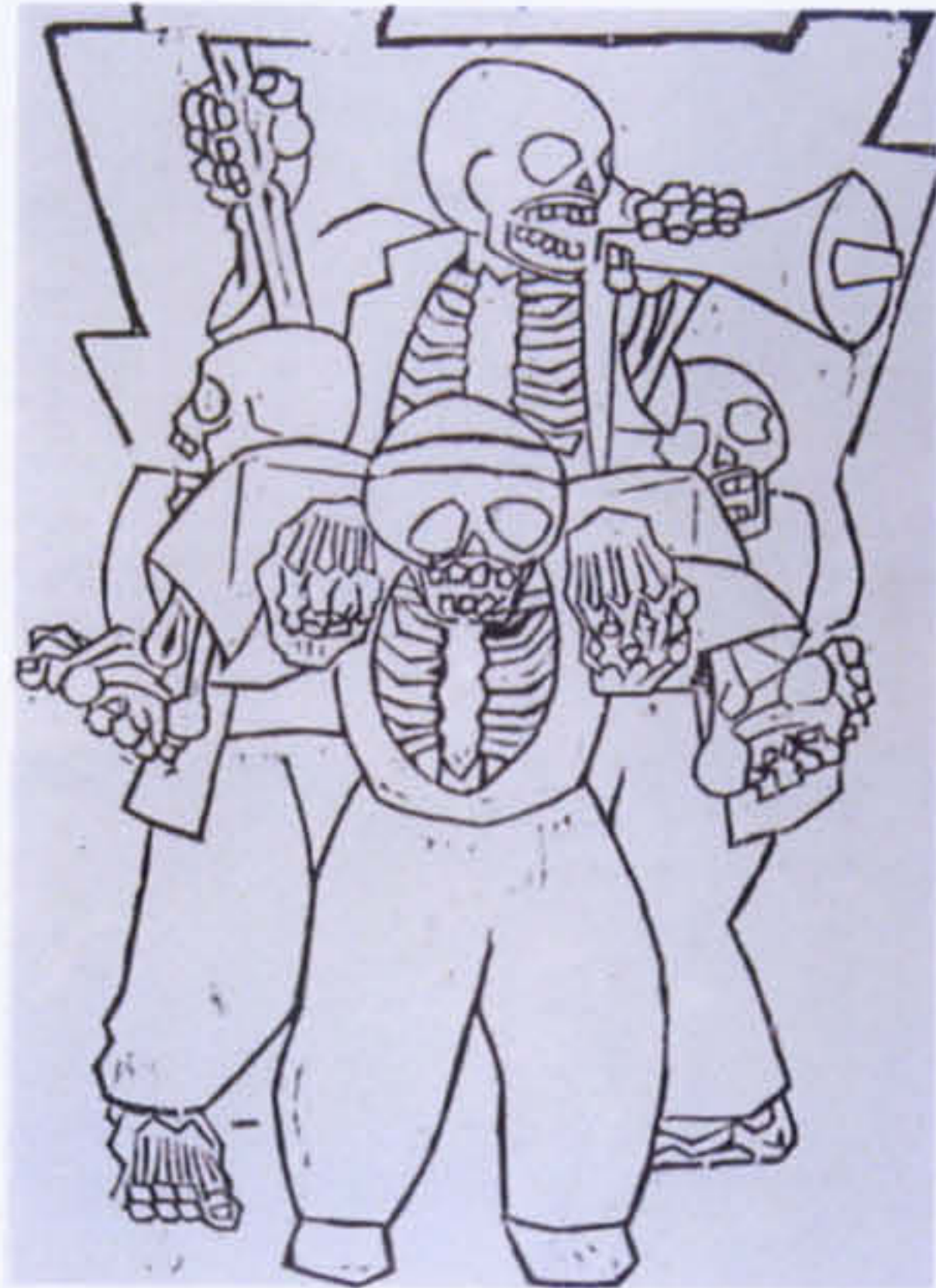


figure 14



figure 15



figure 16



figure 17



figure 18



figure 19



figure 20



figure 33 (1)



figure 33 (2)



figure 33-1



figure 29



figure 30



figure 31



figure 32

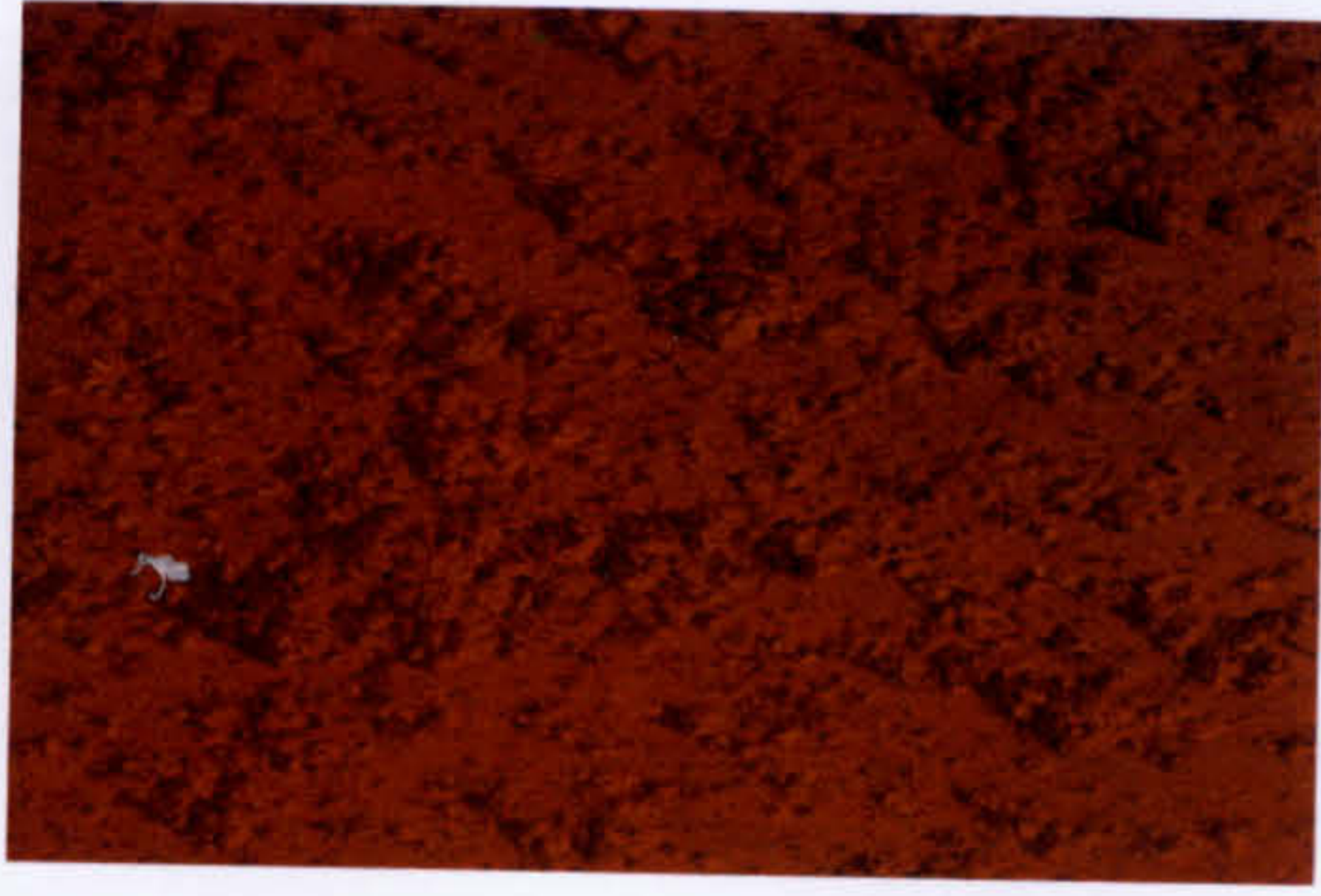


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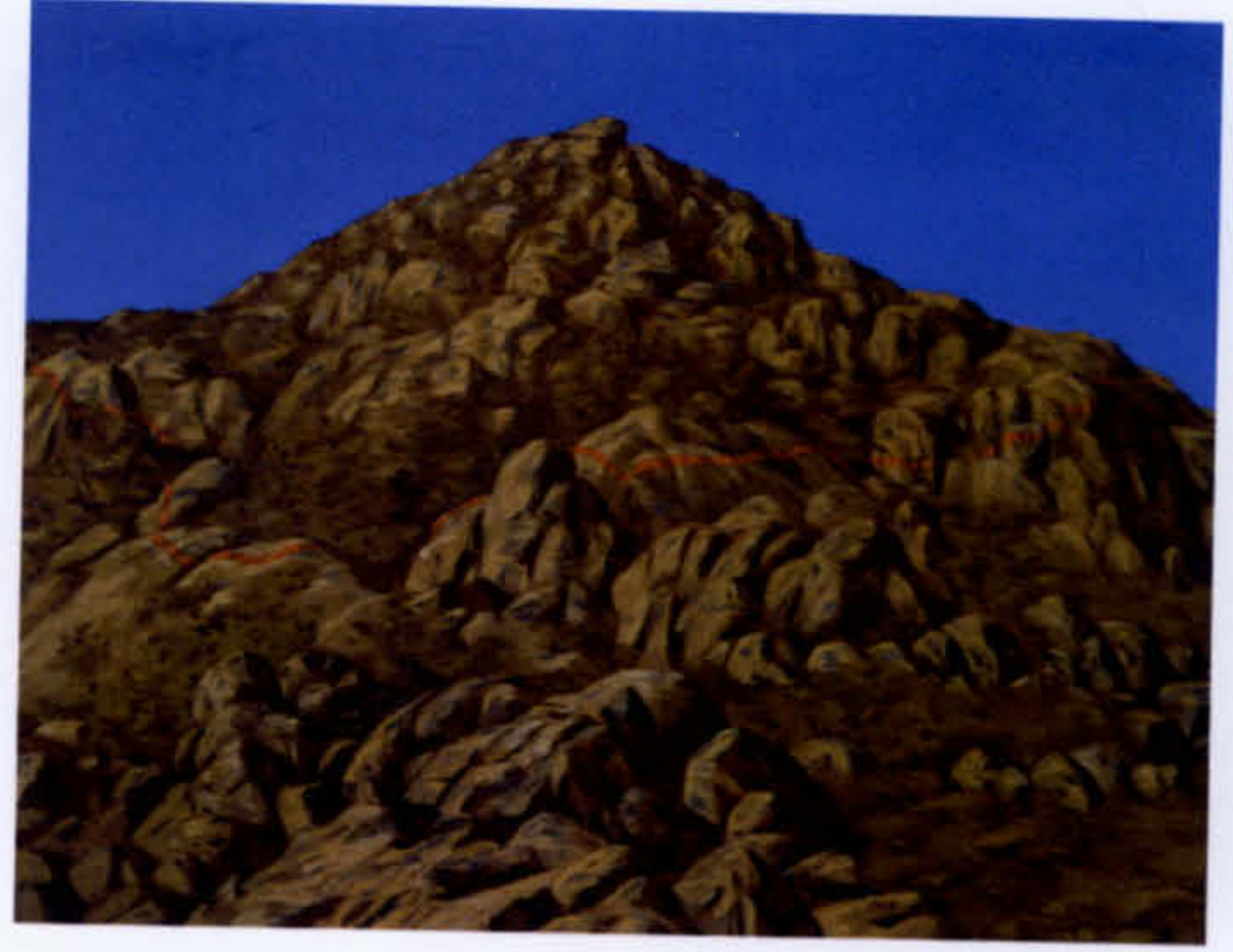


figure 22



figure 23



figure 24



figure 25



figure 26

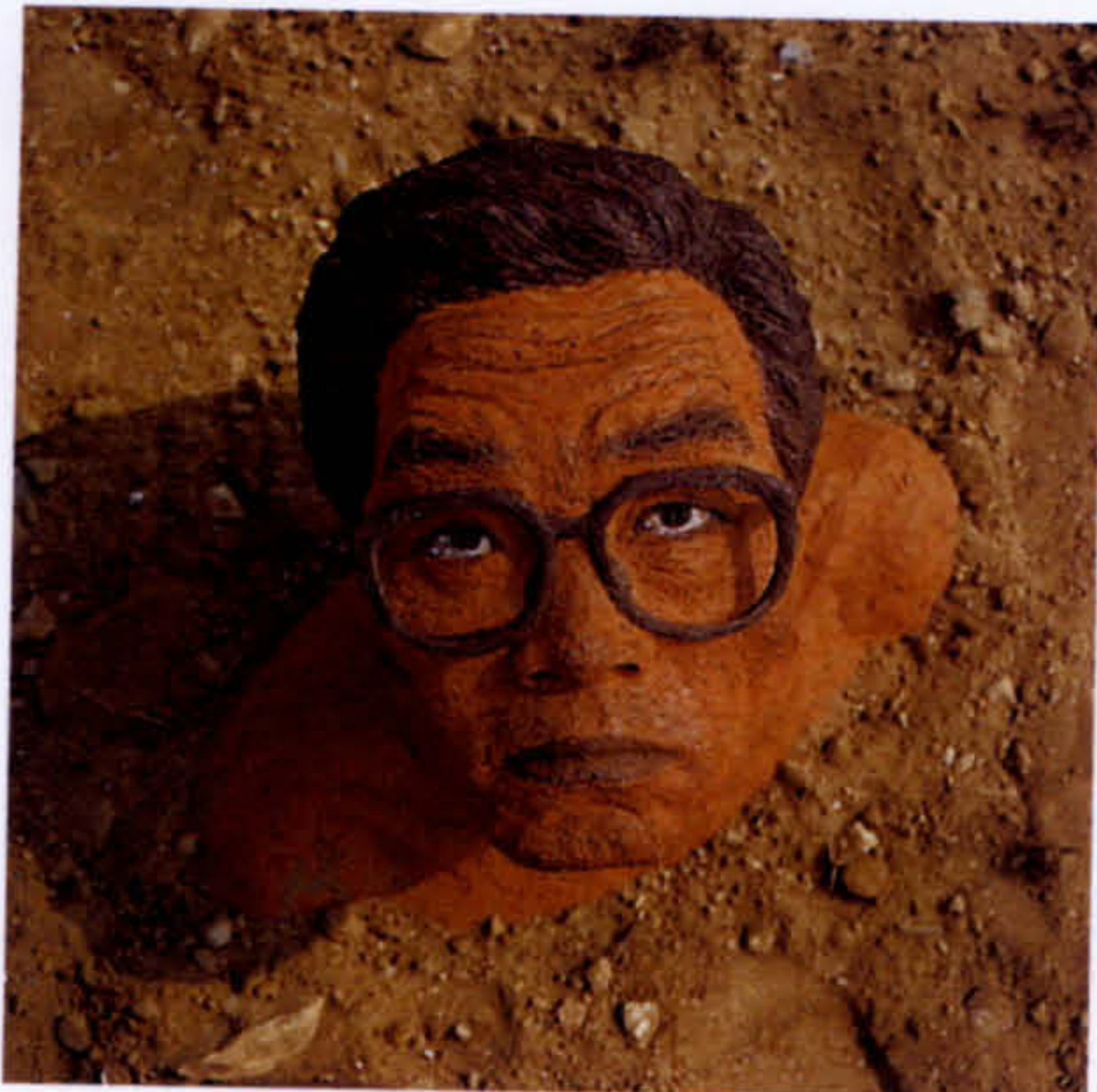


figure 27



figure 28



figure 34



figure 36



figure 35



figure 37

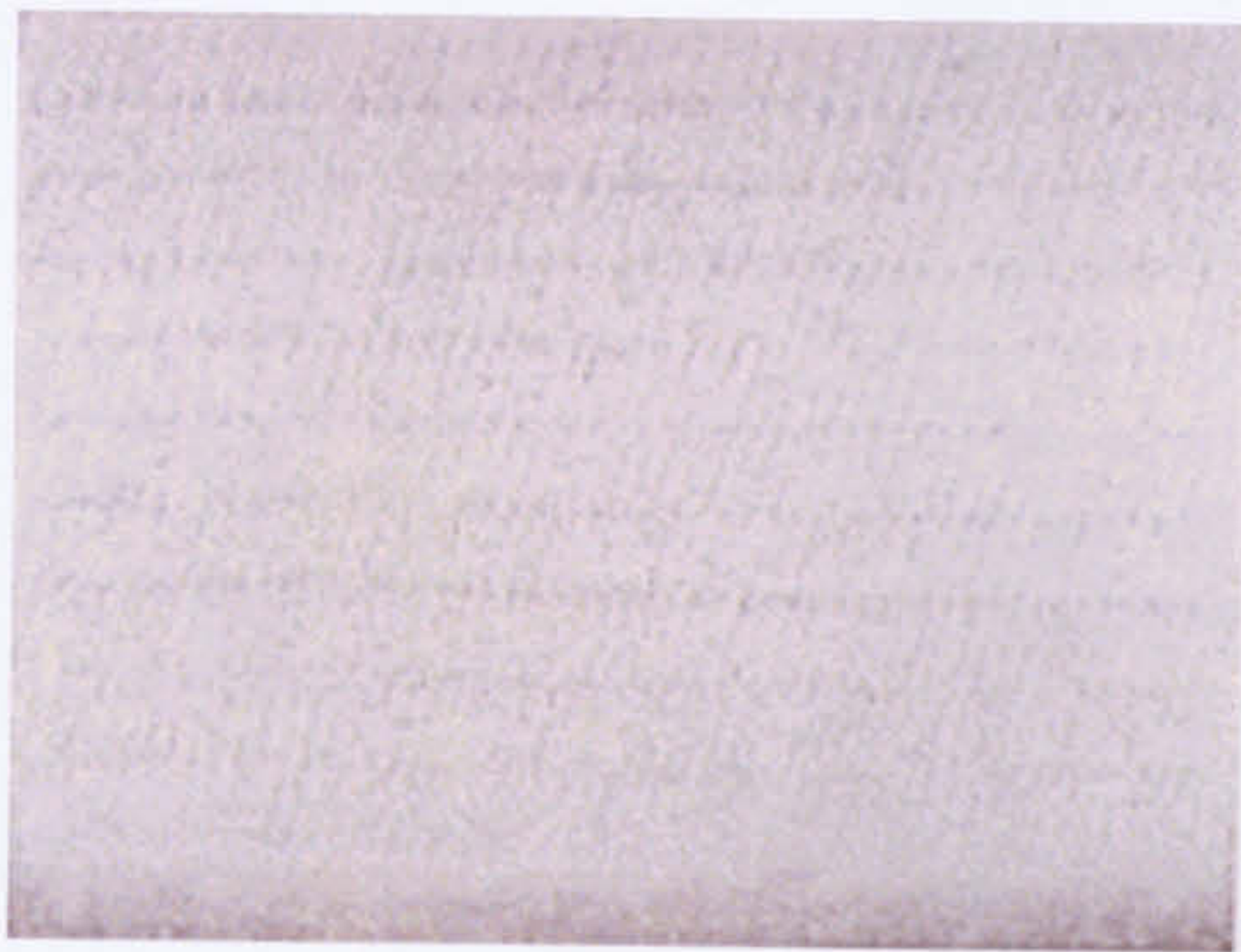


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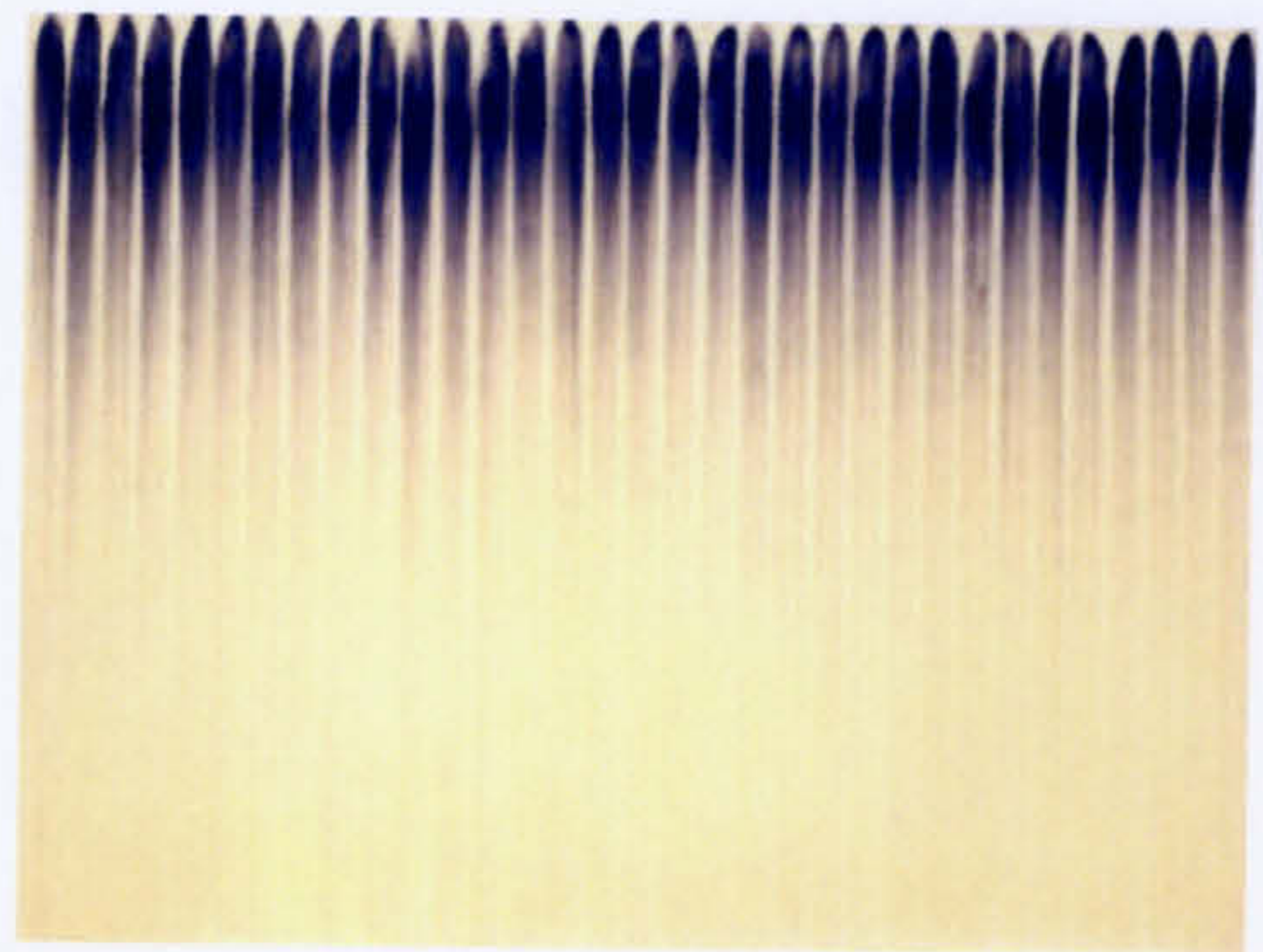


figure 39-1



figure 39-2



figure 40



figure 41



figure 42

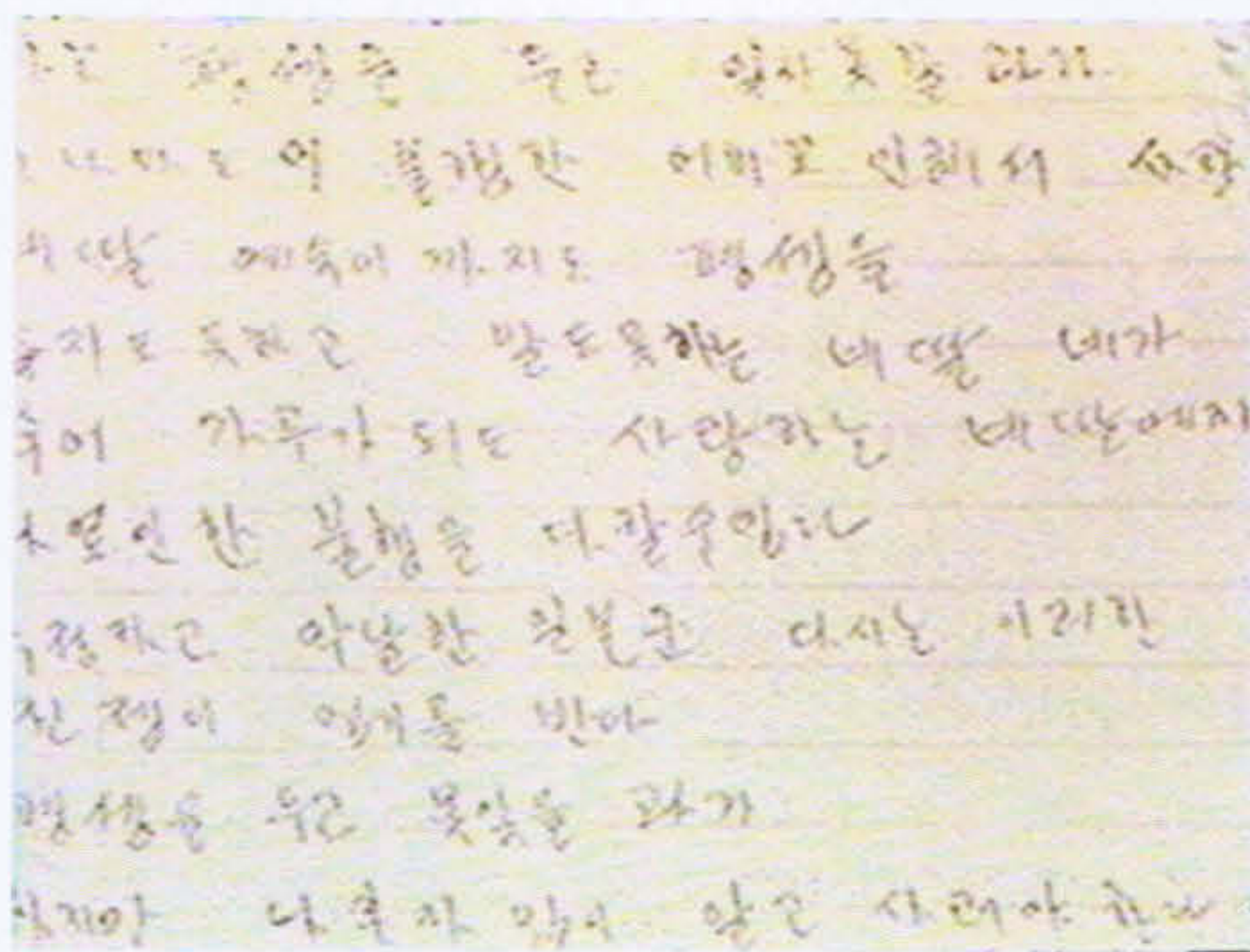


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figure 44



figure 45



figure 46



figure 47



figure 48



figure 52



figure 49



figure 50

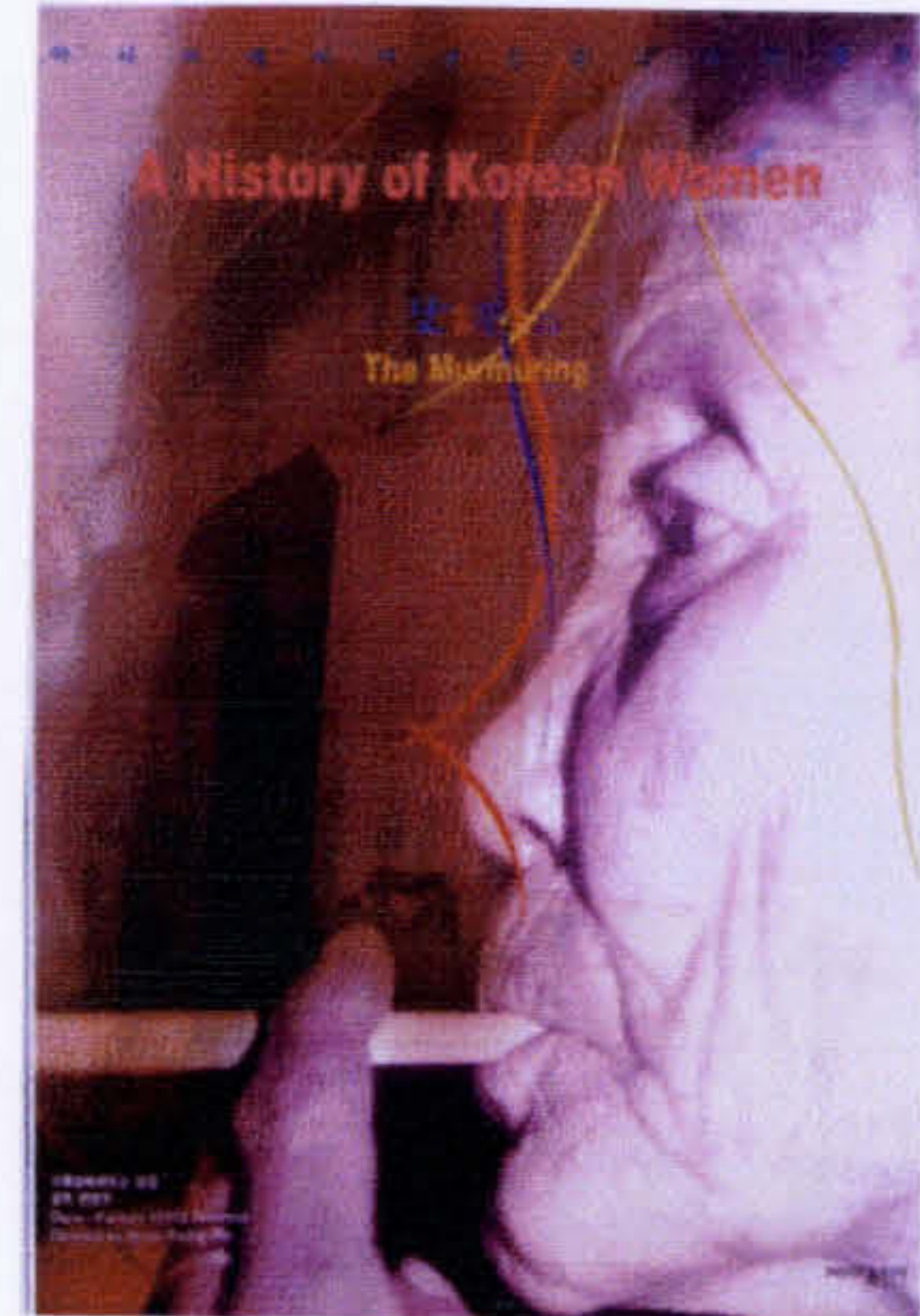


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figure 53



figure 54



figure 57



figure 58





figure 55



figure 56



figure 59



figure 60



figure 61



figure 62-1



figure 62-2



figure 62-3



figure 62-4



figure 62-5



figure 62-6



figure 63



figure 64



figure 65



figure 66



figure 67



figure 68

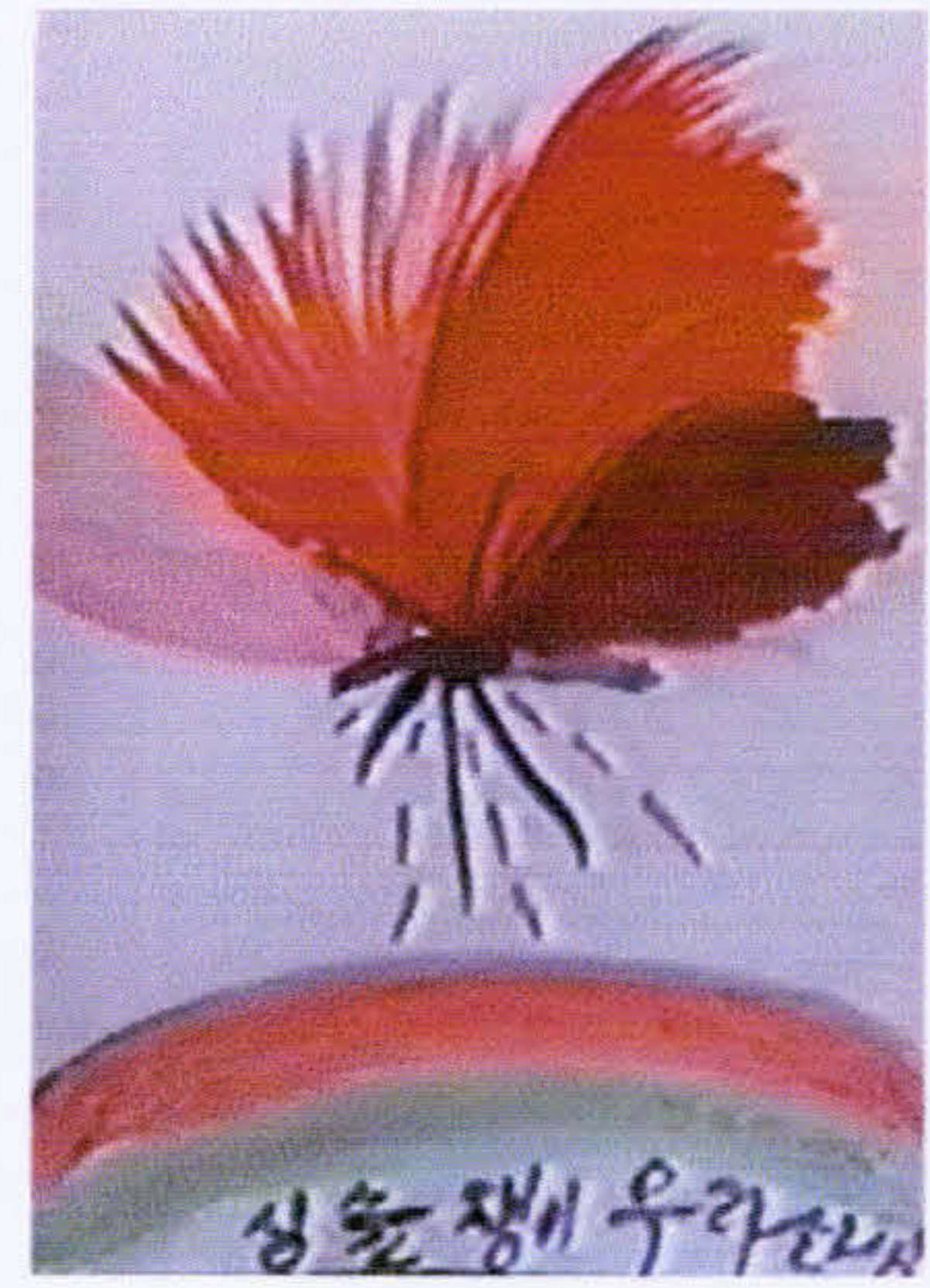


figure 69



figure 74



figure 75



figure 70

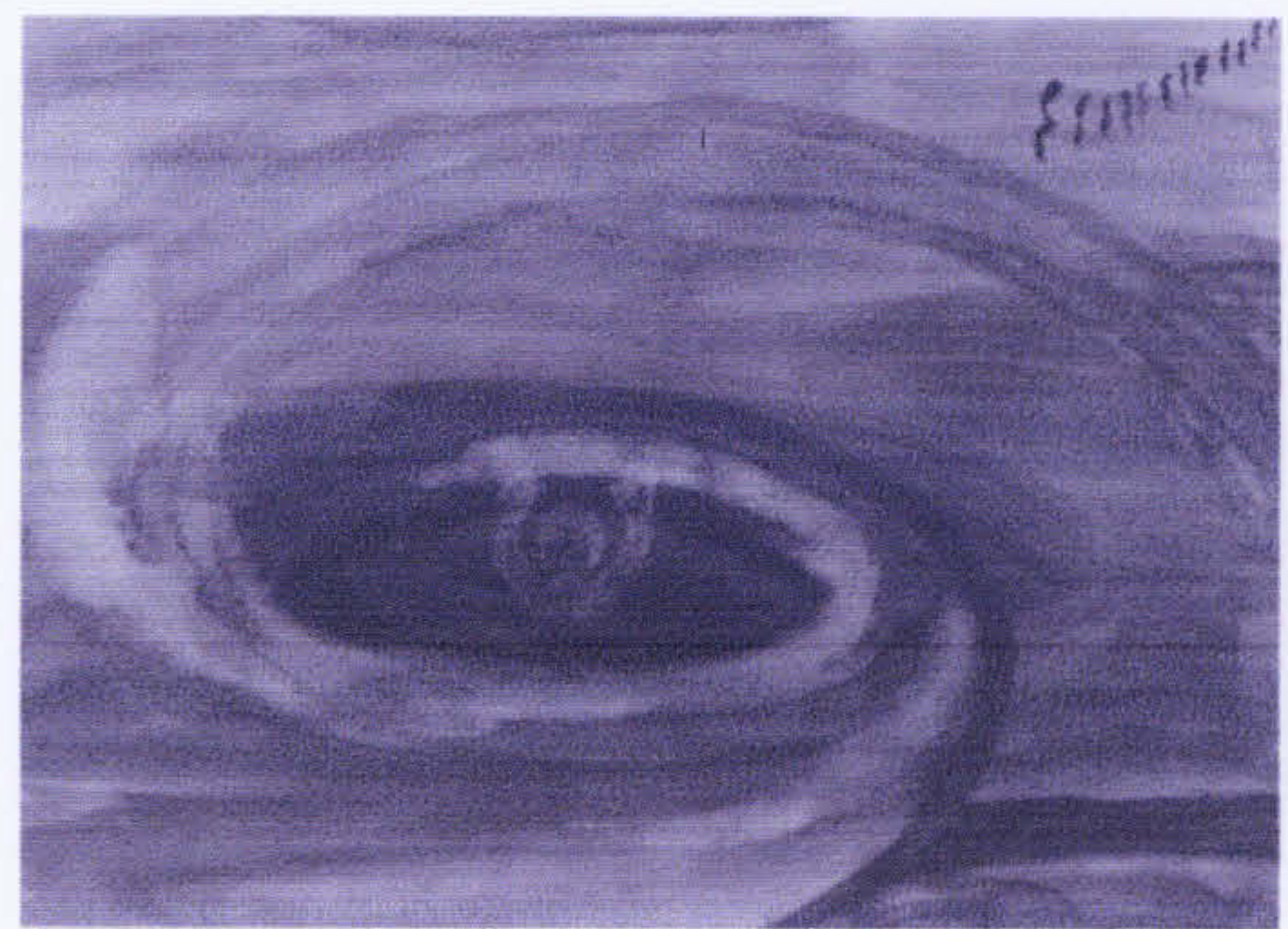


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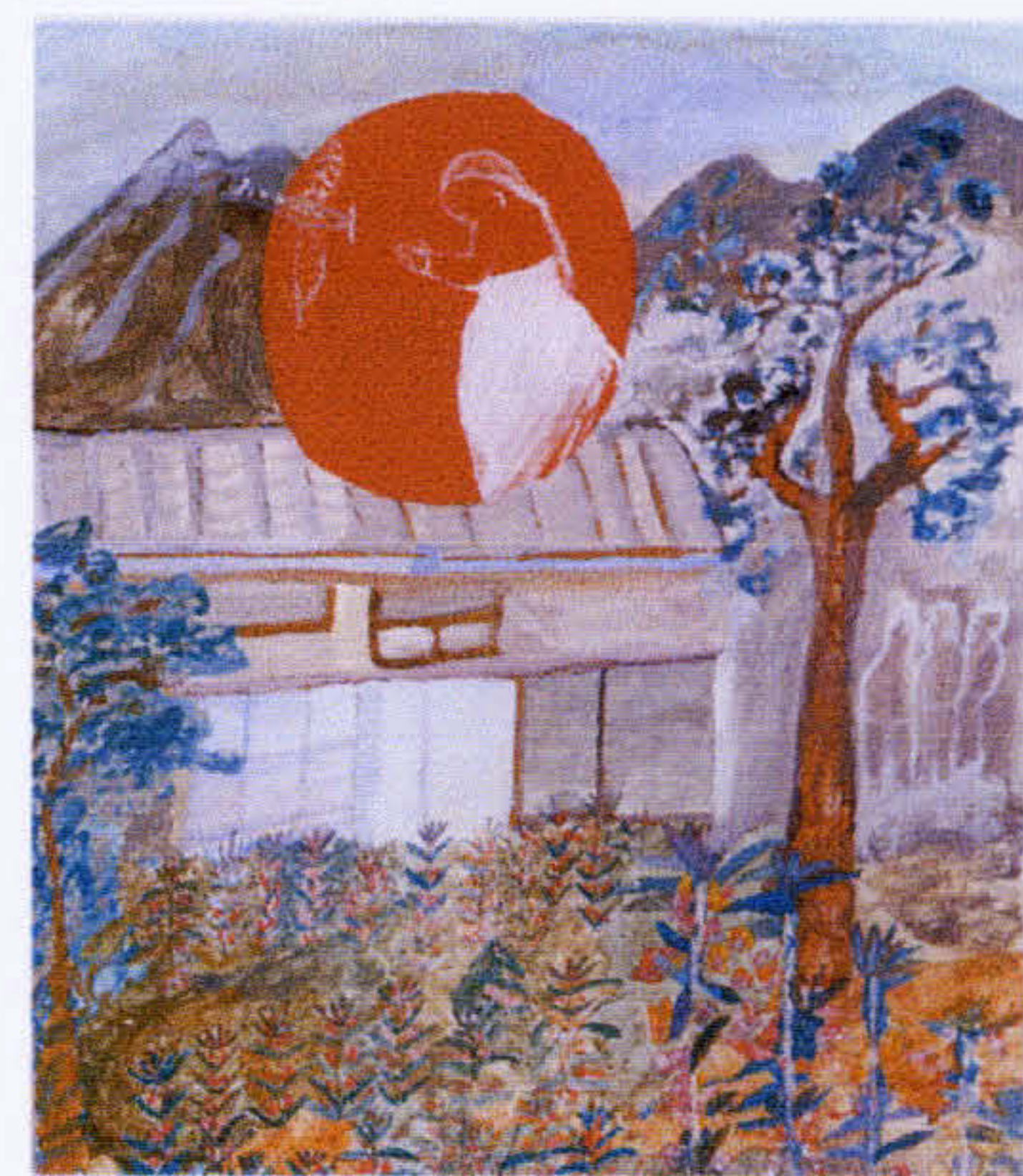


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figure 76



figure 77



figure 78



figure 79



figure 80



figure 81