Summer 6-27-2012

Trans-spatiality as the Horizon of the Coming Community: Ethico-ontology and Aesthetics in Asian Immigrant Literature

Dae-Joong Kim
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

TRANS-SPATIALITY AS THE HORIZON OF THE COMING COMMUNITY:

ETHICO-ONTOLOGY AND AESTHETICS IN ASIAN IMMIGRANT

LITERATURE

By

Dae-Joong Kim

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: English

Under the Supervision of Professor Seanna Sumalee Oakley

Lincoln, Nebraska

June, 2012

Trans-spatiality as the horizon of the coming community: ethico-ontology and aesthetics in Asian Immigrant literature

Dae-Joong Kim, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2012

Advisor: Seanna Sumalee Oakley

This study centers on the potential scope and significance of trans-spatiality as a new literary concept. I employ the concept of trans-spatiality as a means of understanding Asian immigrants' transnational experiences as represented by Asian immigrant writers in the Anglophone world. Trans-spatiality is a grounding term and methodological orientation, and its scope is relational and appositional. Thus, previous studies such as postcolonialism, cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, diaspora studies, and globalization are related to trans-spatiality, but, in this dissertation, I strictly limit its use to an ethico-ontological and aesthetic understanding of Asian immigrant writers' literary works. For this methodology, I explore and analyze various Western philosophers' theories, especially Giorgio Agamben's ethico-ontology. Also, I employ Édouard Glissant's poetics of relation and commonplace (*lieux communs*) as well as Walter Benjamin's constellation to transit this theoretical exploration to literary studies.

In chapter one of my study, which follows a brief preface, I address Asian immigrants' negative (animalized or Otherized) humanities by analyzing two Asian American poets' poems and Glissant's poem alongside a theoretical critique of Heidegger's Western-oriented ontology and ethics. In chapters two and three, I analyze Chang Rae Lee's *Native Speaker* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* to discuss Lee's trans-spatial beings in terms of coming community and form-of-life, and Kogawa's aesthetic testimony of Japanese Canadians' internment during WWII via artistic signs. The fourth

chapter shifts away from trans-spatiality in America-centered and anthropocentric narratives to a clone-centered science fiction and the critical space created by Kazuo Ishiguro, an Asian English novelist. This chapter ends with aesthetic and ethical inquiries into the clone as artist as a cornerstone of the relations between life and art. In the last chapter, I take on the topic of the relations between life and art via an overarching image of a bowl with the void in the center as a form of constellation in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée.* I conclude this dissertation with a brief analysis of my own trans-spatial teaching experience.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my lifelong mentor, advisor, and friend, Dr. Seanna Sumalee Oakley, whose inspiration has been a guiding light and has played a key role in my trans-Pacific odyssey. Dr. Oakley has patiently enhanced my ability as a scholar and a teacher. This dissertation is a result of happy and glorious memories of the years with her as my advisor. I also thank Dr. Frances Condon who gave me a chance to work at the writing center as a consultant which led to two years of teaching experience. I will not forget her brave and truthful teaching and exemplary leadership. The theoretical ground of this dissertation and my scholarship are enormously indebted to two great theorists: the late Dr. Nicholas Spenser and Dr. Roland Vegso. Dr. Spencer's insightful classes complicated and refined my understanding of theory and literature; I commemorate his clear and incisive intellectuality and warm humanity. I also could not have built the theoretical frame of this dissertation without Dr. Vegso's wonderful classes and his introduction to theoretical ideas (especially Giorgio Agamben's) which I had not been familiar with before. My dissertation is also indebted to Dr. Guy Reynolds' classes where I learned how to understand contemporary American and English novels. With these committee members, I am grateful to the faculty of the English Department at UNL and the department's generous fellowship program and various funds.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my parents, Kim, Yong Won (김용원) and Lee, Gum Ja (이금자) and parents-in-law, Hwang, Seon Moon (황선문) and Kim, Im Sil (김임실) whose wisdom and timely support helped me complete this dissertation. My father's insatiable zeal for literature and my mother's invaluable humanity and truthfulness are deeply embedded in this dissertation. I also want to thank other family members and relatives, especially my sister, Kim, Ja Won (김자원) and sister-in-law, Hwang, Soon Mi (황순미), who have supported me in various ways. I am thankful to my UNL friends, Bobbi Olson, Sabrina Sergeant, and Kate Kostelnik, whose editing, peer review, and friendship helped me produce a much better dissertation than I could have alone. Many thanks to my MA advisor, Kim, Ae Ju (김애주) and other professors at Dongguk University, as well as my friends, Sung, Chang Kyu, Im Kyung Kyu, etc., and colleagues in Korea for helping me go through a long tunnel. Last but not least, my greatest debt is to my beloved wife, Hwang, Soon Ye (황순예), whose presence and love have shined through my dissertation and my entire life. Soon Ye joined me in this wonderful journey as my academic partner braving our future together; she has stood by me and taught me how to love, care, and learn. I firmly believe that she will produce a better dissertation than mine.

PREFACE

> Happy are those ages when the starry sky is the map of all possible
> paths
> —ages whose paths are illuminated by the light of the stars.
> Everything in such ages is new and yet familiar,
> full of adventure and yet their own.
> The world is wide and yet it is like a home,
> for the fire that burns in the soul is of the same essential nature as the
> stars;
> the world and the self, the light and the fire, are sharply distinct,
> yet they never become permanent strangers to one another,
> for fire is the soul of all light and all fire clothes itself in light.
> (Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel* 29)

> Tell me, enigmatical man, whom do you love best, your father, your
> mother, your sister, or your brother?
> I have neither father, nor mother, nor sister, nor brother.
> Your friends?
> Now you use a word whose meaning I have never known.
> Your country?
> I do not know in what latitude it lies.
> Beauty?
> I could indeed love her, Goddess and Immortal.
> Gold?
> I hate it as you hate God.
> Then, what do you love, extraordinary stranger?
> I love the clouds…the clouds that pass…up there…up there…the
> wonderful clouds!
> (Jean Baudelaire, "The Stranger," *Paris Spleen* 1)

During my honeymoon in New York, I stayed a day at an inn owned by an old Korean man. In our conversation, he told me that he had immigrated in the 80s, and I asked how he felt about the immigration. His tone was melancholic as he answered that he had been "a renter" in this nation; disconcertingly, his melancholic voice resonated with that of another Korean American, Cho-Seung Hui, who notoriously killed thirty-two fellow students at Virginia Tech in 2007. It is perplexing that despite

Cho's rampage and the subsequent media onslaught, his racial and national identity

has been erased from both the media and the general American population's memory.

If you ask non-Asian people who Cho was, most of them would be unable to identify

him as a Korean American or know his name. His racial identity was so easily

forgotten even though teratology ordinarily leaves behind traces of similar violent

social outcasts in people's minds (Song 21). Why is Cho erased from Americans'

minds? This question leads to another question about media's reproduction of

unidentifiable Asian images.

For example, Cho's performances in the video clips posted on YouTube

consist of corny pastiches of the poses of white loners seen on screen many times; in

the videos, he acts like the disturbed hero full of moral angst frequently represented in

various Hollywood movies. Perhaps this accounts for why he is so easily erased from

the identity map on which only white loner gunmen can achieve notoriety; or, even

more troubling, Cho must be forgotten because the US ideology of the model

minority necessitates that his identity becomes a media spectacle in which his name

and appearance are scribed.[1] Cho's identity becomes more and more empty since he

is forced to represent an evil monster that frightens people; Cho is at most a spectacle

in the society in which non-human properties, such as animality, foreignness, or alien

identity, stand out. In the *New York Times*, for example, Mike Nizza proposes that we

can call Cho a man with a "heart of darkness." Additionally, a member of the

Virginia Tech community describes Cho as "evil. pure, unadulterated" in *April 16th:*

---

[1] Pointing out these phenomena, Sylvia Shin Huey Chong describes how Cho's case was racially ambivalent by explaining not only how his identity as a 1.5 generation of a Korean immigrant family was erased from the media, but also how his radicalized subject is interpellated as an unidentifiable Asian monster.

Virgina Tech Remembers (139). Shrewdly reproduced by media and across the racialogical map, Cho, from Baudrillard's perspective, becomes a code of "the aestheticization of the whole world, its cosmopolitan spectacularization, its transformation into images, its semiological organization" (*The Transparency* 16). Cho's glossy, vivid and transaesthetic images in media create a "transpolitical mirror of evil" that captivates people (*The Transparency* 81). His empty identity even expunges his spirit under the transaesthetic image of evil and the invisible stranger.

How Cho's body is forgotten while his images swarm the media is a synopsis of the dynamic of Asian male stereotypes throughout Asian immigration history in the U.S. In "Theoretical profile of Cho Seung Hui: from perspective of forensic behavioral scientist," Roger L. Depue psychologically profiles Cho's personality and describes Cho as physically immature and emotionally troubled by "selective mutism," and then strangely argues that "[s]piritually, [Cho] showed little interest and dropped out of his church before experiencing a growth in faith" (N-3). This description of physical weakness and incommunicable silence reflects widespread prejudices against the barbarian Asian American male who lacks spirit. Moreover, Dr. Depue's description defines Cho's as spiritually depraved, apparently evinced by his failure to attend church; according to Dr. Dupue's rhetoric, Christianity determines the quality of Cho's spirit. In turn, Dr. Depue concludes his so-called "theoretical profile," by asserting that "[Cho] had become the instrument for the destruction of human dignity and precious potential." So, according to Dr. Depue, Cho is an evil stranger whose evilness has the potential to destruct Western humanity. In this vein, Cho is the most negative manifestation of Asian immigrants and represents the failure

of the American dream and the ambivalence of stereotypes facing Asian immigrants, from the model minority to the barbarian without Western spirit.

Nonetheless, transaesthetic images and ambivalent racial stereotypes over Cho's body paradoxically testify to the importance of his body. Under these illusionary ideological identities, Cho's real body persists but is ignored. Accordingly, Viet Thanh Nguye argues, in Asian American studies, "importance of body" gains urgency (8). Asians' bodies maintain a contentious relationship with transaesthetic images perpetrated by the state's racial formation. Asian writers in the Anglophone world have resisted this cultural and political production of Asians' transaesthetic images of bodies by representing unalienable real bodies. For example, John Okada's *No-No Boy* shows Asian bodies that cannot be identified or subordinated into the state system. In this novel, Ichiro Yamada's Japanese American body loses its authenticity as soon as the state reclaims it to employ it as a weapon against Japan; for this purpose, the state and the state apparatuses even deprive Yamada of citizenship and human rights. This deprivation strips him of representability in the bio-politics of the U.S.

However, these unrepresentable Asian bodies subvert the ideological apparatus of American citizenship. In the U.S. and other Western countries, citizenship has been "the contractual and volitional principles of democratic political membership" (Li 2); but American citizenship, in the history of Asian American immigration, has created zones of exception or exclusion such as the "Asiatic barred zone" in 1917 where all Asian immigration was banned. These barred zones later create ethnic enclaves (for example, Chinatown) that hide unrepresentable Asian

bodies that roam without identities. These trans-spatial beings' "[m]ovement and multiplicity frustrate any logic that seeks to reduce everything to the same, to the apparently transparent discourse of 'history' or 'knowledge'" (Chambers 27).

In this way, under the illusionary ideals of a multicultural utopia and an immigrants' heaven, the unrepresented presentation of Asian bodies demands a new spectrum of Asian American literary studies. As an answer to this demand, this dissertation will explore the potential scope and significances of the concept and phenomenon of what I call "trans-spatiality." Horizontally, in the venue of trans-spatiality, diasporic and migrational experience reveals conjunctions that are trans-spatial. Vertically, trans-spatial experience is reflected within the "virtual" registers of literary spaces. Additionally, trans-spatial beings include moving bodies across imaginary, symbolic, and real borderlines; this concept extends to such people as migrants, immigrants, emigrants, refugees, and so on.[2] In short, trans-spatiality is related to geo-political viewpoints of (im)migration and (im)migrants' bodies, but its scope, in this dissertation, is narrowed to the parameters of the literary term.

Trans-spatiality consists of two elements: "trans" and "spatiality." First, the prefix, "trans" means transcendence and pertains to this dissertation's aim to transcend previous theories of Asians' (im)migration in the Anglophone world and to present a nascent view of their experiences in Asian immigrant writers' literary works. Second, this transcendence does not present a general and idealized vision of the (im)migrants' world, but considers differential trans-spatial experiences and their discourses to search for the commonalities of each singular being's differential bodily experience as explored by Asian immigrant writers. Also, "trans" in trans-spatiality

---

[2] I am using "being" here in light of ontology.

signifies "across" and "relation." In this regard, trans-spatiality does not create unity but rather a constellation of literary relations among ethnic writers' presentation of singular trans-spatial or cross-border experience. This reflects a literary and theoretical turn in literary studies of these Asian immigrant writers' works.

If the "Asian turn" is a legitimate turn, as Eric Hayot in his article "The Asian Turns" claims, trans-spatiality is a part of this turn that emphasizes the global mapping of Asians' presences and voices in the West and the Western literature.[3] In this turn, "spatiality" in trans-spatiality signifies the critical mapping of different literary spaces and a critical production of relations among singular trans-spatial experience that each space shows.[4] On the geopolitical level, this critical mapping is pertinent to "border thinking."[5] Crossing imaginary (ideological), symbolic (linguistic), and real borderlines, Asian (im)migrants' mobile bodies perceive differences, map their positions, and move across the Pacific. Asian immigrant writers in this dissertation use this critical mapping in diverse ways to present the validity of singular form-of-life and their universal community in these related

---

[3] Hayot's *PMLA* article critically proposes the transnational turn as the Asian turn though he also acknowledges the limit in transnationality "whose turn in literary studies has the odd distinction of having largely been theorized before having been practiced" (908). His project of creating global relations of aesthetic and material transnationality largely converges with this dissertation's aim.

[4] This mapping of trans-spatiality corresponds with Nicholas Spencer's "critical space" in American literature that is a critical lens to identify "a continuous process of transformation in fictional spatiality" (2). Spencer's critical space, in the regard of post-Marxism, mainly focuses on "subverting lopsided scholarly dichotomy of aesthetics and politics in fiction" (10).

[5] This critical mapping also correlates with Walter D. Mignolo's "border thinking," namely "moments in which the imaginary of the modern world system cracks" (23). Mignolo's border thinking imagination discloses subalterns' voices because those global stationary or mobile subalterns cannot speak or be identified. This imagination demands literary representation and aesthetic tropes as well as ontological and ethical inquiries of those unidentifiable, un-politicized beings; in other words, in providing a universal vision of "the modern/colonial world system" of diverse geocultures, trans-spatial beings' humanity in crisis crack up these geocultures to present the imagination of these beings' negative presences and unspeakable, indelible experiences. Colonial differences across different Asians' singular experiences are put into relation by trans-spatiality.

spaces. This also entails a theoretical leap from the traditional orientation of Asian

American literary studies, such as identity politics or cultural studies insofar as these

Agambenian concepts deny any identities or unified meanings of community. These

concepts even cross out "Asians." This dissertation uses these radical steps to disclose

the foundational universality of Asianness and Asian immigrant communities and

their future relations with other minorities and their communities. Only in this

fundamental conceptualization is it possible to add infinite combinations of identities

and communities without exclusion. In this radical potentiality, Asianness does not

operate to exclude those who traditionally cannot be considered "Asians" in the West

such as refugees, illegal migrants, boat people, on-line community, bi-racial people,

and so on.[6]

Indeed, the scope of trans-spatiality challenges the identity politics and

cultural studies that have prevailed in Asian literary studies in Anglophone world.

Identity politics and cultural studies have concentrated on the solidification of ethnic

subjectivity or collective identities vis-à-vis a revamp of split and traumatized

identities due to racism, global exploitation, and colonialism, as well as the

invigoration of cultural difference. In many senses, celebrating ethnic difference and

desiring assimilation into the majority share one final cause—the establishment of an

authentic Asian subject and Asian community. However, these legitimate claims of

solid Asian identities contradict with (im)migrants' unidentifiable identities, their

---

[6] One of examples can be North Korean refugees, a few of whom were able to visit the U.S. without a visa because there is no visa treaty between the U.S. and North Korea. After the 2005 North Korean Human Right Act, it has been reported that there are around 50 North Korean refugees in the U.S. However, traditional Asian American studies cannot include their voices in the studies without more inclusive theoretical framework. This is global phenomena, and as Derrida in *Cosmoplitianism and Forgiveness* argues, this refugee issue "calls for an urgent responses" (23).

continuous exiles and their exclusions from the global system.[7] Identity politics and

cultural studies easily exclude those who have not achieved citizenship, those who are

constantly moving across borderlines or those who deny fixed national or ethnic

identities. But I do not claim that these two registers are obsolete now; rather they

have to be reconsidered through more fundamental philosophical and ethical ideas of

"life" and "community" *per se*. In trans-spatiality, culture is secondary, while

philosophy and aesthetic are primary. This philosophical grounding in trans-spatial

study will render identity politics and cultural studies resilient.

Therefore, trans-spatiality is a grounding term and methodological orientation,

and its scope is relational and appositional. Indeed, previous theories such as

postcolonialism, cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, and globalization have already

engaged with certain issues of this trans-spatiality. These theories emerged in

resistance to the rigidity of identity politics and cultural studies. Therefore, it is

reasonable to ask why this trans-spatiality is necessary now and how this theory is

different from other theories. All these theories, including trans-spatial study, started

with the necessity of discursive wars against Orientalism, imperialism, colonialism,

global capitalism, the modern world system, global racism and the newly emerging

multitude of (im)migrants whose collective presences foil ideological state

apparatuses' interpellation. Yet, trans-spatiality transcends certain limits of these

theories that are often vexed by their dependence on dichotomies between

nation/internationality, nationality/assimilation, local/global, and

colonial/postcolonial, which insufficiently address the more complex trans-spatial

---

[7] In *Diaspora Literature and Visual Culture*, Sheng-mei Ma claims, "identity politics in the spirit of the
1960s need to be reassessed amidst globalization and in the new millennium" (98).

phenomena of crossing borderlines and multitudinous immigrations. Crucially, trans-spatiality's transcendence is not the dialectic sublation of theoretical differences among these theories but an attempt to create appositional conjunctions of these theories' differences and to find underlying relations by posing the ontological and ethical questions hidden beneath these theories. Rhetorically speaking, trans-spatiality functions like a semicolon because it relays and relates various forms of border-crossing bodies and the literary representation of these bodies without limits. Likewise, differential beings and their experiences across different local/global situations can be represented in literary works.

After its institutionalization as a discipline, postcolonialism has expanded its spectrum beyond the concepts of post-coloniality or decolonialism. Moreover, its theoretical basis in French poststructuralism reveals the limit of its capability to properly explain newly emerging global events such as Wall Street Occupy, post 9/11 geopolitics, and the rapid development of technology and on-line community. In a *PMLA* panel discussion, Sunil Agnani points out that even Gayatri Spivak, one of the founders of postcolonialism, pronounced "the postcolonial moribund in an age of globalization" (638).[8] Nonetheless, trans-spatiality does not deny the persistent necessity of postcolonial decolonization and constant engagements with nationalism vs. globalism. Imperialism still lurks under various global phenomena in such forms of antagonisms against Islam or Chinese.

---

[8] In 2007, a special *PMLA* edition featured a roundtable, "The End of Postcolonial Theory," on the topic of "potential exhaustion of postcolonialism as a paradigm." In this conversation, all of the participants agreed on the limit of postcolonialism and the necessity of new theoretical approaches to rapidly changing globalization. For example, Jennifer Wenzel problematizes postcolonial studies after 9/11 as being "caught politically flat-footed, facing criticism from right and left" (634).

The "New Cosmopolitanism" cannot deny its own dilemma originating in the Kantian definition of "commonwealth" and "cosmopolitan citizenship" as the ideal vision of "world citizens," which I will critically review in the chapter three. Moreover, its subordination into multiculturalism, which is "a name for the genuine striving toward common norms and mutual translatability" (Robbins 13), reveals its complicity with white supremacy and colonialism. From its origin, cosmopolitanism has been a Western ideal. Yet, trans-spatiality appropriates such substantial ideas as "common" humanity and global "community" from cosmopolitanism.

Likewise, transnationalism is full of complex contention, though an increasing number of scholars in Asian American studies are employing this theory to explain various material and discursive relations. If we grant that the widely-accepted hypothesis that the nation is a fictive narrative and imaginary community, how can we claim that this does not apply to trans-*nationalism* which mostly focuses on local to local, local to global, and global to local relations? What's more, material transnationality is mostly influenced by post-Marxism and discursive transnational theorizations have lost the currency they once had. On a material level, multinational corporations becomes a "transnational corporation" that is "no longer…tied to its nation of origin but is adrift and mobile, ready to settle anywhere and exploit any state including its own" (Miyoshi 86). On a discursive level, theorizations of transnationality lack universality. Transnational relations among African countries cannot be the same as transnational relations among Asian countries. Colonial differences, different economic situations, and different theoretical demands in each

case turn transnational entities into a set of infinitely multiple examples. Still, the geo-political background of trans-spatiality is indebted to the transnationalism.

On the other hand, Antonio Negri and Micheal Hardt's ideas of "Empire" and more recently, "Commonwealth" are not as ideal as implied. Though Negri and Hardt propose a legitimate vision of a non-centered and without-in-and-out Empire and a utopian space of Deleuzian nomads and the multitude, their international but anarchistic vision is tethered to the Western teleology.[9] This limit also corresponds with the limit of their post-Marxist perspective. (Im)migrants or multitude are not new proletariats that have potentiality to bring about international revolution, because the logic of internationalism is not totally different from world capitalism or capitalistic ideals of the world as a flat economic community without borders. Empire and neo-liberal world order are, in essence, utopian and anarchistic. These socio-political and utopian visions of the world, resonating with Kant's ideal cosmopolitanism, presuppose a utopian world without taking the negative aspects of (im)migrating bodies' singular experience into account. Without philosophical, more specifically ontological speculation on mobile bodies' realities and their unidentifiable voices, it is not possible to present the worldview in which those bodies' trans-spatial experiences are recounted.

Last, diaspora studies shows how (im)migrants, through transnational exiles, create "for themselves a fresh mode of relation toward their present and the past, a

---

[9] In *Empire's New Clothes*, a collection of essays mostly critiquing Negri and Hardt's Empire, most contributors do not agree with their visions of the world. It is worthwhile to think over Slavoj Zizek's questions of "The Ideology of the Empire and its Traps": "is today the state really withering away…? Is, on the contrary, the 'War on Terror' not the strongest-yet assertion of state authority? Are we not witnessing now the unheard-of-mobilization of all (repressive and ideological) state apparatuses?" (264).

way of seeing themselves within a new order" (Manuel 39). However, such exceptions as refugee camps, concentration camps, sex camps, and so on reveal uncharted zones of humanity that require more extensive research insofar as those beings' consequential temporary habituation cannot fully explain these conditions of humanity on the verge of inhumanity.

Unlike the geopolitical emphasis of these theories, this dissertation does not expand its scope into socio-political research. Trans-spatiality in this dissertation is limited to only Asians' experience and Asian immigrant writers' representation, even though other ethnic writers and thinkers heavily influence this trans-spatiality. That is, this dissertation, though centered on Asian immigrants' writings, emphasizes "relation" rather than authenticity in terms of trans-spatiality. Moreover, "relation" in trans-spatiality is a philosophical concept and an aesthetic metaphor. In literary and ethico-ontological spaces, imagination and humanity create universal relations among the singularities of thinkers and writers. What this dissertation proposes is that Asian immigrant writers' literary works in the Anglophone world are creating a poetic constellation of "trans-spatial literary spaces." This constellation encompass a "spatialised aesthetic...[where] indistinct and indefinite diasporic identities are negotiated" (Bromley 67). Admittedly, this project could not be possible without the "commonplaces" among Asian immigrants' literary works. As I will explain fully in the first and other chapters, the "commonplace," heavily influenced the key heuristic *lieu commun* of Édouard Glissant's "poetics of relation," is the main linchpin that connects these universal registers.

In fact, the works in this dissertation share similar commonplaces. In this preface, I will introduce three commonplaces: the writers' experience of immigration from Asia or of internment, their experiments with genres, and the ethico-ontological signs of animal cries and voices from the dead in their works. First, most writers in this dissertation were born in Asia and immigrated to Anglophone Western countries when they were under ten years of age: Myung Mi Kim, Theresa Cha Hak Kyung and Change Rae Lee immigrated from Korea to the U.S. and Kazuo Ishiguro from Japan to England. Joy Kogawa was born in Canada but experienced a different sort of trans-spatiality—relocation and internment in Japanese camps during World War II. In their literary works, these writers use or intentionally hide their trans-spatial experience. Immigration and unidentifiable identities dominate their lives and works, which raises for readers a commonplace question—how can these writers represent their trauma produced by exclusion, assimilation, and racism in literary space? I do not mean that their works are based on autobiographical narratives or that their life experiences determine their fictions; the central issue here is how they are able to represent trans-spatial experience within conventional genres by deconstructing these conventions.[10]

Each writer in this dissertation experiments with a particular genre. Chang Rae Lee's *Native Speaker* evokes the generic particularity of a spy novel; Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* that of a poetic testimony of Japanese Canadian internment; Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* that of a science fiction narrative with a backdrop of

---

[10] Those writers also deconstruct the "autobiographical imperative," as Huang calls it, of Asians' writings in Anglophone world Against this conventional style, the writers in this dissertation subtly and intentionally deconstruct this imperative to do "genre experimentation" (Huang, *Contesting Genres in Contemporary Asian American Fiction* 5).

contemporary England; and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* that of a multi-genre avant-garde artwork. However, these works also deconstruct conventional Western genres. Lee's *Native Speaker* is about an ethnic spy, and its plot is not a conventional hard-boiled narrative but a postmodern consideration of immigrants and their communities. Kogawa's *Obasan* also denies the conventional realistic representation of testimonial literature about concentration camps and presents figurative images of animal, dream, and memory that poetically illustrate universal violence and trauma. Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* deconstructs the genre conventions of science fiction and expands its horizon to philosophical considerations of humanity and the ontological meaning of truth and freedom. Finally, Cha's *Dictée* delves into examinations of the relations between her trans-spatial experiences, Western and Eastern names of the void, and art; in this work, trans-spatial life, philosophy and art create a constellation in a form of a "bowl."

Lastly, I uncovered ethico-ontological commonplaces in novels I will analyze in other chapters—the animal's cry and voices from the dead emerging in Asian American literature. Admittedly, this does not mean that these ethico-ontological images can be found only in Asian American literature. Kafkaesque animals' cries or Benjy's animal cry in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* are also instances of this literary commonplace. Indeed, this commonplace leads to my overarching perspective of ethico-ontology differentiated from socio-political one.[11] For this

---

[11] These animal voices come from the true ethos of humanity according to Agamben, while Jacques Rancière regards it as an origin of the ethics of alterity that has to be replaced by politics as *dissensus*. Their contention in fact originates from the different understanding of a paragraph in Aristotle's "Politics" which reads: "Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals" (1129). About this passage, Agamben argues

ethico-ontological philosophical framework, in this dissertation, I theoretically dance

with Western philosophers: mostly Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques

Derrida, Theordor W. Adorno, and Walter Benjamin. Alongside these engagements

with Western philosophy, I will also present its relationships with Eastern philosophy

mostly in the first and the last chapters. The marrow of this dissertation's theoretical

frame is built upon Giorgio Agamben' philosophy and Édouard Glissant's poetics.

Their ideas of "potentiality" and "relation" ground the five chapters of this

dissertation.

The first chapter as introduction will address Asian (im)migrants' animalized

or Otherized humanity and representations of humanity transposed to animlaity in

three poets's poems (Li-Young Lee, Myung Mi Kim and Édouard Glissant) which

create a constellation that provides a universal picture of the whole dissertation. I take

on Heidegger as an example of Western philosopher's orientalization, otherization,

and animalization of Asians and Asian philosophy. By this deconstruction, I propose

three Agambenian concepts—potentiality, form-of-life, and coming community—as

commonplaces of two cross-ethnic and cross-aesthetic relations between Myung Mi

Kim's poetics of commons and Édouard Glissant's poetics of relation.

The second chapter is an analysis of Chang Rae Lee's *Native Speaker*.

Differing from previous Asian American critical attention to this novel's general

---

that *logos* and *phone* as language and voice respectively in this quote reveals the pairs of "bare
life/political existence, zoe/bio, exclusion/inclusion" (*Homo Sacer* 8). The voice is analogous with
animality or *zoe* that has to be excluded for being included to the *polis* or state, while political animal's
logos or language (discourse in modern understanding) verifies its humanity. On the contrary, Rancière
interprets this passage to mean that "[a] speaking being is…a political being" (*The Politics* 12). This
different interpretation shows a different philosophical understanding of humanity; Agamben on
ethico-ontology and Rancière on aesthetics as politics. This dissertation follows Agamben's ethico-
ontological interpretation though not excluding the theoretical importance of Rancière's politics and its
equivalent aesthetics (the conclusion will be my own pedagogical praxis of Rancière's *dissensus*).

themes of cultural difference, immigration writer's identity, geopolitics and racialogy, I discuss the similarity between Herman Melville's Bartleby and Chang Rae Lee's Henry Park to explore his transformation from a scribe in a scripture economy to a trans-spatial bard. Along with this analysis, I explore how Henry starts listening to the voices of the dead and his deceased son, Mitt, in order to disclose the true trans-spatial community of (im)migrants.

In the third chapter on Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, I analyze three different ethico-ontological series of signs—animal signs, dream/memory signs, and ontological sign of death. This chapter argues that true testimony is not a realistic representation of historical atrocity but a poetic representation of the truth of violence and its images. Influenced mostly from Deleuzian idea of art sign, this analysis focuses on the animal cry from the female protagonist's mother, and its ethico-ontological meaning in an aesthetic context.

The fourth chapter shows a shift from trans-spatiality in America-centered, contemporary and anthropocentric narrative, to a clone-centered science fiction and the critical space created by Kazuo Ishiguro. This chapter regards the clone as a metaphor of potential humanity and debates its historical meaning. This future-oriented speculation leads to inquiries of history and art. The clone as an artist is a cornerstone of the piercing issue of the relations between art and life in this dissertation, which I explore more specifically in the last chapter.

The last chapter explores this topic of the relations between life and art via an overarching image of a bowl with the void in the center as a form of constellation in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*. This poetic image of a bowl is in fact the universal

image of life, death, and rebirth. I will prove that Cha's creation of three different modes of languages—bodily language, name language, and language of translation—produce "the poeticized" as the linkage between the trans-spatial writer and her work. In turn, I will prove how this linkage has the potentiality to connect the Western and Eastern names of the void—*Khora* and Tao. This last chapter also draws to a close the continuous discussion of such ontological moods as homesickness, uncanny, and melancholia.

Indeed, these ontological moods are also mine as the trans-spatial writer of this dissertation. I will conclude without summarization but with a brief analysis of my own trans-spatial teaching experience in the U.S. This unconventional conclusion is intended as an experiment of trans-spatiality's other possible deployment. That is also the reason why I use a bowl as the image of trans-spatial literature and the dissertation; it has the potentiality for an infinite future input and output that I will explore in my future scholarship. As Cho, Seung Hui was a form of life in this potentiality, all writers and thinkers in this dissertation form a bowl containing Asian noodle for readers' thoughts and happiness. Strangely, happiness is the endpoint of all the moods and voices in this dissertation. I will usher readers to this trans-spatial world suffering from homesickness, but I hope that together we can find a happiness in the journey. The following introductory and theoretical chapter will reveal the whole philosophical and theoretical map of the dissertation and will function as a guiding star of this journey.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION:
HEIDEGGER'S ASIAN ANIMAL THAT
THEREFORE I AM AND THE POETICS OF COMMONS

> Philosophy has no specificity, no proper territory,
> it is within literature,
> within art or science or theology or whatever,
> it is this element which contains a capability to be developed.
> In a sense philosophy is scattered in every territory.
> It is always a diaspora,
> and must be recollected and gathered up
> (Giorgio Agamben, "What is Paradigm")
>
> The poem is the answer's absence. The poet is the one who,
> Through his sacrifice, keeps the question open in his work.
> At every time he lives the time of distress, and his time is
> Always the empty time when what he must live is the double
> infidelity:
> That of men, that of gods—and also the double absence of the gods
> Who are on longer and who are not yet.
> The Poem's space is entirely represented by this and,
> which indicates the double absence
> The separation at its most tragic instant.
> (Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* 247)

Animal images in Asian American history have long been prevalent. For instance, in *Screaming Monkeys*, Evelina Galang describes how Filipino Americans are compared to "monkey[s]" in "a food review of a Filipino deli called Mango Wango Tango" (3). While this incident enraged the Filipino community, it represents merely the tip of the iceberg in Asian immigration history, where Asians have been compared to vermin or "Yellow Peril".[12] Such hate crimes as the Vincent Chin case,[13]

---

[12] This racial prejudice is closely related to the history of U.S. international politics given the U.S. imperialism and colonization of the Philippines. In this colonization, Filipinos could not gain citizenship because it was believed they were "inherently incapable of self-government and that it would be a crime to saddle the Filipinos with burdens of citizenship" (Gossett 329).

the L.A. riots, and the sequential violence against the Korean community, prove how images of Asians as savages (not Rousseau's noble savage) paradoxically coexist with images of Asians as victims who are passive in response to predators' violence.

Admittedly, this analogy of animals with Asians is not solely applicable to Asian immigrants. For instance, Glen Elder, Jennifer Wolch, and Jody Emel clearly show not just how Western anthropocentricism analogizes an animal space with immigrants' space (i.e. Chinatown, Koreatown and other ethnic enclaves) but also how this anthropocentricism stereotypically uses animal bodies to "racialize, dehumanize, and maintain power relations" (436). This transcoding of racialogy and anthropocentricism has been historically hegemonic in the West. Chicana/o, Native Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans share similar stories. Yet, Asians' animalization in the West, especially in America, internalizes domestic and global contradictions: mute, hardworking, and tamed animal-humans having gone through racial animalization. Nevertheless, there have also been Asian immigrant writers who have endeavored to deconstruct these racial stereotypes and appropriate them in order to problematize the Western construction of humanity that operates to exclude Asians from the human landscape. For example, Monica Chiu in *Filthy Fictions* traces animal images and images of filth in Asian American fiction to unveil the cultural genealogy of racial discrimination and the degradation of immigrants' bodies into filthy animal bodies.[14] A case which brings this to light is "Cleaving"

---

[13] Twenty-one year-old Vincent Chin, a Chinese American, was brutally lynched and killed in 1982 by two white men who received three years' probation. This case enraged Chinese Americans and made a nationwide impact to initiate recognition of hate crimes against Asian Americans. For more information, see Helen Zia's *Asian American Dreams* (58-81).

[14] An imposing example is Maxin Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey* where a Chinese protagonist, Wittman Ah Sing, uses his animal images as a monkey and narrates Chinese American history.

written by Li-Young Lee, a Chinese American poet who immigrated to the U.S. when he was young from China.

According to Wenying Xu, Lee's poem in general inhabits the limbo between the "quest for Absolute and the necessity to speak from a material place," which makes it possible for Lee to become "a diasporic Asian American transcendental poet" (95). As Xu maintains, Lee's poetics derives from a combination of visceral materiality and transcendental metaphysics. Though Lee is purporting to be a writer dealing with universal themes, the materialized metaphors such as food, animals, and plants that contain ethnic differences jar with his aim to present a universal and transcendental humanity. This contradiction stems from his trans-spatial experience and family history, especially his father's life: his father's political exile from communized China, conversion to Christianity while a prisoner in Indonesia, and continuous exile before finally settling down in the U.S. as a Protestant minister. His father's and his own diasporic life induces Lee's transcendental view of the world championing Western Christianity and the American dream. But this view, at the same time, becomes discordant with his personal experience of racial discrimination and stereotypes. For this reason, the animal image in Lee's poems becomes a contradictory image that represents Lee's racially animalized self-image, resonating with Chinese immigration history and his desire of becoming subordinated into the American transcendental spirit.

Li-Young Lee's long poem, "The Cleaving," begins with his eerie description of an Asian butcher in a typical Chinese American grocery store:

> He gossips like my grandmother, this man
> With my face, and I could stand

> Amused all afternoon
> In the Hon Kee Grocery,
> Amid hanging meats he
> Chops
> (Li-Young Lee 77)

In Lee's poetry, the third person pronoun "he" usually stands for the father figure. In "The Cleaving," specifically, "he" designates a butcher and proprietor of a typical Chinese grocery store. This butcher who is chopping animals' carcasses epitomizes every Chinese immigrant such as "[his] grandfather;/ come to America to get a Western education/ in 1917, but too homesick to study" (Li-Young Lee 78). Then, grotesquely recounting the process of butchering with a vivid image of a "duck" dissected in such a way that the butcher cuts the head off and "cleanly halved it between/ the eyes," the speaker "see[s], foetal-crouched/ inside the skull, the homunculus, /gray brain grainy/to eat" (Li-Young Lee 79). After this description, the speaker asks questions:

> Did this animal, after all, at the moment
> Its neck broke,
> Image the way his executioner
> Shrinks from his own death?
> Is this how
> I, too, recoil from my day?
> …
> This is also how I looked before I tore my mother open.
> Is this how I presided over my century, is this how
> I regarded the murders?
> This is also how I prayed.
> Was it me in the Other
> ….
> The butcher sees me eye this delicacy.
> With a finger, he picks it
> Out of the skull-cradle
> And offers it to me.
> I take it gingerly between my fingers
> And suck it down.
> I eat my man.

(79-80)

In the speaker's imagination, the duck, while being dissected by the executioner, imagines that the butcher recoils from his fear of his own death. Death is a common, factual element among living beings, regardless of a being's hierarchical position in nature. This facticity of life and death amplifies as the speaker also transposes himself into the animal's position and projects himself to its (the duck's) death. Thus, through this switch of positions, Lee raises a fundamentally Heideggerian question: "how do we live historically" (Large 84)? For Heidegger, the answer might lie in the authentic being (Dasein)'s historicity.[15] This historicity is related to beings' facticity—being-toward-death. From a Heideggerian perspective, death is one of two elements—death and language—differentiating human beings from animals. In the Heideggerian world, an animal's death is a mere physical death, namely inauthentic *perishing*, while Dasein *dies* (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 229). Although Heidegger admits that ontically both humans and animals die in the same way if death means the end of life, he claims that Dasein or being-toward-death, a person projecting himself to his own death, makes Dasein's ending authentic. In contrast, the speaker in the poem implies that animals and humans are the same because they all die. Death, to the speaker, is commonly relational, contrary to Heidegger's claim that "death reveals itself as the ownmost nonrelational possibility not to be bypassed" (*Being and Time* 232). If Heideggerian death is authentic, ownmost, and the sole moment of death, to the

[15] Indeed, Lee's poetical and philosophical universe is thoroughly influenced by Western and Eastern philosophies; in an interview, he says: "The whole Universe is humming, is vibrating. It's that hum that I want to hear…To be a poet is to reveal the hum, which is 'logos.' It's pure mantra, Tao, law, whatever you want to call it…And poetry is that frequency" (Dearing & Graber 111). This remark clearly shows that his poetic space is a space of encounter between Western and Eastern philosophy and a cosmos in which a poet becomes a poet-philosopher who envisions the historicity of the whole humanity ontologically.

speaker in the poem, death is relational and destructs the hierarchy between animals and humans. In the speaker's eyes, animals, the butcher, and the speaker are related ontologically via death.

Equally, to the speaker in the poem, birth, considered ontologically, is as violent as death. The second stanza starts with the speaker's imagination of himself when he was born. The speaker "tore [his] mother open" to be "thrown into the world" (Li-Young Lee 79). However, this being "thrown into the world" is a violent event, regardless of the significance of a human being's emergence. The speaker's imagination moves further back into the origin of his life—the prenatal form of life. The speaker imagines a fetus as the prenatal form of his own self and compares it with the animal's "foetal-crouched inside the skull, the homunculus, / gray brain grainy/ to eat" (Li-Young Lee 79). A humunculus is a little full-fledged man that was supposed by mystics to live in humans' brains. There are three grotesque associations in this passage: the mother with the animal skull, the speaker and the Other in his mother's womb, and a fetus and an animal's brain. These associations open ontological relations among life, death, origin, and violence. All beings share the same origin whether animal, human or prenatal material. By this radical, ontological de-hierarchization, the speaker destructs his own human subjectivity and orientation. Then, the speaker in the poem leaps to the transcendental images of the butcher, history, soul, and body:

> The noise the body makes/ when the body meets
> the soul over the soul's ocean and penumbra
> is the old sound of up-and-down, in-and-out,
> a lump of muscle clung-clugging blood
> into the air; a lover's heart shaped tongue
> …

> the butcher working at his block and blade to marry their shapes
> by violence and time;
> an engine crossing,
> re-crossing salt water, hauling immigrants and the junk of the poor.
> (80)

Now, transcending the previous images of "every Chinese" and "executioner," the butcher symbolizes "time and violence" becoming transcendental history, God, or Being that ontologically differentiates being from nothing. This transcendental butcher violently operates the ontological and historical system that transforms, connects, splits, and redeems souls and bodies. A person's origin as prenatal form corresponds with the origin of historicity. And this corresponds with Heidegger's philosophical thoughts of the origin of history in one of his writings.[16] On one hand, by eating these origins of history and his life, the speaker in the poem embodies homelessness, while history and his life begins toward the end of history or the end of his life. On the other hand, through eating his prenatal form of life—the animal's life—and becoming Other, the machine of divisions between life and death, animality and humanity, and materiality and spirituality becomes inoperative. Eating is an ontological deconstruction to stop the machine.

Subsequently, the speaker posits again this imagery of history and transcendental Being to physical and spiritual imageries of immigrants. Immigrants over the physical (Pacific) and spiritual ocean form "a many-membered/ body of

---

[16] The origin of history and ontological time is violent as Heidegger claims in his controversial *Introduction to Metaphysics*. In this compiled lecture, Heidegger's interpretation of the choral ode form *Antigone* poetically discloses how humanity originates from the strange power of "*denion*" (*Introduction* 160). "Denion" means an overwhelming sway of violence and its forming of the world by taking a journey to dominate the earth and nature; in this sense, Heidegger says, "humanity is violence-doing" (*Introduction* 160). By this violent inception of humanity and its historicity, human beings become inauthentic beings, losing their ontological homes. Thus, Humanity originally began with "homelessness," and its mood is "un-canny," which in German (*das Unheimliche*), means both home and homelessness and turn into melancholia as a symptom.

love" (81). This "body of love" is not perfect or authentic but consists of "each one's unique corruption of those texts, the face, the body" (81). In other words, this body of love is a space of collective immigrants' bodily subjects and their imperfect and improper material spirituality, though this space has the potentiality to create a collective space of love. In this "flesh" taken as a totality, "All are beautiful by variety" (81). This body of love forms a spatial, historical "flesh" where all suffered, deformed, and both materially and spiritually separated immigrants can share their texts, trans-spatial experiences, and material spirituality.

This flesh is not just an ontological totality but also a textual one. Intellectuality and historical connections through texts are woven into material spirituality and ontological "flesh" when the speaker "suck[s] the meat of animals or recites 300 poems of the T'ang" (Li-Young Lee 81). Here, the speaker equates reading to eating in that "[his] reading [is] a kind of eating, [and his] eating a kind of reading" (83).[17] Eating consists of both negative, destructive deconstruction and positive nutrient consumption. Discursive texts and material flesh are to be destructed and consumed to invigorate the speaker's intellectuality and body. However, this double act of deconstruction and consumption is violent in both cases. The speaker violently engages in this double process, especially to deconstruct Western humanity and transform his own ethnic identity into nutrient substance for him; the speaker "would devour [Chinese] to sign it, [a] race that according to Emerson *managed to preserve to a hair/ for three or four thousand years/ the ugliest features in the world*" (83, emphasis in original).

---

[17] Lee's poem corresponds with Frank Chin's novels and plays that use Chinese eatery and culture as heroic place. But here I focus on pre-culture and philosophical interpretation.

By italicizing, Lee quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson's letter wherein Emerson wonders why "the same dull current of ignoble blood creep[s] through a thousand generations in China without any provision for its purification" (Emerson 127). In that letter, Emerson's diatribe becomes more and more racist as he claims: "Even miserable Africa can say I have hewn the wood & drawn the water to promote the wealth & civilization of other lands. But, Chin[a], reverend dullness! Hoary ideot! All she can say at the convocation of nations must be—'I made the tea'" (Emerson 127). Emerson materializes Chinese civilization and its spirit by emphasizing China's allegedly "ugliest feature"[18]; yet his Orientalist essentialization of the whole Chinese civilization can in no way stand; it naturally deconstructs itself. In this way, the speaker in the poem deconstructs Emerson's racism and replies to his obviously ridiculous rant by eating "Emerson, his transparent soul, his soporific transcendence" (Li-Young Lee 83). The speaker devours Emerson's racism and xenophobia textually and culturally to deconstruct the violent shadow of Emerson's transcendentalism. In this sense, "eating" is the process of deconstructing trans-spatial history and its violence, but this eating is also a process of consuming Emerson's philosophy allowing it to be appropriated by the poet.[19]

---

[18] According to Gassett, Emerson is one of the American intellectuals who were "disposed to endorse phrenology to one degree or another" (72).

[19] This eating is not just deconstructing but also an integrating process. As Jeffrey Patridge argues, Lee's eating Emerson indicates mediation "between his own voice and American literary tradition" (83). Similarly, Xu also holds that Lee "avenges himself and the Chinese by subjecting Emerson and his racist remark to the trope of eating, and with the same trope he simultaneously embraces his people and their four thousand years of history" (123).

Furthermore, this eating discloses the bio-power Chinese immigrants hold to resist the bio-political apparatuses that control them.[20] The speaker sings, "muscles/ insisting *resist, persist, exist*…the body humming *reside, reside*…the body sighing *revise, revise*" (Li-Young Lee 85). Persistence and perdurance are Chinese immigrants' unrepresentable but most powerful bio-power against the American system of division and oppression Emerson's racism fits into. In regard to cultural aspect and identity politics, for Asians, residing in the U.S. entails a violent assimilation or a drastic revision of identities. Legally or illegally, while not registered administratively due to citizenship restriction and exclusionary laws, Asians survive, persist, and prosper. For this reason, Asians' ontological presence and movements across the Pacific contain such registers as cultural assimilation, homelessness, and resistance.

Immigration history in the U.S. is a history of bio-political exclusion and resistance via immigrants' ontological presences. The only weapon immigrants have is their ability to scream and to "be" "here" and "now" and "move" persistently; they cannot communicate properly and fall short of claiming their human rights under the condition that their humanity is itself in doubt. They cannot be differentiated from animals under the state demographic apparatuses if they are counted as non-identifiable non-citizens. These Asians become the uncountable "many" animal-beings. The speaker in the poem ends the poem with his deep thoughts of violence, spirit, and possible change through a form of pan-racial community:

---

[20] Admittedly, bio-power is not wholly positive; but bio-power in the most negative form can achieve its maximum power though by a being's presence and his everyday practice. The bio-politics is also not totally negative system but is interwoven to bio-power from the birth; however, in trans-spatiality bio-politics loses its meaning because of its incapability to identify an Asian being.

No easy thing, violence.
One of its names? Changes. Change
Resides in the embrace
Of the effaced and the effacer,
In the covenant of the opened and the opener;
The axe accomplishes it on the soul's axis.
What then may I do
But cleave to what cleaves me.
I kiss the blade and eat my meat.
I thank the wielder and receive,
While terror spirits
My change, sorrow also.
The terror the butcher
Scripts in the unhealed
Air, the sorrow of his Shang
Dynasty face,
African face with slit eyes. He is
My sister, this
Beautiful Bedouin, this Shulamite,
…this Jew, this Asian, this one
with the Cambodian face, Vietnamese face, this Chinese
I daily face,
This immigrant,
This man with my own face.
(Li-Young Lee 87)

In these lines, the speaker, in compliance with Heidegger's understanding of the

origin of humanity from violence, considers that violence as the essence of humanity

"resides in the embrace of" the active agent of violence ("the effacer" and "opener")

and the passive victim ("the effaced" and "the opened"). This "embrace" deconstructs

the dialectics of "the changer" and "the changed" so that it opens "the open" to all

forms of beings, regardless of their roles, as a common place of all beings without

hierarchy. The speaker in the poem "cleave[s] to what cleaves [him]" (Li-Young Lee

87). Likewise, the speaker immanently cleaves the transcendental Being that cleaves

him. This cleaving of the cleaving renders the literary space immanent because it

reveals that "the cleaver," as a transcendental Being, has the same spiritual materiality

as "the cleaved"; thus, "my meat" is in fact the cleaver's meat that the speaker in the poem eats, deconstructing the hierarchy of the passive victim and the active annihilator. This could be possible because of the opposite function of "cleaving," that is, it connects transcendental Being with beings though its result is death. Only on the fundamentally immanent plane of life and death, beings and Being can be separated and simultaneously integrated. Negativity and positivity in both forms of immanence and transcendentality coexist with the rhythm of integrating and separating.

Presenting this radical vision of a space where all beings, through splitting and connecting life and death as well as immanence and transcendence, exist immanently without divisions between transcendentality and materiality, animality and humanity, and subject and Other, Lee's poem ends with an image of gathering of all different immigrants into a common place where the alterity on their faces calls for ethical responses or responsibilities from "each of us" (Li-Young Lee 87). In this way, a Chinese's suffering face from the ancient "Shang Dynasty" as a materialized spirit, can have an "African face with slit eyes." Every suffering face, like Levinas's face containing alterity as its content, forms an ethical community of the "flesh" in which Others with faces of "Beautiful Bedouin, the Shulamite…this Jew, this Asian" and so on, dwell together (87). Here ethnic particularity and universal humanity merge into ontological and ethical issues of animality and responsibility.[21] This common place

---

[21] Xu also discusses this metaphysical combination of universality and particularity in Lee's "Cleaving," and says, "Lee's interpersonal ethics originates from his transcendentalist impulse to render cultural differentiation meaningless. Yet it is precisely his cultural difference that makes him fascinating poet" (126). However, I use singularity instead of particularity to note the different perspective from Xu's more cultural understanding. Singularity does not contrast with universal because it is a pre-cultural, ontological register of a person's ontological historicity.

and its ethical, ontological, and political contexts are the main topic of this chapter and the whole dissertation.

From here, I will trace the connectivity of animality and Others (specifically Asians) and their roles in Western thoughts, especially through Heidegger's texts. The methodology I will take is commentary. As Deleuze says, "in the history of philosophy, a commentary should act as a veritable double and bear the maximal modification appropriate to a double" (*Difference* xxi). I will, from my Asian position as a "veritable double," take on and comment on Heidegger's texts, especially on his differentiation between Dasein's world and the animal's environment placed in equivalence with the Other's world; at the same time I will conduct meta-commentry on several other scholars' commentaries on Heidegger's ambiguous exclusion of animality from humanity. Then, I will examine how Li-Young Lee's images—"body of love" as an ontological totality of "flesh," historicity of violence, and imagination of a common place of all suffering minorities—are related to the poetics of commons and the poetics of relation proposed by two minority poets—Myung-Mi Kim and Édouard Glissant.

Heidegger and Asians' Animal Spirits

It is little known that Heidegger collaborated with a Chinese scholar to translate *Tao Te Ching* in 1946, right after WWII, but rescinded the project abruptly after their last meeting in the summer[22] of 1946. Paul Sih-yi Hsiao, in "Heidegger and

---

[22] To investigate the genealogy of Asians becoming animals without spirit, I take on Heidegger's oeuvre for several reasons. Heidegger's encounters with Asians and Asian thought disclose the hidden dilemma Western philosophers had against the presence of other human races. Undeniably, Heidegger does not represent all Western philosophers and philosophy in modern times, and he is not the only one

Our Translation of the *Tao Te Ching*," reminisces and comments on his collaboration

with Heidegger. Before Hsiao met Heidegger, Heidegger had resigned from his

rectorship and become a hermit living in the Black Forest.[23] Part of Hasio's

description of his first meeting with Heidegger presents a vivid but uncanny mid-war

scene:

> On 27 November 1944, the beauty of the city of Freiburg in
> Breisgau, the scenic capital of the Black Forest region, was
> destroyed by an air raid. The air raid was unexpected, since
> Friburg was supposed to have been declared exempt.
> Twelve hours beforehand *many animals and people
> became uneasy.* Particularly strange was the behaviors of
> *an enormous duck* in the city park, which for almost twelve
> hours quacked and flapped around wildly. One is generally
> inclined to think that *wild animals have premonitions of
> natural catastrophes*, prompted by certain atmospheric
> changes "in the air." But air raids are not natural
> catastrophes, but actions decided upon and directed by
> human beings. The monument to the duck by the lake in the
> Freiburg city park (bearing the inscription: God's creature
> laments, accuse and warns) offers food for thought not only
> for paraphychologists but also, I believe, for philosophers. I
> mention these impressions from my years in Freiburg
> because I repeatedly discussed them in my conversations

---

who had a dilemma in admitting Others' presence and thoughts. However, the Heideggerian case is striking not only because of his popularity in Asia but also because of his status in Western philosophy; as many argue and I agree with, Heidegger is the last great philosopher so far in the West. Regardless of his notorious collaboration with National Socialism, his philosophy is the deepest, most controversial and influential in Western philosophy. I maintain that every post-Heideggerian Western philosopher starts their philosophy by opposing or agreeing with him.

[23] When Heidegger was elected rector in1933, he addressed, "The Self-Assertion of the German University." Later this address became a scandal because he explicitly and implicitly had expressed his commitment to the Nazis. Heidegger here emphasized the necessity of shaping "those powers of human being (Dasein) that press it hard into one spiritual world of the people" (478). Heidegger's address is full of patriotic zeal and the vigor for reformation of the German spirit under National Socialism. When this address became a scandal, he asked for a posthumous publication of his justification of this address. In this "The Rectorate 1933/1934: Facts and Thoughts," Heidegger defends his previous position and asserts that he was "neither a member of the party, nor had [he] been active politically in any way" (481). In this writing, Heidegger claims that he was a victim of the Nazis. Yet, his apology and excuses are elusive. More problematically, he still sees National Socialism as "the historical essence of the West" and regarded the fascism as a phenomenon of "nihilism" that swept Europe at that time (498).

> with Heidegger. For I had the same experience as many other Asians…What [Heidegger] "brought to language" has frequently been said similarly in the thinking of the Far East. For example, *temporality* has always been understood differently in China than in the West. For us the duck does not need any paranormal powers: *everything is connected with everything else, and in each moment there is concealed the entire past and also the open future.* (93-4; my emphasis)

In the essay, Hsiao, a Chinese scholar, ends this passage with a lucid vision of "relations" of beings and historicity of the whole. Interestingly enough, in this "space of relations" and historicity, animals, especially an "enormous duck," are agitated, resonating with the global horror and violence of World War II.[24] Also, Hsiao, as a stranger of an Other in the West, quizzically shares the mood of uncanniness and angst with animals as well as Heidegger. The future that makes present in the process of "having been" creates a totality of temporality into which animals and humans as well as Westerners and Easterners fall equally (*Being and Time* 326). More than this ontological understanding of temporality, Hsiao says that the animal's agitation and its premonition are more understandable to Asians than to the Westerners. Why and how? If animality is more sensitive to historicity than humanity, is this possible because Hsiao's essence is closer to animality than Heidegger's? Hsiao emphasizes that something is "brought to language," vis-à-vis certain methods Hsiao and Heidegger similarly employ to philosophize issues related to Hsiao's experience of

---

[24] My analysis focuses on later Heidegger compared to the early Heidegger whose philosophy was much more Husserlian and phenomenological. This so-called "turn" in 1930s when he switches the order of "being and time" to "time and being" is symptomatic because he moved much closer to Nietzsche's homesickness of the ancient Greek and using poetry as more mysterious and elusive ways to think over the end of the modernity and certain future-oriented historicity that he dreamed of. His engagement with Asian thoughts and scholars from this time reveal how he tried to set up authenticity of the new Occident tradition and authentic linkage of German and the ancient Greek.

the animal's uneasiness or animal "angst." Then, how could they find common "ways to the languages"?

Hsiao emphasizes "temporality," which refers to Heidegger's historicity. Heidegger's historicity is premised on the fact that "existence as ek-sistence" is ontologically future-oriented and historical.[25] That is to say, Heidegger's historicity focuses on Dasein's destiny in the darkness of the world and Dasein's future-oriented thinking as being-toward-death thus one authentically and resolutely chooses one's future, projecting herself into authentic death. Given Hsiao's description of the war and anxiety over the future of Germany as well as China's dismal geopolitical situation at that time, the commonality of Heidegger and Hsiao's positions over temporality correlate with both Eastern and Western philosophers' similar apocalyptic visions of their contemporaries. That is, regardless of Hsiao's use of German to converse, both Heidegger and Hsiao communicated as if they were transposed into "the enormous duck" because the moods over war and violence prevail in their worlds.

However, this interpretation encounters obstacles due to Heidegger's zealous nationalism and his ambiguous philosophy about animals. In fact, Heidegger's solution to escape the darkness of the world and the oblivion of Being, according to his *Introduction to Metaphysics,* is to transpose "Our people," explicitly Germans, "from the center of their future happening into the original realm of the powers of Being" (38). If so, aren't Hsiao and the duck excluded from Heidegger's Dasein as if

---

[25] According to Heidegger, Dasein's temporality is historical, and Dasein "temporalizes itself in the unity of future and the having-been as the present" (*Being and Time* 362). I understand his historicity as a romantic hero's resolute, existential decisions of his or her own future. Heidegger is much more close to Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Romantic poets than commonly accepted. I argue that Heidegger might be the last Romantic thinker, and his destiny has to be tragic as much as his romantic vision.

to answer, Heidegger, in a lecture, paradoxically asserts that while all other peoples

lost their metaphysics as a historical spiritual mission, only the "German people has

not yet lost its metaphysics…because it does not yet possess it" (*Being and Truth*

63)? That is, only Germans could have the unique potentiality to restore authentic

humanity. Indeed, Heidegger's communication with the Chinese scholar Hsiao

reverberates with Heidegger's later notorious remark about postwar tragedy in China,

where people were executed and many (including Li-Young's Lee's father) were

exiled because of their political positions following China's adherence to

communism. Heidegger claims:

> Hundreds of thousands die *en masse*. Do they die? They
> succumb. They are done in…They become mere quanta,
> items in an inventory in the business of manufacturing
> corpses. Do they die? They are liquidated inconspicuously
> in extermination camps. And even apart from that—right
> now millions of impoverished people are perishing from
> hunger in China. (Leaman 60; italics in original)

Although his remark is ambiguous at best, I argue that it is naïve to say that

Heidegger's remark is entirely racist and fascist. Heidegger's remark is, in fact,

neither racist nor fascist, though his repulsion against communism is easily

detectable; he seems to merely bemoan the perished people's inauthentic deaths owed

to political inhumanity and the darkness of the world. Notwithstanding his pessimistic

viewpoint that this tragedy of humanity would not end easily because it is caused by

the core of modernity—technology and modern rationality—Heidegger's perspective

is utterly ambiguous in the sense that his lament is based upon an enigmatic question

of "how [the human being] stands with Being" (*Introduction* 148). From Heidegger's

perspective, to put it poignantly, it seems that those Chinese who inauthentically

perish as animals "perish" rather than die authentically cannot "stand with Being"

because they do not have time to set a journey of thinking before they "perish."

On top of that, the inauthentic termination of the Chinese is not an ethical,

political, or aesthetic issue to Heidegger.[26] Heidegger argues that (European) people

have lost humanity not because "they" have destroyed the modern humanity that

orients from *zoon logon echon* or *animal rationale*, but because "they" have

jettisoned such true meaning of Being as *logos* or *phusis* (nature). Even so, are the

non-European, (i.e. Chinese), not authentic beings, namely Daseins, if they perish

rather than die? This question is correlative with Heidegger's ambiguity about the

ontological difference between animality and humanity. Yet what causes these

ambiguities? Heidegger's anthropocentric or Occident-centric exclusions are closely

related to his exclusions of the inauthentic "they" from the German "new spirit"; in

fact, in another lecture, Heidegger straightforwardly maintains, "national Socialism

being driven today is the coming to be of a new spirit of the entire earth" (*Being and

Truth* 116). How, then, may we understand this "new spirit" in the context of

Heidegger's exclusion of the Chinese from authentic death?

In *Of Spirit,* Jacques Derrida argues that spirit is the hidden kernel of

Heidegger's philosophy, and this kernel of darkness contains the sublime darkness of

the world and the fascistic commitment Heidegger hides, as well as its connectivity to

the European, Christian and teleological spirit that have in history, under the name of

---

[26] Heidegger clearly renounces contemporary ethics, saying that the contemporaries lost "the shaping of the historical Being of humanity, ethos, which under the influence of morality was then degraded to the ethical (*Introduction* 18); in a similar context, he also criticizes politics and aesthetics since contemporary politics disinhibits *polis* too much to make it "innocuous and sentimental," while aesthetics lost its "*polemos*, struggle in the sense of the confrontation, the setting-apart-from-each-other" (*Introduction* 140-141).

enlightenment and with the power of technology, manipulated, colonized and destroyed other civilizations. In this book, Derrida deconstructively dances with Heidegger's sporadic use of three words designating "spirit," connecting this esoteric use to Heidegger's hesitation in speaking of his commitment to the Nazis.[27] Derrida proves that Heidegger's spirit is not totally free from the shadow of Hegelian *Geist*[28] or Christian spirituality. However, as Derrida deconstructively analyzes, Heidegger flounders on the way to "the new spirit" as if something alien were parasitically attached to his "spirit," while this alien being surreptitiously burrows under his own darkened philosophical kernel of the ontological identity of spirit and Being. This alien "being" is an animal or a human whose essence is animality.

Heidegger, in "Letter to Humanism" deals with the conflicting relations among life, animality, humanity and spirit in more detail:

---

[27] Derrida wrestles with Heidegger's subtle and suspicious uses of three German words (*Geist, geistig, and geistlich*). According to Derrida, Heidegger avows or disavows use of these words. In turn, Derrida reads Heidegger's connectivity to Hegelian or Christian discourses as well as "Heidegger's commitment [to] and breaks in affiliation" (39) with the Nazis. Correspondingly, Derrida comments that Heidegger's argument is full of "equivocation or indecision, the edging or dividing path which ought, according to Heidegger, to pass between a Greek or Christian - even onto-theological - determination of *pneuma* or *spiritus*, and a thinking of Geist which would be other and more originary" (82).

[28] This ambiguous connectivity centers on the issue of animality within spirit in both Hegelian and Heideggerian philosophies. One of the most intriguing and problematic example in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is his critique of common sense as an animal feeling; Hegal claims: "Since the man of common sense makes his appeal to feeling, to an oracle within his breast, he is finished and done with anyone who does not agree; he only has to explain that he has nothing more to say to anyone who does not find and feel the same in himself. In other words, he tramples underfoot the root of humanity. For it is the nature of humanity to press onward to agreement with others; human nature only really exists in an achieved community of minds. The anti-human, the merely animal, consists in staying within the sphere of feeling, and being able to communicate only at that level" (43). Hegel's analogy is critical but ambiguous. Nonetheless, his solution of this problematic common sense is obvious; instead of common sense, "True thoughts and scientific insight are only to be won through the labor of the Notion" (*Phenomenology* 43). However, his analogy between animality, feeling, and anti-humanity in the abovementioned quote is problematic because, if what he claims is true, human feeling is animality, and its anti-humanity disrupts the creation of community.

So too with animal, *zoon*, an interpretation of "life" is already posited that necessarily lies in an interpretation of beings as *zoe* and *physis*, within which what is living appears. Above and beyond everything else, however, it finally remains to ask whether the essence of man primordially and most decisively lies in the dimension of *animalitas* at all. Are we really on the right track toward the essence of man as long as we set him off as one living creature among others in contrast to plants, beasts, and God? We can proceed in this way; we can in such fashion locate man within being as one being among others. We will thereby always be able to state something correct about man. But, we must be clear on this point, that when we do this we abandon man to the essential realm of *animalitas* even if we do not equate him with beasts but attribute a specific difference to him. In principle we are still thinking of *homo animalis*—even when animal [soul] is posited as animus *sive mens* [spirit or mind], and this in turn is later posited as subject, person, or spirit [Geist]. Such positing is the manner of metaphysics. But, then the essence of man is too little heeded and not thought in its origin, the essential provenance that is always the essential future for historical mankind. Metaphysics thinks of man on the basis of *animalitas* and does not think in the direction of *humanitas*. (228; italics in original)

In this quote, Heidegger is destructing the Western metaphysical tradition that regards humans as rational animals by opposing "*animalitas*" to "*humanitas*." His hidden target in this quote is Aristotle's categorization of the human soul as animality ("*sive mens*") in the sense of animal.[29] Heidegger critiques this metaphysical heritage as the origins of ontic thoughts, and then he veers his argument to the direction of future-oriented thoughts to save humanity from this ontic-metaphysical tradition. In turn, Heidegger argues that his philosophy purports to escape the traditional metaphysical ideas of "subject, person, or spirit [Geist]" (*Basic Writings* 228) because these ideas

---

[29] In Aristotle's "The Soul," Aristotle divides "the soul," into "(1) local movement and (2) thinking, discriminating and perceiving" (586); in Aristotle's episteme of the soul or spirit, thinking is equivalent with animal/bodily qualities of movements and senses; that is, a human being is a thinking animal, not a thinking human. Life and movement are the core of thought and animality in Aristotle's world.

are the foundation of the ontic tradition. In other words, Heidegger claims, German

Idealism and its spirit as well as its rationality are based on the idea that the essence

of "humanity" originated from animality.

Yet, the first sentence and sequential destruction (Heideggerian

deconstruction) of traditional metaphysical ideas are in conflict with each other. Does

Heidegger successfully destruct the linkage of life as *zoe* (bare life) and *phusis*

(nature and emergence of life) and animality? Why is locating "man within being as

one being among others" against human dignity (Heidegger, "Letter to Humanism"

228)? Is not the ontic difference of life and death more fundamental than the

ontological difference between animality and humanity? If animality shares "life"

with humanity and this "life" itself is the foundation of humanity defined as a body

with soul, by denying animality, Heidegger cannot help but succumb to the Romantic,

Christian vision that humans must transcend their lives to become spiritual beings.

Heidegger defends these suspicions and elusively admits that when his words are

"seen metaphysically, we are staggering" [30] (*Introduction* 217) because all

Heideggerian philosophy is easily mistaken as one of ontic metaphysics or

existentialisms. But to me, Heidegger staggers in his discussion about animality and

Others.

Heidegger's equivocal philosophizing of animality and its connection to

humanity as well as "new spirit" becomes more disconcerting in his 1929-1939

---

[30] Reading through this passage, I could not be sure what this pronoun refers to. Does Heidegger refer to Germans or general readers? Heidegger's staggering gets more symptomatic. I quote his whole passage with this doubt: Heidegger says sequentially, "Everywhere we are underway amid beings, and yet we no longer know how it stands with Being. We do not even know that we no longer know it. We are staggering even when we mutually assure ourselves that we are not staggering, even when, as in recent times, people go so far to try to show that this asking about Being brings only confusion, that it has destructive effect, that it is nihilism" (*Introduction* 217).

lecture series published under the title of *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. This lecture has two parts: the first half is about profound boredom as Dasein's fundamental mood to open the truth of Being, whereas the second half is about ontological differences among the "things without world," "animals as beings that are poor in the world," and "humans as agents of forming the world." Heidegger's search for "the world" in three different modes of beings initiates with the meta-philosophical search for the home of Western poetic and ontological thoughts before the emergence of the Plato-Christian metaphysical tradition; thus, the poet's and philosopher's journey to home as an origin of Western thoughts is to find the forgotten linkage between pre-Plato Greek thought and the contemporary German's new spirit. In this sense, this lecture series initiates with an appraisal of German Idealism and Romanticism such as Novalis's homesickness that is "an urge to be everywhere at home." Subsequentially, Heidegger asks such questions as the following:

> What is man, that such things happen to him in his very ground? What we know of man: the animal, dupe of civilization, guardian of culture, and even personality—is all this only the shadow in him of something quite other, of that which we name Dasein? Philosophy, metaphysics, is a homesickness, an urge to be at home everywhere, a demand, not blind and without direction, but one which awakens us to such questions as those we have just asked and to their unity: what is world, finitude, individuation? Each of these questions inquiries into the whole." (*Fundamental* 6)

Contextualized within this quote, Heidegger's underlying presupposition is ambivalent: Dasein, as a being-with-others in its world forming world, is at home and not at home simultaneously. Heidegger paradoxically claims that "going home," taken as the essence (ethos) of humanity, is a journey to find humans' fundamental

freedom, being burdened in that fundamental attunement to profound boredom. This paradox is "to liberate the humanity in man, to liberate the humanity of man…[but] This liberation of the Dasein in man does not mean placing him in some arbitrary position, but loading Dasein upon man as his or her ownmost burden. Only those who can truly give themselves a burden are free" (*Fundamental* 166). Heidegger holds the paradox that man needs to be liberated from his animality to be free, but finding this freedom is also a burden.

What, then, about those animals enveloped in human forms, namely the "dupe of civilization"[31] or "ape of civilization" (*Fundamental* 5)? Are they as free as authentic humans, Daseins, if they are not burdened with this historical task? If they cannot have their "ownmost" individuality, can they be liberated from animality? Freedom is a task that individual Dasein to attain desires with the help of its propensity to bear the profound boredom in order to attune to Being's sayings. A collective pack of animals or the "ape of civilization" cannot do so because they are not able to bear the profound boredom. Heidegger makes the comparison between collective modern men with animality. Subsequentially, in this second part of the book, Heidegger onerously tries to prove that humans can find their ontological home in Being, through thinking and language,[32] under the ontological moods of

---

[31] Derrida poses a similar question reading Heidegger and claims, "the city-dweller who has lost all sense of country, who has shaken off homesickness, who has lost feelings of nostalgia…the modern city-dweller is an ape of civilization" (*The Animal* 146).

[32] Language is the authentic faculty humans have according to Heidegger. For instance, in his "Letter on Humanism," Heidegger takes on a "scarcely fathomable, abyssal bodily kinship with the animals" (*Basic Writings* 230) and transposes this kinship between animality and humanity to the difference between them in terms of language. Heidegger's main argument is relatively simple; silence is the potentiality of speaking, and only humans can have the potentiality of silence before speaking because they can think and gather "disclosedness for the overpowering surge of beings as a whole" (*Being and Truth* 87). An animal's vocalization such as "roaring, bleating, barking, twittering" (*Being and Truth*

homesickness or melancholia, but animals, though cohabiting with humans, are the

destitute of the world because they are tethered to their instinctual urges; they are

open to the ring of instincts which Heidegger calls "disinhibitive." In other words,

Heideggerian animals move freely, but they are slaves to their natural instincts. Only

humans can form the world because Dasein is able to form its world through a

fundamental attunement to profound boredom.

However, Heidegger seems to struggle with the implied other possibilities[33]

that the essence of humanity is animality and that the authentic status of Dasein is

exclusionary. He implies that modern men, as "they" or the inauthentic multitude, are

in-between animals and authentic Daseins because they are acting in consonance with

natural instincts and mechanical orders. Heidegger bemoans that modern men have

lost their ability to attune to the emptiness and its profound boredom and philosophize

their historicity as well as humanity because they fall prey to the inauthentic animal's

"ring." In short, Heidegger's animal metaphor of "ape" implies critiques of modernity

and its mechanical, speedy, inhuman orders and suggests that humans are animals if

they inhabit the animals' ring (or the open) where animal instincts captivate humans.

---

86) is different from humans' speech in this sense for animals cannot keep silent because they don't
have the aptitude to talk, while humans can keep silent because they can think and speak. However,
some inevitable questions ensue: don't humans cry or scream, suffering like animals? What about
humans (especially Others) who are not able to think or speak? What about silent or screaming beings
such as savages, barbarians, foreigners, Chinese, or Jews in history whose talking and speaking has
been regarded as equivalences to animals' "roaring, bleating, barking, twittering"? Heidegger never
answers these questions any more than he speaks about his commitment to Nazism.

[33] One of these possibilities is Negri's commentary on Heidegger's "poverty" in *Commonwealth*. Negri
interprets Heidegger's "poverty" literally as economic poverty, and exemplifies Heidegger's criticism
on communism to show how Heidegger makes an "explicit link between poverty and
communism[…and] hatred of the poor…as a mask for racism" (49). I do not agree with Negri's
interpretation because, as Derrida proves, Heidegger's poverty means cognitive, spiritual poverty, not
economic poverty. Negri's criticism is not distanced from antagonisms against Heidegger's anti-
pragmatism. For example, in *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay*, Stanley Rosen critiques Heideggerian
philosophy in terms of nihilism which has brought up a "contemporary crisis of reason" (xiii).

The only difference between humanity and animality is hierarchical, spatial

difference between their ontological openness to different worlds. In other words,

humans form higher, philosophical, and artistic "worlds," whereas animals are open

to their lower, instinctual "environment" because animals cannot have the "as"

structure (i.e. stone as a material for use or an ax as a tool to use for building a house)

or humans' reflective structure of thinking.[34]

To put it another way, humans generally have the potentiality to become

Daseins because of their capability not to accept the world in consonance with their

desires and animal instincts, but with the transcendental, reflective faculty of logos.

What's more, though he emphasizes "being-with" in *Being and Time*, Heidegger

expresses his repulsion of a collective, unidentifiable multitude, which contrasts with

Heidegger's emphasis of the collective German task to bring forth the new spirit.

But, as Agamben, a recent philosopher who takes on Heideggerian animals

and excluded humanity, suspects, the difference between humanity and animality, as

well as inauthentic mutltidue and authentic Dasein, is not clear. It is more likely that

"Dasein is simply an animal that has learned to become bored […,] awakened *from* its

own captivation *to* its own captivation. This awakening of the living being to its own

being-captivated, this anxious and resolute opening to a not-open, is the human" (*The

Open* 70, emphasis in original). In other words, if humans are fundamentally

---

[34] Derrida explains this structure of "as" in the structure of language as animal's "properly *phenomenological* impossibility of speaking the phenomenon whose phenomenality as such, or whose very as such, does not appear to the animal and does not unveil the Being of the entity" (*Of Spirit* 53). Derrida's explanation depends on the Kantian notion of difference between the noumenal structure and phenomenal structure as well as the possibility and impossibility of the phenomenological horizon between humans' worlds and animals' environment, which also suggests humanity's self-reflectivity. In this sense, as Derrida deconstructs, Heidegger's differentiation between animals' environments and humans' worlds are fundamentally influenced by German Idealism, especially Kant and Husserl's phenomenology.

captivated by their instinctual, animalistic environment (ring) and vulnerable to the disinhibitive, why don't we say that animality is the essence of humanity? Isn't Heidegger also accepting this possibility when he says, "the 'as' is something distinctive about that which human Dasein is open for, in contrast to the animal's being open for…In the case of the animal, being open for…is being taken by…in captivation" (*Fundamental* 333). The ellipses in this quote are original and implicate Heidegger's intentional omission of the "as structures" to replace them with erased spaces for animals and the collective inauthentic multitude. Namely, in the case of being deprived of the "as" structure, humanity cannot be differentiated from animality.

In *The Animal That Therefore I Am,* Derrida also critiques this hidden possibility in Heidegger's humanity. In this book, Derrida deconstructs Heidegger's texts to reveal how animality lurks under Heidegger's new spirit and humanity. After tracing the genealogy of animality in Western philosophy, Derrida deconstructively proves how the genealogy of humanity and animality begins with Descartes' animals since he was the first philosopher who regarded animals as machines separated from humanity and spirituality. Later, Derrida suspects that Heidegger's discourse, despite Heidegger's explicit critique of Descartes' dichotomy of mind and body in *Being and Time*, "is still Cartesian."[35] This legitimate suspicion is on the same track with the suspicion that Heidegger's spirit is theological and totalitarian, despite Heidegger's explicit critiques on onto-theology and modern politics.

---

[35] Heidegger's affiliation and explicitly critical approach to German idealism is confusing at best. For example, Žižek, in *Ticklish Subject*, also points out that Heidegger's critique of Kant's transcendental imagination is in fact opaque. According to Žižek, Heidegger hesitates at certain moments in his critique of Kant's transcendental imagination because Heidegger also realizes his philosophy includes Kantian problems of turning monstrous transcendental imagination into discourses.

Returning to Hsiao's essay one can see how Heidegger encounters Asian's animality. After first meeting with Heidegger, Hsiao learned the scandal of Heidegger's commitment to the Nazis. Hsiao confessed that he "[feels] considerable empathy [because] Heidegger [is] obviously suffering from injustice" (95). In his essay, Hsiao expresses empathy when Heidegger explained to him how the same quote from *Being and Time* was criticized by both the Nazis and the Allies (though Heidegger did not say which sentence it was). Hsiao's mood, however, grows more complex and ambivalent because of Hsiao's strong nationalism. Hsiao implores, "China was a pitiable victor, in reality only a half-Ally, even if belonging to the 'four great powers in the world" (95). Hsiao is partly proud of the fact that China is a half-Ally on the victors' side, while he is also partly antagonistic that China does not play the central role among the Allies. Regardless of his feelings, Hsiao sent a quotation from Mencius's famous maxim[36] to Heidegger, and claimed that "Heidegger appeared to be quite moved by this quotation…[so] It was at this same meeting that [Heidegger] proposed [co] translating the Lao-Tzu" (96).

Though they managed to finish the translation of the first fourteen chapters of *Tao Te Ching*, Hsiao and Heidegger did not continue after 1947, when Heidegger suddenly ended the collaboration. When Hsiao visited Heidegger again during the 1960s to question him about the termination of their collaboration, Heidegger smiled and replied that it was Hsiao who did not want to complete the project (Hsiao 98). While Heidegger seems to be the one who outwardly broke the collaboration, it is

---

[36] The maxim is "If heaven wants to impose a difficult task on someone, it first fills his heart and will with bitterness, rots his sinew and bones, starves his frame, imposes great poverty upon his body." This maxim in fact is related to Mencius's famous idea of (天命, Tiānmìng) which can be understood as a political maxim that one's political destiny is predestined by the heaven, and fateful suffering is a springboard to transcend one's miserable condition.

difficult to know for sure who caused the end of collaboration. Hsiao might have caused Heidegger to abort the collaboration due to his nationalistic zeal and resentment against Japanese imperial intervention in China.[37] Or, Heidegger might have found something in chapter 15 that deterred his further translation. There is no document to confirm either scenario, but I hypothesize that if it was Heidegger who quit the project, perhaps he did so because he found something in the fifteenth chapter that resonated with the dilemma of his exclusion of inauthentic beings and the political scandal in which he was locked. Chapter 15 of *Tao Te Ching* is about how a scholar can help herself to overcome troubles. In Chapter 15, Lao-tzu says:

> Of old those who were the best rulers were subtly
> Mysterious and profoundly penetrating;
> Too deep to comprehend.
> And because they cannot be comprehended,
> I can only describe them arbitrarily:
>
> Cautious, like crossing a frozen stream in the winter,
> Being at a loss, like one fearing danger on all sides,
> Reserved, like on visiting,
> Supple and pliant, like ice about to melt.
> Genuine, like a piece of uncarved wood,
> Open and broad, like a valley,
> Merged and undifferentiated, like muddy water.
>
> Who can make muddy water gradually clear through tranquility?
> Who can make the still gradually come to life through activity?
> He who embraces this Tao does not want to fill himself to
> overflowing.

[37] In the essay Hsiao expresses his resentment at Heidegger's sympathy with the Japanese people, as Heidegger "considered Japanese people innocent and even spoke against reparation" (98). Hsiao implies that he might disagree with Heidegger's inevitable comparison of Japanese with Germans. In fact, at that time, Heidegger was the most famous and significant philosopher in Japan. As Graham Parkes claims, "The reception of Heidegger in Japan has been the most enthusiastic of any country—perhaps even including Germany itself" (9). For example, the Tokyo school, a group of imperialist philosophers who were influenced by Western philosophy, tried during and after WWII to connect Heidegger's philosophy with their Japanese philosophy based on Zen. According to Yasuo Yuasa in "Modern Japanese Philosophy and Heidegger," these Japanese scholars also expressed sympathy with Heidegger's scandalous predicament reflecting their own.

It is precisely because there is no overflowing that he is beyond
wearing out and renewal. (126)

This aphorism suggests that in order to avoid troubles, the Tao master has to be as careful and patient as he can be, waiting until "muddy water gradually clear through tranquility" and making "the still gradually come to life through activity." Ironically, according to Hsiao, Heidegger loved these two lines and so "[thought] this through farther, in saying that clarifying finally brings something to light, and subtle motion in the tranquil and still can bring something into being" (Hsiao 282).[38] Perhaps Heidegger regarded the Tao as very similar to his idea of truth—a realm of concealment and unconcealment—and he thought that the scandal would be cleared away as time goes by. Is Heidegger's interpretation of the aphorism legitimate, though Heidegger's interpretation ignores the negativity of the Tao? In general, Taoism deactivates any effort to fulfill as the last stanza of the chapter I quote suggests; emptiness and potentiality are much more important than fulfillment, and any positivity embeds negativity. But Heidegger's interpretation seems to imply that the end of all his troubles will be tranquil life, without considering the negatives results of seeking "fulfillment" of a philosopher's historical mission—bringing back Dasein's new spirit and establishing new humanity without falling into animality. Moreover, it is in the chapter fifteen of *Tao Te Ching* that there are two animals hidden in the second stanza. In fact, "Cautious (豫)" and "Being at a loss (猶)" as Chinese characters etymologically mean "elephant" and "dog," and if these two

---

[38] Heidegger even asked Hsiao to "write out these two lines in Chinese as decorative calligraphy" (Hsiao 282).

characters (豫猶) form a word together, it means "postponement." Heidegger faces the Tao animals he excludes from humanity in these lines.

As I have tried to deconstruct and discuss, Heidegger's hesitations toward and disavowals of animality as the essence of humanity is symptomatic because it parallels the uncanny responses of "the enormous duck" Hsiao and Heidegger converse over. This hesitation opens "the open" where the stranger's covert animal-humanity is crossing through. The thin boundary separating humanity from animality obscurely reveals the truth behind Heidegger's conversation with Hsiao about animals' temporality and the hidden reason why he abandoned the project of translating *Tao Te Ching*. As the last example, this inversion of Dasein's home from humanity to animality haunts Heidegger's interpretation of Trakl's poems in "Language in the Poem: A Discussion on Georg Trakl's Poetic Work." This inversion reveals the unstable ontological ground of a relationship between a Western stranger and animals in the Occident. By analyzing Heidegger's animality via his interpretation of Trakl's poems, I will show how, in front of the "darkness of the world" which agitates the duck, temporality causes Heidegger to exclude animality from humanity.

In "Language and the Poem," Heidegger interprets Trakl's poem by focusing on Trakl's enigmatic word choices such as "stranger," "animal," and "blueness." Blueness is the color of the dawning world following the darkness of the world and the in-between color of the threshold between both hope (light) and destitution (night). In this mystic mood of a world of darkness and hope of the "new spirit," what the "stranger" in Trakl's poems encounters is a "blue wild game" that receives its

blue from 'the blueness' of the "ghostly twilight dusk" (*On the Way* 165). According to Heidegger, this wild game or blue game "not yet determined in its nature is modern man; they, mortals, would think of the stranger and wander with him to the native home of human being" (*On the Way* 167).

Heidegger's reading of Trakl's despondency about mediocre modern people is melancholic because Heidegger's Trakl is, like Sisyphus, dragging his feet in the darkness of the world. In the poem, Heidegger reads both Trakl's maddening resentment against the modern world and hope, which synchronizes with Heidegger's own mood. Thus, it is not clear whether Heidegger is truly analyzing Trakl's poems or expressing his own mood and thoughts in the venue of Trakl's words.[39] Heidegger implies that spirit (Trakl's spirit, but much closer to Hegel's *Geist* or the Christian idea of redemption) has illuminating and destructive aspects in terms of its historicity, in that the spirit's flame "is the ek-stasis which lightens and calls forth radiance, but which may also go on consuming and reducing all to white ashes" (*On the Way* 179). Thus, Heidegger poetically says that the spirit "has its being in the possibility of both gentleness and destructiveness" (179)[40] and "gathers [living beings] into the One"

---

[39] Karsten Harries, in "Language and Silence: Heidegger's Dialogue with Georg Trakl," expresses the same predicament in interpreting Heidegger's Trakl essay; he asks, "who is speaking? The poet or the philosopher? There is no clear answer; the reader left disoriented" (502). About these questions, Harries proposes that the tension between "the language of poetry and philosophy" can be productive to elicit genuine thinking (503).

[40] The image of this spirit resonates negatively with the constructive and destructive power of modern technology. Considering the fact that this essay first appeared in 1953, it is contextualized with his notorious remarks about the Chinese and the comparison of the gas chamber with agricultural industry. Heidegger contends, "Agriculture is now a mechanized food industry. As for its essence, it is the same thing as the manufacture of corpses in the gas chambers and the death camps, the same as the blockades and reduction of countries to famine, the same thing as the manufacture of hydrogen bombs" (Manning 20). Heidegger, in this quote, echoing his comments on the Chinese's perishing like animals, is not mad but melancholic; he deplores the consequences of maddened modernity implemented by technology and Western rationality, and which causes Europeans to forget the true meaning of the

where "all…belong together" (181). This "one" as a site for gathering is both a poetic site and the site of the future to which Dasein is venturing. In the end, Heidegger discusses Trakl's evening land as "the Occident" (194).

Heidegger's Trakl or Trakl's Heideggerian "Occident" as a land of the evening of blueness is a utopia Heidegger imagines as a site of the future; that is, this Occident is "earlier and therefore more promising than the Platonic-Christian land, or indeed than a land conceived in terms of the European West" (Heidegger, *On the Way* 194). The Occident is not the contemporary European West, but a utopia Trakl and Heidegger perceive coming with historical light (logos) from the true West. From Heidegger's perspective, Trakl prophesizes that the descent of the world spirit due to "the apes of civilization" will switch retroactively to reclaim this utopian Occident by going back to the higher ground of true West and authentic history (presumably ancient Greece). Heidegger notes that Trakl's totalized one generation, taken as a coming community, will disclose a totality of true humanity in the Occident. In turn, Heidegger provocatively notes, Trakl's poem is "one single call that the right race may come to be, and to speak the flame of the spirit into gentleness" (*On the Way* 195).

However, "one generation," one race, or one humanity that dominates Trakl's Occident has in its shadow fascism, nationalism, xenophobia, colonialism, and violence against true "strangers": immigrants, Levinas' Other, and Asians in

---

Greek "*techne,*" "creation (*poeisis*)" and "*logos* (gathering of fourfolds)." Nonetheless, another more morbid picture lurks in this romantic melancholy though; the status of human beings (i.e. Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, Korean women in sex camps built by the Japanese army, etc.) in gas chambers and death camps become tantamount with crops and food. Does he mean that those victims are equivalent to maltreated, industrially manipulated, massively produced materials (food)? If stone and wheat do not have worlds, could those victims have their worlds? The answer remains buried in a thick opacity. All we can see is the blueness of the Heideggerian spirit.

Heideggerian world. As an Asian, with a different mood of homelessness and melancholy, I can see a different blueness of the dawn than could Heidegger. Western philosophers are desensitized to a discursive mechanism that operates to differentiate animals from humans, inauthentic beings from authentic beings, and Asians from humanity. To me, Heidegger's and/or Trakl's Occident as utopia looks like dystopia. *The dawn in the Occident is always already before and after the dusk in the Orient.*

When Heidegger sees the dawning sky in Europe, an Asian sees dusk and upcoming night. Hsiao might have surmised the same when he heard that Heidegger would not continue the translation of Eastern Tao. Heidegger might have aborted his efforts to listen to Asian Tao because it contains an alien animality that reflects his own animality. Then, if the exclusionary ontological machine operates in Western (if we can call apparatuses machines), even Eastern philosophers' thoughts, what is this machine?

In *The Open*, Giorgio Agamben calls this machine an anthropological machine, which is similar to Derrida's idea of philosophical anthropology.[41] Agamben implies that Heidegger's ontology is interrupted by the ontic knowledge and theology[42] though Heidegger explicitly undermines them. This anthropological machine as an ontological-political-ethical machine detects and forecloses animality

---

[41] In "The Ends of Man," Derrida discusses how Hegelian-Husserlian-Heideggerian philosophy are anthropological, namely how their philosophies are limited to "*we* of the philosopher to 'we men,' to the *we* in the horizon of humanity" (*Margin of Philosophy* 116; italics in original).

[42] This corresponds to Derrida's discovery of onto-theological aspects in Heidegger's theory. Agamben claims that "captivation is a more spellbinding and intense openness than any kind of human knowledge; on the other, insofar as it is not capable of disconcealing its own disinhibitor, it is closed in a total opacity. Animal captivation and the openness of the world thus seem related to one another as are negative and positive theology, and their relationship is as ambiguous as the one which simultaneously opposes and binds in a secret complicity the dark night of the mystic and the clarity of rational knowledge" (*The Open* 59).

from humanity to imbue certain humanity with its authenticity and power while excluding others from authentic humanity. This machine undergirds the bio-politics that exploit animalized humanity under the disguise of spiritual enlightenment and anthropological division between savages and citizens. Meanwhile, in such spaces as refugee camps, concentration camps, sex camps, or warzones in the third world, animality loses its "life" as its essence while being transposed into the death. Namely, the anthropological machine, operating in the total discourses and ideologies of humanity, excludes animal-humans and operates as a death machine to bulwark the exclusionary mechanism of humanity; under this machine, POWs, FOBs, refugees, and so on, lose their humanity.

How, then, can we stop this operation of the anthropological machine? How can we render this machine inoperative? I ask this question because writers I will deal in this dissertation ask similar questions and answer differently. These writers' solutions also function in concert with Western and Eastern philosophies. There are three ways to stop this machine, drawing from recent Western philosophies: Levinas's radical ethics of other, Deleuze and Guattari's becoming Other, and finally Agamben's coming community and form-of-life. These philosophers offer a way to imagine a literary space where others' negatives create a new aesthetic space.

First of all, the anthropological machine deprives humans of the capability of disclosing the truth that humans' ontological "home" does not exist in ancient Greek thinking but in Other's suffering animal faces. This capability derives from "shame" as a fundamental ontological mood. Heidegger may have felt shame from facing animality as the essence of humanity and the Chinese people's inauthentic deaths,

though he could not admit this. Heideggerian animals and the Chinese are the bluest

animals in Trakl's poems, which are not fundamentally different from Heidegger's

authentic stranger. Suffering faces, with or without real faces, are the ontological

truths of Others as Levinas proposes. Levinas claims, "the epiphany of a face is a

visitation" (*Basic Philosophical* 53), though his ethics also excludes certain beings.[43]

The Other's face with an animal's suffering face visits "us." Hospitality and hostility

starts from this visitation, and the subject will realize that his or her ontological and

ethical home is not in his world but in the Other's face. In other words, as soon as the

subject encounters this face of the Other which has alterity as her content, he or she,

whether he or she is a Westerner or Easterner, will "lose its naïve belief at home in

the world and discovers itself bound by the other in ethical responsibility" (Peripich

58).

Next, it is necessary to admit that philosophy is geographical rather than

universal. Heidegger, on his journey back to ancient Greece, staggers when he meets

savages, the Chinese, and animality. The anthropological machine operates as soon as

Westerners run into the limit of their understanding of these Others, especially

animalized Oriental Others. A solution to deconstruct this limit might be to conduct a

---

[43] Levinas's ethics is fundamental ethics as much as Heideggerian ontology is fundamental ontology
(Peripich 7). Paradoxically, explicitly opposing Heidegger's philosophy and his political commitment
to the Nazis, as a Holocaust survivor, Levinas also hesitates before animality. Levinas differentiates
humanity from animality by saying "humanity is not a genre like animality" (*Humanism* 7). According
to Diane Peripich, "Levinas and animals" or "Levinas and the environment," in analogy with
Heidegger's animals, are problematic, because Levinas ambiguously implies that we are not
responsible for certain animals' suffering faces since they do not have faces; Levinas said in an
interview that "The priority is not found in the animals, but in the human face" (155), and a snake does
not have a face while an ape does. Peripich finalizes her interpretation of this ambiguity by claiming
"Why does Levinas give the human face priority?...because it is only in human society that it is
possible to worry about justice for others, human and others alike" (175). But, I think Peripich's
interpretation is as sympathetic and ambiguous as Derrida's about Heidegger's animals.

virtual (thought) experiment of becoming Others, animals, and so on. This is not the same as mere sympathy, but a creative production of universality among people with the help of a strategic comportment of each individual's singular difference. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *What is Philosophy?* bring the notion of shame and playing the part of animal in order to "pass into" a zone of potentiality:

> The feeling of shame is one of philosophy's most powerful motifs. We are not responsible for the victims but responsible before them. And there is no way to escape the ignoble but to play the part of the animal (to growl, burrow, snigger, distort ourselves): thought itself is sometimes closer to an animal that dies than to a living, even democratic, human being….We think and write for animals themselves. We become animal so that the animal also becomes something else. The agony of a rat or the slaughter of a calf remains present in thought not through pity but as the zone of exchange between man and animal in which something of one passes into the other. (107-109)

Here Deleuze and Guattari, roaming on Heideggerian Occident, are not only more melancholic, but they are also more optimistic than Heidegger. As they claim, the way to get over the Heideggerian dilemma is to "become" Other, such as animals and Asians. This is a way to virtually imagine a new people that are neither as totalitarian nor authentic as Heidegger's "one generation" in the Occident. In this fashion, Deleuze and Guattari envision "the shadow of the 'people to come' in the form of art" (*What* 218), and they optimistically argue that this coming people in the form of art "can only be created in abominable sufferings, and it cannot be concerned any more with art or philosophy. But books of philosophy and works of art also contain their sum of unimaginable sufferings that forewarn of the advent of a people. They have resistance in *common*—their resistance to death, to servitude, to the intolerable, to shame, and to the present" (*What* 110; my emphasis).

Then who are these "coming people," with suffering faces, inviting our responsibilities, forewarned by art and philosophy, and formed via becoming others? Agamben, in a similar venue, proposes the idea of the "coming community" of "whatever singularity."[44] Agamben's "coming community" is not a community in the future; rather, this community is the most fundamental form of community that exists "now" and "here," though it cannot be represented. Agamben's coming community cannot be represented because it consists of purely singular beings without identities. Besides, this community does not belong to history because it "entails the possibility of redemption [and is] construed on the acceptance of irreparable facticity and contingency of the world" (Salzani 45). This community is also the extremely *common*[45] community where all can be included as examples. Agamben proposes this idea of the unrepresentable community to make the anthropological machine and exclusionary violence inoperative.

If it can be imagined in ethico-ontological space, how, then, can art, especially literature, present this community? Agamben's answer to these questions merges into

---

[44] The most definite similarity between Agamben and Deleuze is their highlighting potentiality as the positive and real power of life. Still, as Claire Colebrook asserts, the difference lies in method: "whereas Deleuze's method tends to be ontological—he uses science and problems of the physical world to consider life and difference—Agamben's method is genealogical and philosophical" (56). However, I propose the more accurate difference is that Agamben's philosophy is ontological, while Deleuze's philosophy is ontic.

[45] In *Means without End*, Agamben enigmatically proposes the idea of common as the most extensive political idea of "use" that does not differentiate proper from improper nor appropriation from expropriation. He imagines a common political element between unifying totalitarian propriety and unrestrained industrial democracy of impropriety. He then proposes such possible common forms such as "inoperative community, compearance, equality, loyalty, mass intellectuality, the coming people, whatever singularity, or…event of language intended as free use of the common and as sphere of pure means" (117-8). These common means without end purport to maximize the potentiality of political forms people can imagine and actualize. Indeed, oppression begins with emphasis of "end," such as the Western teleological end of history. "Common," in this sense, is the rhetorical device to imagine an ontological dimension of all-inclusive form of eings without being divided culturally or political aims such as international communization, international democratization, commonwealth, and so on.

a concept—potentiality. Potentiality is the core of Agamben's oeuvre and correlates

with his ontological ethics that reject any exclusionary violence. These coming people

in the coming community resist the anthropological machine by their ontological and

common presences; their bodies in nudity, as bare lives, become full potentiality for

ethical responsibility.[46] Agamgen's idea of "bare lives" as *homo sacer* is not to

express humanitarian pity over these outcast lives. It is rather a philosophical

speculation of the human condition and its negatives that biopolitics and its

anthropological machine manipulate; Agamben, as Kishik interprets, "tries to jam

[the] metaphysical division-machine" (34).[47] All exclusionary violence, according to

Agamben, initiates because we do not think of these negatives and the potential realm

of our beings with actual beings. Within common and all-inclusive humanity, such

negatives as Others, *homo sacer*, animality, or savages coexist with positive form-of-

life and are not sublated into dialectic synthesis; in this sense, "I" am a singular being

in the community without identities or divisions between my negatives and positives.

In terms of ethico-ontology, every time we think of humanity, it is ethical to think of

animaltiy as humanity's potentiality, and the reverse is the same. Heidegger's

melancholia will persist, and his animals will bleat, squeak, live, and die in my

dissertation as in reality. In this fashion, Asians in the "coming community" will

---

[46] In *Nudities*, Agamben traces the ontological and religious meaning of nudity and compares its meaning to Heideggerian truth as "the opening of truth, of 'disclosedness' (*a-letheia*, 'unconcealment'), without which knowledge would not be possible" (81).

[47] *Homo sacer* is a concept to divulge the apparatuses of the anthropological machine which distinguishes human's life into *zoe* (bare life) and *bio* (political life) to exclude those *homo sacers* from humanity. *Homo sacer* is the dark side of legal, state bio-politics. As Kishik aptly states, "our life, with its basic rights and liberties, is usually protected by the laws of a state; but it can also easily be transformed into what Agamben calls a bare or naked life, which is stripped of its way or form of life. With a blink of an eye, a flick of a pen, or a press of a button, any 'good citizen' from any 'respected country'…can be excluded from the state-run 'protection plan' and thus be exposed to random acts of violence" (18).

imagine a commons or commonplace they can gather, speak, eat, live, and die. And, this commonplace is the literary space I propose.

Admittedly, there are more than three registers to stop the anthropological machine. What's more, the weakest part of my application of Agamben's ideas such as form-of-life and the coming community seems to radically contradict the legitimacy of theoretical framework of this dissertation; it can be said that it is preposterous to use those most fundamental ontological ideas for Asian American studies. This critical flaw in fact is more than a flaw but a Derrida's *pharmakon*, which means both medicine and poison. As I briefly introduced in the preface, my use of Agamben's ideas is for grounding. I do not deny that Agamben's philosophy is "before" any ethnic studies. Yet, my proposal is that because of the propositions of these non-identity-political, non-cultural, absolutely non-ethnic ideas, I can move to the discussion of Asian politics, ethics and literature. Without these concepts, linguistic and cultural studies on ethnic literature will lose their connectivities to other ethnic studies and their potentiality. This is the same with Heidegger's philosophy; that is, because of Heideggerian philosophy's ontological grounding, we can further his philosophical ideas into ontic culture, politics, and individual discipline.

From now, to bridge my commentary and meta-commentary on Western and Eastern philosophers to the final vision of an aesthetic space, I will focus on three registers appropriated from Western ideas: tarrying with negative, strategic nominalism, and creative universals. These registers will reveal a literary commons where Asians and animals exist, breaking free from the anthropological machine.

Strategic Nominalism and Creative Universals

Ethnic writers often run into a question of their agency in writing about their ethnic identities and experience. In particular, those who have trans-spatial experience while writing about their experiences are prone to fall into such predicament because, as Patridge observes, they have to "draw from cultural codes 'alien' to the codes of the established literature, but they likewise draw from the traditions, literary influences, and established codes of the major literature" (123). This dilemma is also relevant to their philosophical questions about the contradiction between universal form-of-life and ethnically specific forms of life. Then, what kind of form-of-life can ethnic writers imagine without losing their ethnic agencies as well as universal humanity? Before undertaking this question, we must first consider what form-of-life is.

Agamben's "form-of-life" is a powerful metaphysical tool to think of the correlation and difference between the universal and the singular as well as the positive and the negative within humanity. If life is a form, regardless of its content, one's life can have different forms of life; in other words, one's present form of life has n-1 potential forms-of-life, I mean full potentiality minus the current form of life as a graduate student or Asian in the Occident in my case. Appearance and spectacle in society hides these n-1 potentialities. However, as soon as this form-of-life is fractured and divided into various forms of life—bare life, Dasein's life, Asian life, Jewish life, animalized life, life in a concentration camp—ontological exclusion begins, and a being falls into one of categories: Heideggerian Dasein, animal, Chinese, and so on. Inasmuch as the form-of-life sustains its singularity as an

example and its universality as a form-of-life, not divided into various forms, the anthropological machine cannot operate.[48]

Thus, to deliberatively sustain the singular form-of-life and avoid the violence of division and exclusion, the n-1 potentiality of negatives under the form-of-life has to be recognized but hidden from the anthropological machine. Agamben's philosophy is to contemplate all these possible forms of life and philosophically render them *examples* of an indivisible form of life. In this regard, Agamben finds the problems of negatives in Hegel's philosophy, but these negatives in Hegel's philosophy are the foundation of Agamben's philosophy. From now, though briefly, I will analyze how Hegel takes on this issue of negative and deconstruct his dialectic system to show the necessity of strategic nominalism[49] and the creative universal. Together, these can present the form-of-life in a form of literary space as *commons* where the anthropological machine becomes inoperative.

Hegel's notion of "tarrying with negative," contains snags of animality against humanity, the form of community and life, and the role of aesthetics. Hegel says: "Spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it. This tarrying with negative is the magical power that converts it into being" (*Phenomenology* 19). This passage constitutes the marrow of the Hegelian dialectic

---

[48] The whole argument of form-of-life originates from Agamben's most promising and potent essay, "Form-of-Life." In this essay, he defines the term "form-of-life" as, "a life that can never be separated from its form, a life in which it is never possible to isolate something such as naked life" (*Means and End* 3-4). This form of life is absolutely immanent life without identities and divisions, such division as *zoe* and *bio*. This form-of-life is powerful means to stop the anthropological machine because it provides a maximum potentiality with zero actualization—such potentiality of "potentiality not to do." In this sense, his philosophy proposes a negative side of the philosophy of human will and its focus on ends.

[49] I use this term without reference to other scholars, but I have observed several scholars using it for different purposes. For example, Thomas Osborne uses this term to analyze Foucault's ethics. However, my use is not the same as Osborne's.

and its negative. The basic argument is that our everyday experience consists of given

common sense and its self-enclosed circle, but at some moment, consciousness

recognizes otherness because of the power of "Understanding" that defamiliarizes this

common sense. Difference that emerges from these accidents and negatives produced

via different otherness is in fact "the energy of thoughts, of the pure

'I'"(*Phenomenology* 19). Just prior to the quotation, Hegel exemplifies "Death" and

"Beauty" as negatives. Life and understanding tarry with these negatives so that they

sustain. Thus, Hegel's Absolute Spirit (Geist) is able to uphold its power only when it

continues to tarry with negatives.

Returning to the previous arguments, if humanity and reasons are positive, it

is not preposterous to assume that animality and emotions are negatives. In this

context, beauty, death, animality, and emotions share the same negativity in Hegelian

dialectic. This tarrying with the negative is also a process to bring forth universals

and, dialectically, a community of isolated individual self-consciousness in Hegel's

dialectic. However, this dialectical process of two different self-consciousnesses that

form a community interestingly excludes certain others in the process of forming the

state, as the anthropological machine operates under the auspice of spirit, humanity,

history, Identity, the same, the Occident, or citizenship. For instance, discussing the

dialectic transition from the ethical order of "Family" to the political "State," Hegel

claims, "it is only as citizen that [the individual] is actual and substantial…so far as

he is not a citizen but belongs to the Family, is only an unreal impotent shadow"

(*Phenomenology* 270). That is, though being included in the ethical order and

community of "Family," according to Hegel, a non-citizen cannot achieve its potent

self-consciousness because it becomes an impotent shadow of the state as the completion of Absolute Spirit. In terms of Hegelian dialectic and its negativity, the non-citizen status of a human being is consonant with the premature social system—the Family—before its evolution into a more developed social form of the state.

However, here Hegel's "tarrying with negatives" persists and opens another problematic combination of universal and particular I discussed previously as two contradictory registers in ethnic writers' creation of universal form-of-life alongside singular forms of life. If negatives remain with positives, neither universals nor particulars can be solely negatives or positives. In this eternal tarrying moment, what a writer needs is to avoid a preposterous situation where one's ethnic particulars jar with universal themes; in this paradoxical situation, a writer has to choose which of universal or particular is negative and positive as well as its vice versa.

To avoid this dialectic sublation, rhetorical apposition or conjunction of negatives and positives must occur. And, in these appositional "relations," universality and particularity coexist though the universal constantly changing form to be a continuum or a totality that preserves particulars' differences. The particular must be strategically emphasized to create these universals for the totality or the continuum. Philosophically, these eternal tarrying moments of negatives and positives as well as appositional relations of universals and particulars require creative universals and strategic nominalism. Contemporary nominalism[50] in the geo-cultural

---

[50] Nominalism, according to the *Dictionary of Philosophy*, generally means "abstract or general terms, or universals, [which] represent no objective real existents, but are merely words or names, mere vocal utterances" (211). This disconnection between things and representation opposes realism, which hypothesizes the actual existence of universals. According to nominalism, if we use 'evil' as a universal term, it cannot universally exist in reality; what exists are particular events or beings that cannot be universalized into 'evil.' Nominalism, in the context of postmodern, post-structural theories

world represents bodies whose particular presences deconstruct the historical progress of universals such as justice, spirit, and humanity. As Fredrick Jameson claims, modernism or postmodernism can be transcoded as cultural nominalism because in globalization, national, racial, gender, local, individual differences implode the universals and their authenticity. Aren't positive humanity and negative animality then universals and thus lose their significance as ontological categories and hierarchy? Cultural and political minorities face a dilemma between universals and particulars. If we disagree with nominalism, the result can mean the exclusion of everything ineffable and indelible in the West determining it as universal negative (i.e. animality in Li-Young Lee's "The Cleaving" will lose its specific Chinese experience and its singularity, undifferentiated from White immigrants' experiences); on the other hand, if we fully agree with nominalism and emphasize fundamental differences that cannot be universalized, it is questionable how we can create a totality within which minorities are able to find universal ground or a common place to exist with particular others without excluding negatives. Thus, nominalism becomes a strategic method to generate a creative universality that has the potentiality to contain constant changes of its elements and forms.

A form of an appositional combination of strategic nominalism and creative universality in literary space is Benjamin's constellation, in which differences maintain their powers while adding, via constant change of form of constellation, new particulars without universalizing them into fixed concepts or essences. The

---

and cultures, represents the symptoms Fredrick Jameson calls the "loss of historicity" or "historical deafness" because it rejects mapping the general picture of the global culture, politics, and even ontology (*Postmodernism* x-xi). Using nominalism in Adorno's philosophical context, Jameson argues that aesthetic nominalism is paradoxical in that though it rejects the universal, it also means "reduction to the body as such" (*Postmodernism* 152).

constellation does not deny universal concepts or essences, but it denies the oppressive universalizing process of identity, universalization, totalitarian politics, teleological history, and the general humanity. This constellation has a potentiality to actualize certain poetics on literary space that represents the spaces where Asian foreigners, strangers without spirit, and human-animals dwell everywhere including concentration/refugee/sex camps as well as states of exception. Their voices can relate to each other without falling into violent universalization or impotent nominalism while keeping every positive's potential negatives; likewise, in this constellation, form-of-life as a creative universal can contain differential forms of life while avoiding form-of-life's divisions into various forms of life.

Many Western intellectuals are also looking for a way to create a new "relation" in literary, political, ethical, and ontological spaces. Agamben, Negri, Derrida, Badiou, Glissnat, Deleuze and Guatarri, and others, are similarly attempting to find these new universal relations of singularities without excluding negatives in philosophical, political, ethical, and aesthetic spaces. They are tarrying with negatives using creative universals and strategic nominalism. For example, interpreting Negri's multitude, which contains differential, nominal positions in the Empire such as feminism, nationalism, ecology, the animal right movement and so on, Paolo Virno also argues that Negri's multitude,[51] as political and ontological multitude, is a rhetorical "commonplace" because it "is united by the risk which derives from 'not

---

[51] In an interview, Negri explicitly criticizes and rejects "'negative thought' (from Nietzsche to Benjmain and from Rosenzweig to Agamben)'" (*Negri on Negri* 38). Following Deleuze's and Spinoza's philosophical ground of immanence and mono-substance, he rejects these thinkers' negative sides because their philosophies are limited within Western modernity and its nihilism. He also criticizes Agamben and Derrida because they are too Heideggerian (*Negri on Negri* 82). I am not in the place of judging if his criticism is legitimate, but his criticism seems to be too biased and ignores the negatives he also sees but cannot accept because of his political utopianism.

feeling at home,' from being exposed omnilaterally to the world" (34). Virno uses "common place" as the rhetorical space of the multitude in the sense that "common places" are "the apotropaic resource of the contemporary multitude…[and] the epicenter of that linguistic…animal which is the human animal" (34-5). As I also have maintained, the uncanny ontological mood of "not feeling at home" as a human-animal is a commonplace "life of mind" (Virno 34). In turn, this "life of mind" as a creative universal is "the One which lies beneath the mode of being of the multitude" (Virno 37).

This use of "commonplace" as a constellation, as a space of multitude, "form-of-life," or coming community through creative universals and strategic nominalism to disinter the unmediated negatives hidden in (post) modern ontology and its aesthetic presentation is not limited to European philosophers. Li-Young Lee's poem also shows the creative universals of animality and the "not-at-home" mood as well as the strategic nominalism of the Chinese experience of his spirituality to keep the universal potentiality of becoming negative forms of life such as animal-humans or Others. There are two additional, significant, minority, pan-racial intellectuals and poets I will discuss—Myung Mi Kim and Édouard Glissant. Insofar as their poetics prove commonality between two poets across continents, their experience of negative form of life and their endeavors to build a common poetics where all other forms of life come together into a common place open a vision of constellation where their worlds create "Relation" without being fixated into their particular ethnicities or negating negativity or Heidegger's Occidental "Being" or "spirit."

A Trans-spatial Voyage between Two Poetics—Myung Mi Kim's Poetics of Commons and Glissant's Poetics of Relation

Myung Mi Kim's poems are experimental and relational. Not a single poem can be understood without considering/understanding the linkages with her own and other alluded poems in poems' constellational totality, which she calls "commons." Kim's frequent uses of fragmentized syllables and intentional insertions of Korean or Latin words in English sentences encumber American readers' understanding of her poems. Using these experimental syntaxes, the speaker in Kim's poems intentionally stutters[52] so that the interconnectivities of indelible sounds and images leave unfathomable rifts in her texts. Even if readers' imaginations and understanding draw lines between these monads to create a pattern of a constellation, there is no guarantee that they catch the whole image correctly; rather the whole image is a fragmentary map which only delivers unclear ideas about global violence, in images of as war, animals, cries, melancholia, nostalgia, homelessness, resentment against capitalism and inhumanity.

The center of these global ideas of violence is the speaker's trauma from a war—the Korean War lived through before she immigrated to the U.S. The postwar scene and imagination of the Korean war in Kim's memory brings about disruptions

---

[52] Kim's poetics corresponds with Deleuze's minor literature that Deleuze discusses in "He Stutter" because of her use of language and minorization of major languages. Kim's poems have "poetic speech that actualizes [the] power of bifurcation and variation, of heterogenesis and modulation, that are proper to language" (Deleuze, "He Stutter" 108), and she pretends that she "is always like a foreigner in the language in which [she] expresses [herself], even if this is [her] native language," which "gives birth to a foreign language within language, a grammar of disequilibrium" (Deleuze, "He Stutter" 109-110).

in her articulation, imagination, and feelings.[53] These disruptions, however, also recount different and particular spaces and times via the universal idea of war; the Korean War meets wars in Vietnam, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and so forth to create a constellation of violence. Moreover, this constellation does not exclude negatives such as animals or all forms of victims. For example, the image of massacre in war is juxtaposed with the meat packing industry in her poems. Reading Kim's poems, in this sense, are like voyaging on the physical and linguistic ocean to come upon islands having a singular, but shared climate. In particular, her *Commons* can be read as a manifesto of her poetics connecting the/her Asian experience with poetic philosophizing.

Commons ends with two long poems that are deemed Kim's manifesto of her "poetics of the commons." The first of these two is entitled bilingually—"Sawing Song/ *t'opchil norae,*" in which the latter title is an English transcription of the pronunciation of the Korean title. This juxtaposition of the two titles signals Kim's project of relations, as she also clearly articulates in the first two lines of the first poem of *Commons*—"The transition of the stability and absoluteness of the world's contents / to their dissolution into motions and relations" (13). This transition from the world contents, which may refer to Hegel's Spirit and its teleological history, to the change and flow of motions and relations open the new space where the Western "Being" or "Spirit" becomes "Relation." In this poetics of relations, this epic poem opens a new poetic way to create language, thoughts, history, and cultural relations

---

[53] Though Kim was born in 1957 when the war ended, South Koreans were still suffering from postwar conflicts, poverty, and intensive local conflicts with North Korea. Though Kim could not experience war itself, I assume, experiencing postwar situation, the Korean war itself became the kernel of her historical trauma.

across the West and the East. Namely, it opens a poetic commons where Asians become form-of-life and the coming community on the same ontological level as Westerners, and animality and spirituality become the essence of humanity. The poem starts with a story of an orphan girl:

> The story of a girl who does not know her name or her age
> Mother who had gone to stay under earth
> Father who had gone to stay under heaven
> (*Commons* 98)

The story in the beginning of the epic poem is a universal narrative about an orphan girl's journey to find her parents. This commonality, in turn, expands into humans' universal situation of poverty and animalization: "There lived millions and millions of poor and tired human beings, toiling ants who have built a nest underneath a heavy stone. They worked for the benefit of someone else. They shared their food with the animals of the fields. They died without hope" (*Commons* 99). As such, human beings on the earth are poor and have to work to the bone in the world. They are animalized poor people not just materially, but also spiritually as they work only for others. Then, what is the meaning of this "poverty"?

To put it bluntly, poverty is the universal theme of Kim's oeuvre (i.e. one of her books is entitled *Penury*). Alongside war and violence, Kim uses the theme of poverty to bring forth a constellation where material, economic poverty and spiritual "poverty" resonates with such ontological, ethical, geopolitical and transcultural issues as death, violence to Others, war, the destruction of nature, racial discrimination, and so on. For example, in another poem she lists words that form universal imaginary ideas of violence and captivity: "foundry / mill / warehouse // tannery / refinery / central clearing hall // infirmary / barracks / internment camp //

auto plant / containment center / refugee camp" (*Penury* 17). All the facilities Kim

lists evoke administrative processes, artificial production, globalized violence, the

darkness of civilization, and massive destruction. Technology and manipulative

rationality within the bio-political anthropological machine globally operate to

produce unnatural, inauthentic, and poor people, poor animals, and exploited objects.

In this sense, Kim's poverty reverberates with Heidegger's darkness of the world in

terms of strategic nominalism and creative universals. The next stanza presents

images of the machine and the poet's effort to break free from this machine: "Hold

this up / Amid listening board and gourd / Were to pipe and fittings / Free from

function/ To change the position of enunciation and the relations within it" (*Commons*

99). Poverty is not just an image but also a universal and global machine that operates

within a global system. Through the poetic enunciations and the relations of this

machine, this machine produces the poverty of the world. The next line shows the

result of this poverty, a wandering orphan on the earth: "Peregrine and Earth / The

day that makes one an orphan" (*Commons* 99-100) and this wanderer's poetic journey.

"Peregrine" can mean both a peregrine falcon and a wanderer, a trans-spatial

being, which leads to the image of "Earth," resonating with the previous association

of Earth as the place where people are poor. Thus, if "peregrine" refers to the orphan,

it signifies the orphan's wandering and journey, while the orphan metaphorically has

an animal form—she is in essence an animal wanderer. In contrast to Trakl's stranger,

this "peregrine" as the orphan girl wanders and sings, containing her animality as her

essence. Moreover, in contrast to the stranger in Trakl's Occident, on the earth the

girl is as poor as an animal. But a similarity between Trakl (or Heidegger)'s stranger

and the orphan girl intriguingly exists: both of them are wandering to bear witness as

to how human civilization emerges out of animality and how it destructs nature, and,

how its system of violence results in the darkness of the world. The people's

collective songs disclose the historicity of humanity from its origin. Meanwhile,

Kim's speaker encounters a ring of people who are proceeding towards a temple and

singing:

> A wheel
> A place of assembly
> A ring or circle of people
> Belonging to or used in processions
> A solemn procession to a temple with singing and music.
> (*Commons* 100)

People within this ring are full of elation and enthusiasm inspired by sayings from the

temple. An ambiguity resides in the movement of a wheel, an image of the machine.

The next stanza shows that this wheel and procession are related to the formation of a

nation—a humanized nation where the previous poverty seems to be eliminated.

> Sayings   .   disturbances
> A nation to be humanized
> Visited by a humble pounding
> The meaning of becoming elated.
> (*Commons* 100)

In the ring in which people are captivated like Heidegger's animals, poetic sayings

pervade, though the people in the ring face "disturbances" in the poem. Here syntactic

space and a period between "sayings" and "disturbances" make the poet's role and

people in the ring more ambiguous. If the sayings come from the temple, and so the

sayings are religious, why would there be "disturbances"?

    The answer is unclear, but the speaker envisages how a nation is formed via

"humanization" of animal people and she listens to "a humble pounding" in the

process of building their civilized nation (*Commons* 100). Like the movement of a saw and "a humble pounding," this fluctuation is rhythmic but violent. With this humble rhythmic collaboration, the nation emerges with the people's rhythmic movements in history being attuned to the moods of Heideggerian animal ring— elation and enthusiasm. This exuberance is charged with spiritual energy, which is compared to the historic moments of burgeoning nationalism or fascism. The people stay in the ring enthusiastically because it nullifies people's thoughts in, while it also drags them into fanatic, violent actions. Thus, humbleness and humanization are hidden below a thick opacity and deep ambiguity, though the speaker admits, "This is to be done / This is to be sung" (*Commons* 102).

As Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer observe, rationality has contained irrationality from the inception of human history. The inception of a humanized community as a nation captivating people into its ring of disinhibitiveness in fact conceals a violent, uncanny, and morbid image of animals being dragged into a slaughterhouse (remember Lee's grocery store); the speaker discloses this by saying:

> Shambling   .   shambles
>
> That snapdragon's crimson
> Understood as a potential sound.
> (*Commons* 103)

People in the ring are shambling into shambles, namely a slaughterhouse. This grotesque image corresponds with the universal history of the world, especially Asia, where people have gone through colonization, independence, and nationalistic or fascist fervor after gaining independences and before falling victim to series of wars. Again, Kim uses punctuation to illustrate her message; she inserts a pause with a

period and spaces between "shambling" and "shambles" to reveal the infinite

examples of these historical, violent, and inhumane events. The period represents

these infinite examples of violence, and the pause as caesura is saturated with

ontological moods such as melancholia, homelessness, and, more or less, a feeling of

animality-humanity. But this building, destruction, and rebuilding are in rhythmic

movements and repetitious.

Universal human history is thus formed through repetitious movements of

building, destruction, and rebuilding. Aesthetics becomes an expression of the will of

the people. Only within the ontological idea of historicity and humanity, resonating

with the original sense of the rhythm of creation, can humanity restore itself without

letting animality be denigrated to cruel violence. Violence discloses how the

collective song inside the ring of people is both aesthetically beautiful and fanatic

because it is saturated by the mood of the aestheticization of politics.[54] The color of

"crimson" on the "snapdragon" (*Commons* 103) symbolizes the blood human-animals

have to spill in "shambles," which represents another ring of beings, a ring of war

depriving humanity. However, this slaughterhouse is another form of commons where

animals, the dead, and humans can come together. Slaughtering and consumption is

part of rhythm Kim finds in humans' historicity.

The poem ends with a line, "Come at us   leapt" (*Commons* 103). The last

line is filled with an urge, but the reader cannot identify who the agent of this urge is;

is the agent rhythm as origin of art and historicity? If so, Kim's utopia is in the future

and in art. Art, though very susceptible to falling into a fascist frenzy, is the true ethos

---

[54] Walter Benjamin categorizes fascism as the aestheticization of politics, and communism as the politicization of aesthetics (*Illumination* 242).

of humanity and historicity; likewise, philosophy and politics, though very susceptive to totalitarian urges, can lead to the unconcealment of truth or the beginning of revolution. Art can be everything because art, through attention to the rhythm of historicity, is the space of infinite possibilities. But art is limited too because art, like human beings, lives and dies inside history. Art's form, in a constellational, radiates its original meaning of rhythm, and changes eternally in correspondence with historicity.[55] Kim's poem responds to historicity in order to be responsible, changing form and screaming with its fragmented forms as the historicity and humanity suffers. Therefore, Kim's poem focuses on the universal and singular human condition and its historicity by employing various broken forms and creating a constellation of different fragments.

In the next poem, Kim presents a more organized poetics of the commons:

> ….
> Swerves, oddities, facts, miscues, remnant—threnody and
> meditation—
> The perpetually incomplete task of tracking what enters
> into the field of perception
> (the writing act)—its variegated and grating music,
> cadences, and temporalities
> ….
> This book emerges through cycles of erosion and accretion
>
> Commons elides multiple sites: reading and text making,
> discourses and disciplines, documents and documenting.
> Fluctuating. Proceeding by fragment, by incretion.
> Through propositions, parataxis, contingency—
> approximating nerve, line, song.
>
> Velocity, the exultant and transitory glimpse of encounter
> ….

---

[55] Delezue and Guattari, in "Of the Refrain," also analyze this ontological aspect of rhythm and Chaos. Analyzing art (music) and chaos, he proposes ideas such as "rhythm-chaos or the chaosmos" (*A Thousands* 313).

> Released into our moment, shaped as it is by geographical
> and cultural displacements, an exponentially hybrid state of
> nations, cultures and voicings. (*Commons* 107)

In this poem, Myung Mi Kim traces Western philosophies, aesthetics, and their spirits

by forming commons as a literary space of the coming community through the

rhythm of "erosion and accretion." Kim's *Commons* is the space of errancy or a trans-

spatial experience produced from "geopolitical and cultural displacements,"

resonating with "temporalities" (*Commons* 107). In this rhythm of historicity, Kim

sees "the exultant and transitory glimpse of encounter" that proceeds by "fluctuation"

and "fragments" (107). This rhythm resonates with "voicings" from beings. It is not

clear whose "voicings" Kim refers to, but the agents of these voicings are multiple

beings that are in the ontological mood of "threnody and meditation" (107). These

moods echo through the constellation of beings in commons, the utopia Kim desires.

After presenting the universal form of commons, Kim quotes Adorno's

ambiguous proposition, "The fragment is that part of the totality of the work that

opposes totality" (*Commons* 108).[56] How can we understand this antinomy? This

question relates to the paradoxical relations between fragment and totality, semblance

and truth, utopian desire and painful expression, and spirit and materiality. First,

integration, coherence, totality, or aura in the artwork is, according to Adorno,

semblance, and this semblance contains the utopian desire of creating nonviolent

relations among artworks and their objects. However, in the contemporary

administrated world, this aesthetic utopia is not possible because every effort to

---

[56] This fragmentary quote in Kim's poem is from Adorno's *Aesthetics* (45). Here Adorno critiques
Walter Benjamin's aura because of its potential misuse when it is institutionalized within the cultural
industry, where aura becomes an "exhibition value." In this context, Adorno writes that "The category
of the fragmentary—which has its locus here—is not to be confused with the category of contingent
particularity: The fragment is that part of the totality of the work that opposes totality" (*Aesthetics* 45).

change is always already mediated by apparatuses. Adorno does not provide any compromise for this dilemma; rather, the distintegration and the status of each artwork as a windowless monad reveal how monads are related and connected within a constellation or a totality. Reflecting Heidegger's darkness of the world, Adorno claims: "[t]he darkening of the world makes the irrationality of art rational: radically darkened art (*Aesthetics* 19). In Adorno's *Aesthetics*, pain, shudders, fragmentalization, and darkness are the honest and truthful responses of the arts bearing witness to the irrational violence in the world; yet this does not mean that modern arts lose their rationality. Rather, they achieve a different rationality expressed via a new art form. Art's purpose, although appearing purposeless now, lies in the antinomy of the utopia in the arts because "art must be and wants to be utopia, and the more utopia is blocked by the real function of order, the more it is true; yet at the same time art may not be utopia in order not to betray it by providing semblance and consolation" (*Aesthetics* 32). And, within this utopian desire, art "should introduce chaos into order rather than the reverse" (*Aesthetics* 93). In short, art is the space of chaos with utopian desire existing in opacity along with totality on the outside; harmony, in turn, is semblance (*Aesthetics* 100). Therefore, artwork has its utopian dream of the redemption of semblance in fragmented and damaged art's totality and autonomy. But this is an impossible utopian desire now since we have lost our ontological home, so much so the art has lost its authentic, original semblance.

Here, Adorno's ethico-aesthetic perspective emerges. Artistic expression fundamentally has to express objects' pain. These objects include animals; thus,

Adorno argues, "there is nothing so expressive as the eyes of animals—especially apes—which seem objectively to mourn that they are not human" (*Aesthetics* 113). As Adorno explains, expression is art's praxis to disclose this materiality of the spirit whose dominance brings forth the illusionary semblance of unity, totality, humanity, beauty, etc. The expressions of animals' faces are sublime since they reflect the material truth of humans' spirits. Semblance and the utopian desire of totality paradoxically disclose this materiality and history of subjects' violence towards nature and others.

In this sense, Li-Young Lee's collective embodiment of being Chinese and sharing the animality as spiritual materiality reveals this paradox. Cannibalism is the truth of spiritual communion, but Li-Young Lee never abandons the utopian dream of the not-yet-come totality of beings at home. Likewise, Myung Mi Kim never loses the dream of totality, but its expression is full of pain and materiality, so the expressions become fragments because this totality is in mimetic relations with objects, animals, and nature that are destructed via subjects' physical, epistemological, and cultural violence. This is how the aesthetic forms a constellation with ethics and ontology. Kim's poems, in fragmented form, contain the painful faces of animals and others as in Adorno's constellation of the "animal/fool/clown," which has been ridiculed and ignored throughout history.

In sum, Kim's "commons" and its poetics is about the lived experience and the search for the true ethos of humanity in a collective form which resonates with "form-of-life" and the "coming community." The form of this commons also relates to Glissant's *chaos-monde* that "reconstitutes the image of the mother planet, an Earth

that would be primordial" (*Poetics* 154). Glissant's *chaos-monde* is a necessary

commonplace to create a poetics that can reflect the world of poetic relations. Thus,

chaos-monde secretly embeds its utopian dream in the future perfect tense. About this

utopian dream, from the standpoint of West's Others, Oakley deliberates:

> This commitment to redemption manifests in poetics that
> seek to make common aesthetic-ethical truths and utopian
> agendas rather than universalize these as did prominent
> European Romantic thinkers and writers. (*Common Places*
> 2)

As Oakley observes, Glissant's commonplaces (*lieux communs*) such as "community,

freedom, and society" (*Common Places* 2) are formed like Benjamin's constellation.

The thoughts of Glissant, the Caribbean poet and thinker, can be relayed by Kim's

Asian American experience, because both went through similar trans-spatial

experiences, eternal exiles, postcolonial oppression, and creation of their own

languages in order to find a way to freedom in *chaos-monde*. Errancy and exile are

destined in these writers' lives, but these lives share the origins (rhythms) of Kim's

and Glissant's voices. Glissant underlines "an awareness of our place in the world and

our reflection on the necessary and disalienated relationship with Other," and "new

form of expression through our combined poetics, and far removed from abstract

universality, with the fertile yet difficult relationship with our willed, collective need

for obscurity" (*Caribbean* 169-170). This commons as poetics of Korean Americans'

trans-spatial experience resonates with the commonplace as a poetics of the

Caribbean poet's different form of trans-spatial experience. I conclude this chapter

with a brief analysis of a poem by Glissant to compare it with the trans-spatial Asian

poems I have discussed. This will concisely disclose the universal picture of the

constellation of all animalized Others.

Glissant's poem, "Acclamation," starts with the image of a bowl and the

darkness of the world, boding well for the future:

> It was the salt in time's bowl. Nothing was left but an
> obscure urn of words. Is there a morning? The darkness of
> course bodes well—when words are shining on the step up
> to the house. In this realm of our hands.
> ….
> I
> Fetch me mudflows sheets of metal mangos form the blaze
> Let the limpid word go dry and barrenness be over
> Where the straw was and every uncircled thing
> It is time to halt vast errancy and it is time
> To arm the song with continents
> That hail us in passing in broad midday
> O worry, salt left on death by foam, my black land
> Take me into the summer that has no spring, O cry
>
> II
> It is the town, silent in its clay. It is the green wood, shoring
> up the frame of night.
> It is our own dogs, seen lapping between two winds. Strays.
> Hairless iron dogs, gaunt wizards of our absence, errant
> dogs. It was women, fierece cravings, and men, toothless
> mouths. Factories' roux, the year's vintages. I have not
> named the sea, married to a black cry, separated from the
> black procession. On this land
> Close down the sea and against the sound of peoples
> coming
> Pull shut its sandy handles, with their rock bolts.
>
> III
> I made such a cry my home, where no earth looms; and no
> shore is by the seas where I have been.
> Twisted by the hurricane, this man sees the mud at the
> door, the path leading to nights where each one gutters on
> the verge of death
> And he hears the earth where more than one name was
> buried.
>
> IV

Here the lands, behind the islet. (*Black Salt* 107-110)

There are several mysteries in the poem. First, what is this "bowl"? The "bowl"

represents historicity and a diaspora given that the black salt in Glissant's poems is

understood to symbolize Africans' diaspora and the pain and suffering they have gone

through. The bowl contains painful words as if it contains black salt, and these words,

like Kim's sayings, deliver the sayings of historicity, the future of the world because

the words are "shining on steps up to the house" (*Black Salt* 109). This house is

similar to Heidegger's language as the house of Being, but the house is proximate to

the "coming people" because this house is not for Being but for Relation of the

coming Others. And, as we will see in the last chapter of this dissertation, "Bowl of

Origins: Naming the Void and the Coming Community: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's

Dictée," the bowl becomes the central void of potentiality in Cha's *Dictée* such that

the uncanny image of a bowl in its formal clarity should encompass the philosophical

and aesthetic impulse and orientation of the work.

However, the darkness of the world is full of death and animal cries. On this

island, stray, iron dogs with poverty-stricken men and women, like the jumbled

images of Trakl's stranger and blue animals, are listening to "a black cry," a cry

resonating with "the sound of peoples coming" (*Black Salt* 109). These people are a

coming community with a form-of-life. They are moving toward dogs and people

whose distinctions are blurry because both of them dwell on the land—the Other's

land. The speaker cries like an animal because he also lost his home eternally, as well

as the shore he could land on. But, the last mystery is unfathomable. What is the

name buried in the earth? The sequential chapters of this work will address this

question. The name cannot be named because of the eternal errantry trans-spatial

writers, in this case trans-spatial Asian writers, experience. The name is the name of

the geographical, historical, ethical, political, ontological and aesthetic "home" or

"commons" of the animals Heidegger would exclude. The home for which I am also

looking.

CHAPTER 2

**TRANS-SPATIAL METAMORPHOSIS FROM A KOREAN BARTLEBY
TO A TRANS-SPATIAL BARD IN *NATIVE SPEAKER***

> We know ourselves as part and as crowd,
> in an unknown that does not terrify.
> We cry our cry of poetry.
> Our boats are open, and we sail them for everyone.
> (Glissant, *Poetics* 9)
>
> The motley community of homeless and helpless and well-intentioned
> ran in terror, surrendered, vomited, cradled the dying.
> And the rising tide of that migration from the South
> —not foreign to the ravages of war—never stopped, clamored
> forward,
> joined the war with both wooden and real weapons, capital, and
> plunder
> (Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* 240)

In this chapter, I will show how immigrant melancholy, particularly that of

Asian Americans, congeals into a voice—unidentifiable and depersonalized—and in

the dead in Chang-Rae Lee's novel *Native Speaker*. First, I will turn briefly to Myung

Mi Kim's "And Sing Us," the first poem in her collection *Under Flag*, because it

exemplifies the model of voice that permeates Chang-Rae Lee's novel.

To some extent, several depersonalized characters in Lee's novel correspond

with a mysterious voice in Myung Mi Kim's poem that begins with these cryptic

three stanzas:

> Must it ring so true
> So we must sing it
>
> To span even yawning distance
> And would we be near then
>
> What would be the sea be, if we were near it

Voice
It catches its underside and drags it back
What sound do we make, "n", "h", "g"
Speak and it is sound in time. (*Under Flag* 13)

The poem is mostly about the diasporic experience Koreans had crossing the Pacific,

as the next stanza confirms: "Depletion replete with barraging / Slurred and taken

over / Diaspora" (13). The speaker of this poem begins her singing mysteriously

because a true, echoing "voice" invites the speaker to an imaginary space. The hoped

for cartographical totality created by such imaginative "spanning" is deemed a porous

one through which the speaker is inching to a sea, none other than the Pacific. The

unidentified voice from an unnamed speaker in the poem is physically dragged back.

Meanwhile, mimicking the rhythm of the ebb and flow of the sea, a mysterious voice

comes and goes, leaving partial sounds on the beach as if these sounds were material

remnants of the voice.

Those remnants are "n," "h," "g," which do not signify anything in English

individually or collectively. While their significations are shadowed, phonic elements

remain. These sounds are materialized or impersonated so that they can be dragged

back from the sea. Yet these individual syllables are different transnational signifiers

signifying "nation" in Korean: (*n*)*a-ra* (the Korean word for "nation" in pure

Korean), (*h*)*an-gguk* (the Korean word for "Korea" in Chinese characters), or (*g*)*ook-*

ga (the Korean word for "nation" in Chinese characters). In these connotations, the

mood of the poem teems with nostalgia and melancholia because the speaker, trying

to express her desire to go back to Korea, cannot complete the articulation of her

nationality, which is fragmented into three different Korean words. The fragmented,

disabled letters embody this failure linguistically. First, although three Korean words containing these letters share the same meaning, the meanings of these letters in English will not elicit such understanding from American readers. Second, due to this incomprehensibility in Korean and English alike, the phonic differences of the three letters represent unfathomable linguistic gaps between Koreans, Americans and Korean immigrants. If Koreans cannot conjecture any significant relation of those letters in the English pronunciation, neither can Americans. In short, despite the "nearness" of the three letters, the meanings of the letters contain linguistic, translational, and logical impasses. But on an ontological level, across these linguistic gaps and impasses, these incomprehensible letters in English, separately materialized, embody unidentifiable, but related bodies of people, specifically the dead. Through a circular movement and syntax, the last stanza of the poem engagingly reveals that the voice originates from the dead.

> ….
> Not a singular song trundle rondo
> What once came to us whole
> In this we are again about to do
> In the times it takes to dead dead dead la la la
> Trundle rondo for a long time it stood marker and marked
> Mostly we cross bridges we did not see being built. (*Under Flag* 15)

Kim describes echoing voices from the dead singing in a ring. The infinite repetition of "not a singular song" resonates with the collective singers who are on the threshold between the dead and the living. In this context, the voice in the poem can be interpreted as collective voices from this threshold.

Thus, the fundamental question posed by the poem concerns the voice. What are the correlations between the voice and the cryptic letters? In the poem, why does

the voice rather than a speaker *speaks*? What is the relation between voice and language? The voice defies mere translation and transcription in that it precedes linguistic articulation. How might we understand the voice in the poem stretching across the unfathomable gaps between individual letters as incomprehensible things? Agamben's *Language and Death* assists in our understanding of the voice as pure language before human understanding.[57] While Agamben's idea of ethos may well be too universal to apply to the Asian American experience, his ideas help me to sketch out the theoretical, poetic, and philosophical relations among immigrants' ontological, ethical experiences. Melancholia is the mood of immigrants in globalization and the mood permeating the negative grounds of humanity. That mood manifests the truth of these unidentifiable immigrants deprived of sovereignty and even human dignity, as the recent debates surrounding immigration law in Arizona prove.

Reflecting on the ideas of Heidegger and Hegel, Agamben claims, "'Taking-the-*This*' and 'Being-the-*there*' are possible only through the experience of the Voice, that is, the experience of the taking place of language in the removal of the voice" (*Language and Death* 37). The most negatively concealed voice is the animal voice (voice without signification) of the dead, "only because the animal voice is not truly empty…but contains the death of the animal, [so] human language, articulating and arresting the pure sound of this voice…[can] become the voice of *consciousness*, meaningful language" (*Language and Death* 45). On these ontological grounds, meaning is negatively mediated by non-meaning (animal voice) where voice remains

---

[57] Before Agamben, Heidegger also explored this problem but stopped; Heidegger admits, "The essential relation between death and language flares up before us, but remains still unthought" (*On the Way* 107-8).

as a trace before articulation. Moreover, according to Agamben, this role of voice from being-toward-death or "bare life" engenders Heideggerian *Stimmung* (mood) in its negative relation with *Stimme* (speaking) because "*Stimmung* is the experience that language is not the *stimme* of man, and so the disclosure of the world that it puts into effect is inseparable from negativity" (*Language and Death* 56).

The voice of Myung Mi Kim's poem peals with this *Stimmung*. Only through these negativities of death and voice can we consider the ontological difference of humanity from inhumanity such as nothing (death). The ontological differences between being and death as well as voice and language unfold truth. How, then, can this truth be unfolded, and who is the agent of this disclosure? The disclosure of the truth is possible only with mystic unconcealment by "the word of poets" where "silent experience of the taking place of language in the Voice and in death is completed" (Agamben, *Language and Death* 62). After these ontological, poetic speculations, Agamben switches to an ethical inquiry under the lens of the etymological understanding of ethos as a "dwelling place" in Greek, stating:

> The place of language is now truly lost forever…In its downing, thought compared, that is, led back toward the Same, the negative dimensions of the event of language, its having-been and its coming to be, its silence and its voice, being and nothingness; and in the extinguishing of thought, in the exhaustion of the dimension of *being*, the figure of humanity's *having* emerged for the first time in its simple clarity: to *have always dear* as one's habitual dwelling place, as the *ethos* of humanity. (*Language and Death* 81, emphasis in original)

The *ethos* of humanity resides in human beings' habitual dwelling place. This place is built upon the ontological ground of the unidentifiable voice of the dead that fundamentally resembles the voice of the animal that remains as an ethical trace

under the transcendent Being. Then, what can the mood (*Stimmung*) of this dwelling

place of humanity and its voice or ethos be? If the animal voice is the vanishing trace

before articulation and death is the factual future of all beings' existences, the mood

about what we have lost and will be losing is melancholia.

In the era of globalization, bodies in constant movement that cannot find a

proper place to dwell in the world undergo a different ontological, ethical

melancholia that is irreducible to a mood of universal human condition. Immigrants,

including Asian immigrants in the U.S. whose immigration has been marked by

exclusion and quotas from the very start (i.e. the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Acts and

the 1924 National Origins Act), suffer from specific melancholia.[58] The ideal,

primary object of Asian American loss is whiteness, a property that determines one's

social status in the U.S. As *Native Speaker* portrays, this loss turns some Asian

Americans into melancholics since they cannot accomplish identification with that

object: "[i]n identifying with the lost object, the melancholic is able to preserve it but

only as a type of haunted, ghostly identification" (Eng and Han 346). The history of

exclusion from U.S. citizenship, the psychic and communal ambivalence between

total assimilation and isolation, and the trans-spatial experience of immigration have

germinated this melancholic split-subject, or a marginal Asian, who becomes a

nowhere-being rather than a model minority subject. The image of the model

---

[58] Extracting ideas from several parts of Freud's complex paper on melancholia and showing their
interpretation through a racial lens, Eng and Han claim that racial melancholia, against Freud's
pathological understanding, is a depathological understanding of group psychology in which
melancholia "presents a compelling framework to conceptualize register of loss and depression
attendant to both psychic and material process of assimilation" (344). Eng and Han also claim that
racial melancholia is unresolved mourning without end initiated by "unstable immigration and
suspended assimilation of Asian Americans into the national fabric" (345).

minority abuts the image of the monster, traitor, killer, or self-denigrating mourner within the ontological rhetoric of racial melancholia.

Native Speaker is haunted by images of traitors, ghosts, monsters, losses, and infinite mourning—all split images of melancholia. From start to finish, *Native Speaker* is narrator Henry's melancholic memoir of what he has lost. Such a melancholic memoir represents a literary space in which the voices of lost objects or dying people or the dead become fragmentary selves in the writer's psyche. Voices from the negative ground of humanity erupt and ossify, tracing a trajectory of beings "displaced from the external world into the internal world of the psyche" (Eng and Han 355). Lee's world of melancholic memory is littered with moments that resurrect lost voices as traces from the Asian American experience. Its violence originates from racial history, which is saturated by the mood of the voice of the dead.

In *Native Speaker*, Henry, roistering in the world of lost voices in his memory—especially that of his dead son Mitt, becomes a dreaming monster or a member of Agamben's coming community of "whatever" beings that I will explore more deeply later. At the same time, Henry also positively undergoes an experience of transformation from a scribe (an Asian Bartleby the scrivener) to a melancholic bard. Lee's melancholic bard resurrects immigrants' voices, which disrupt a bio-politics in which language covers voices and turns being-in-the-*house*-of-language to being-a-*renter*-with-an-accented-voice. Also, Henry's transformation to a memory-self that attempts to alienate his scribing self becomes the melancholic split ego of an immigrant, a symptom of Western modernity. The dreaming self who heeds the voices of the dead is identified as a savage or an irrational child whose illegitimate,

illegal existence has to be erased by Western discourse. As a philosophical example, after he divides our memory into two realms in a schema: pure memory and bodily memory for sensori-motor meachanisms (Bergson, *Matter and Memory* 152), Henri Bergson calls people who live in the pure memory "hardly better fitted for action: here we have no man of impulse, but a dreamer" (153). Interestingly enough, Bergson employs children and a savage as examples (154). Bergson implies that both tend to become dreamers or reckless barbarians or echolalia (114). Through Bergson's lens that represents a Western perspective, Henry can be seen as a child *and* a savage as soon as he begins dwelling in his memory where the Korean language has more originality than English. But Henry does not stop listening to the voices from his memory. Henry confesses, "[a]nd if I remember everything now in the form of lists it is that these notions come to me along a floating string of memory, a long and lyric processional that leads me out from the city…back to this place of our ghost" (227). The ghosts and their voices become knots of the threads entangled by his memory and the previously untold stories. Henry dwells in his singular maze of language, voice, and memory; then he becomes a melancholic bard who mourns over the dead he has loved by disinterring their muted voices and telling their tales rather than scribing their identities.

In short, becoming a child and savage is analogous to becoming a melancholic bard who has the potentiality to dream and investigate the voices from the nether of lost beings and things. Correspondingly, Walter Benjamin observes, "all the wisdom of the melancholic is subject to the nether world; it is secured by immersion in the life of creaturely things, and it hears nothing of the voice of revelation" (*The Origin* 152).

To melancholics, voice from memory and the realm of the dead discloses that

possibility of redemption or the utopian dream are impossible; in this mood, the

melancholics desperately endeavor to find the meaning of those voices in vain.

Infinite frustrations and multi-folded hidden memories ossify melancholics' faces and

change them to pensive, expressionless statutes of savages dreaming and listening to

fossilized voices.[59] This melancholia is diasporic melancholia. Immigrants lose

translatability and transmittability from their original language and history. The only

way they can find their own true voice and the authenticity of their existence in

history is to ponder on and pine for what they lost or listen for voices from the dead.

This is the reason why in art history the images of savages are pensive, stony, and

melancholic. Because of this diasporic melancholia, ironically, Bergson's dreamer

and savage, immersed in his or her own memory without being enlightened by the

blazing light from the sun of Western *logos*, have the potentiality to hear the voices

from the stygian nether world; because of this potentiality, they become melancholic

poets or bards Western poetics cannot explain.

Henry's Melancholy Transformation from a Scribe in Scripture Economy to a Mourner

  Native Speaker begins with Henry's experience of loss and gain: "The day my

wife left me she gave me a list of who I was" (1). Henry has lost intimate

relationships with other beings, even things, and gained the written identities scribed

on his wife's list. Paradoxically, this list of identities is also "the list of everything of

---

[59] Benjamin explains that stone is the element of melancholia and dreaming dog-face is what melancholics look like (*The Origin* 152).

[Henry's] that's dead" (Lee 124). On one hand, Henry is a human source of the categorical representation of death. On the other hand, Henry himself is also a part of the scribing apparatus: he is employed by a global spy company (Glimmer and Company) based in New York City as an ethnic spy who capitalizes on his ethnic identity in order to spy on other ethnic people.

Furthermore, the less Henry speaks or engages in situations where he can be exposed and identified, the more of an emotional alien he becomes. Like Bartleby, in Herman Melville's short story, "Bartleby, the Scrivener," Henry, at the beginning of his scribal tenure, "never voiced any displeasure" (Lee 1); rather he prefers to or prefers not to do what others order of him without expressing his own emotion. Henry can express his emotions no more than he can speak like a native English speaker. According to his wife, Lelia, Henry is not so much an emotional alien as a "False speaker of language" (6), not only because "he is listening to himself" (12) for self-correction, and his articulation and locution lack emotional quality, but also because he is an "illegal alien…poppa's boy…stranger/follower/traitor/spy" (5). As Lelia points out, Henry's interiority and exteriority are severed such that he cannot find ways to connect two separate interior and exterior worlds via truthful language. This severance effectively erases memory as well as the potentiality (however fictional) to change the situation, producing a fundamental melancholia.

It is through this melancholic fissure that nebulous voices from the collective dead speak to Henry. To some extent, Henry listens to internal and external voices to record or register them in his memory. However, the scribing function of memory causes a split self, dramatically illustrated in Henry's interaction with one of his spy

assignments, John Kwang, an aspiring Korean American and New York councilman.

While listening to Kwang, Henry recalls the time when, to get over his own anxiety

of hiding his Korean accent, he listened to a split self who was literally a mirror

image or alter ego that could not be integrated into a holistic identity:

> I kept listening for the errant tone, the flag, the minor mistake
> that would tell of his original race. Although I had seen hours
> of him on videotape, there was something that I still couldn't
> abide in his speech. I couldn't help but think there was a
> mysterious dubbing going on, the idea I wouldn't give quarter
> to when I would speak to strangers, the checkout girl, the
> mechanic, the professor, their faces dully awaiting my real
> speech, my truer talk and voice. When I was young I'd look in
> the mirror and address it, as if daring the boy there; I would
> say something dead and normal, like, "Pleased to make your
> acquaintance," and I could barely convince myself that it was I
> who was talking. (Lee 180)

Here, the incommunicability between the memory-self and the present-self results in

a melancholic fissure between the speaking self and the listening self.[60] While

detecting, scribing, and mimicking others' voices and gestures as a cultural spy,

Henry cannot "speak truthfully and not be demonized or made a traitor" (197) due to

this split ego.

This melancholic split ego corresponds with Henry's job as a cultural spy and

scribe of immigrants' identities, which is in essence a traitor/scribe. In his job as spy-

---

[60] Melancholia has its root in Freud's cryptic paper "Mourning and Melancholia." Freud elaborates that, immersed in melancholia, the Freudian split ego self-abases its alter ego for its loss in regard to an object; specifically speaking, the ego (ego ideal), in terms of morality, criticizes the alter ego which represents "a loved object which ha[s] been shifted away from it on to the patient's own ego" (248). Self-denigrating and fanatically expressing lugubrious criticism of/for their loss, the melancholics tend to decry that they are worthless people; but, in a deep psychoanalytic state, as Freud explains, they are turning loved object-loss to ego-loss since melancholia is caused by a narcissistic identification with the lost object or person. Additionally, the melancholics endeavor to hide their ambivalent feeling of hate and love towards their lost objects or people, which causes an ambivalence of love and hate; that is, psychologically, melancholia is located in-between narcissism and sadism. Freud suggests that the melancholics kill their egos by killing other people they love and hate. Mourning over loss is different from melancholia since the latter contains internal violence.

scrivener, Henry provides written analyses of other immigrants' lives "to extend the

evening's narrative to its logical and fitting end" (Lee 198). In this analysis, Henry

aims to be "a clean writer, of the most reasonable eye, [who] present[s] the subject in

question like some sentient machine of transcription," and he "won't employ anything

that even smacks of theme or moral[ity]," sticking rather to the "uncomplicated task

of rendering a man's life and ambition and leave to the unseen experts the arcana of

human interpretation. The palmistry, the scriptology, the rest of their esoterica. The

deep science" (203). Additionally, Henry's time consists only in a series of presents

because he must observe people "in a rigorous present tense, as a subject dynamically

inhabiting a scene, as a phenomenon of study" (204). Living only in the present

inhibits any possibility of finding translatability from past memories to the present. In

turn, Henry intentionally obfuscates the realm of memory and childhood. This split

ego and the untranslatability between past memory and present-being reflects the

modern crisis of experience.[61] At the core of this crisis is a loss of an ontological,

ethical way of experiencing the death of others.[62] Unable to experience others' deaths,

Henry becomes a bio-scribing machine, recording and collecting bio-political

---

[61] According to Agamben, this "non-translatability into experience…now makes everyday existence intolerable…" (*Infant* 16). Agamben argues that this split between memory-self and present-self and non-translatability into everyday experience is caused by the operation of the modern/postmodern authority that "is founded on what cannot be experienced, and nobody would be inclined to accept the validity of an authority whose sole claim to legitimation was experience" (*Infant* 16-17).

[62] According to Agamben, the split egos of (post)modern people whose scientific selves and emotional selves are divided prevent them from *having* an experience of the death of others. Agamben, using Greek etymology, also presents how Aristotle differentiated the scientific, intellectual Mind (*nous*) and emotional, experiential soul (*psyche*); then Agamben demonstrates that the boundary between the two areas is death (*Infant* 21). Though modern science unified these two traditional areas and "makes experience the locus—the 'method'; that is, the pathway—of knowledge" in this process of modernization, experience became a split ego that "is possible only to *undergo*, never to *have*." In other words, modern man can undergo an "infinite process of knowledge" but cannot have an experience whose boundary is death (*Infant* 21). In the same token, Agamben presents the allegory of this split ego as follows: "Don Quixote, the old subject of knowledge, has been befuddled by a spell and can only undergo experience without ever having it. By his side, Sancho Panza, the old subject of experience, can only have it, without ever undergoing it" (*Infant* 27).

information to identify, register, discipline, and punish other people—mostly immigrants or ethnic minorities—for the benefit of the global spy company, the state and Negri's Empire.

However, against Henry's will, voices from the dead attack this Bastille of a scribing state apparatus in which Henry is working as a spy and scribe. These voices envelop Henry's world, and they cause him to suffer from traumatic memories and reveal to him the truth that he lacks the experience of speaking in a true voice. In contrast to Henry's scribing, the voices have an orality that cannot be identified or scribed under the registering state apparatus. For example, Henry hears his deceased mother's voice "always: *San Konno san itta*. Over mountains there are mountains" (Lee 333). The voice from Henry's mother erupts in Korean with an accompanying translation. Yet the translation cannot deliver the real meaning of the mother's voice; Henry's mother reiterates a Korean saying that means "every time a situation gets worse." The scribed text in English of Mother's voice and its literal translation fails to transmit the truthful meaning and mood of what the voice from the dead, Henry's mother, possesses or appropriates. Incapable of translating or forcing signification onto his mother's voice, Henry feels melancholic over these truthful voices from the dead which hide untranslatable or non-transmitted truths—the truth of the deleterious experience his Korean parents' voice had, namely their experience of immigration and racism as well as homesickness.

Michel de Certeau, a French sociologist and anthropologist, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, describes modern societies as "scriptural societies" (131). Modern discipline and reproduction has scribed and registered people's voices in order to

control; in this process, de Certeau maintains, "Voices of the people" have been scribed and mystified. Instead of delivering pure voices from people, "orality insinuates itself, like one of the threads of which it is composed, into the network—an endless tapestry—of a scriptural economy" (132). The scriptural economy, similar to Foucault's disciplinary apparatuses, implements and scribes rules on human bodies to create "the great book of our law" (de Certeau 132). In this (post) modern process, pre-modern orality or the primordial mode of articulations have been replaced by scribing; the scriptural apparatus "separates itself from the magical world of voices and tradition" (de Certeau 134). As the state apparatus, the scripture economy[63] registers and brands identities onto people. Even children's fates are scribed, institutionalized, and written by rules and laws, causing children to lose the chance to listen to the traditional cosmos and its voices of their world.[64] In some respect, immigrants, the illegitimate children of history, are new, unconventional entries in the scriptural economy. While they must be registered in order to be acknowledged as citizens, they remain unfathomable encryptions in this system because of their unidentifiable appearances and voices.

Henry, recording and scribing those identities on which he spies, identifies his task as an aspect of scriptural economy;

> And sometimes I will write them out now, again, though for
> myself, those old strokes, unofficial versions of any
> newcomer I see in the street or on the bus or in the demi-
> shops of the city, the need in me still to undo the cipher like

---

[63] Michel de Certeau's concept, "scripture economy" is not about Christianity. It is, as Jeremy Ahearne interprets, "economy of writing" (52) and social apparatus that operates "the relations between the dominant practitioners of writing and the social 'body'" (58).

[64] In this scriptural economy, de Certeau claims, "every child is already put in the position of the industrialist, the urban planner, or the Cartesian philosopher—the position of having to manage a space that is his own and distinct from all others and in which he can exercise his own will" (134).

> faces scrawled with hard work, and no work, and all troubles.
> The faces of my father and his workers, and Ahjumhma, and
> the ever-dimming one of my mother. I will write out the face
> of the young girl I saw only yesterday wearily unloading
> small sacks of basmati in front of her family store . . . (Lee
> 170-71)

Observing these quiet legal/illegal immigrant workers and scribing their lives, Henry

assumes the position of a panoptic eye and plays a role in scripture economy:

Hoagland, the owner of Glimmer and Company, orders Henry to "*be the scribe*. The

eye" (204; my emphasis). However, a melancholic mood and empathy for these

unregistered, illegitimate beings saturates his voice because he knows that "[a]ll you

see will someday fade away. To what chill of your remains" (171).

Although Henry "celebrate[s] every order of silence borne of the tongue and

the heart and the mind" (Lee 171), he also knows that those silences, as another form

of the voices, are not mute, but linger as beings. Walking urban streets and silently

hiding in the crowds, immigrants create spaces and erase the registering scripture of

law-abiding citizenship through their unregistered presences. Against the colonial and

capitalistic accumulation of information, the immigrants accumulate memories.

Working, walking, and talking in their foreign individual utterances with their

undetectable experiences, immigrants transform themselves into the abandoned,

abused, but free children of history born of globalization and global capitalism.

Eventually, they will replace the white-dominated world of history's adults who have

registered, colonized, and mystified their unidentifiable bare lives. Yet, their bodies

exist under the laws of scribing; as de Certeau holds: "From birth to mourning after

death, law takes hold of bodies in order to make them its text" (139). The

bureaucratic, technocratic scribing tools, the scribes of laws working on immigrant

bodies, and capitalistic/colonial power constitute the scriptural economy where immigrants' voices are strained, their tongues tied, their bodies scanned, and their identities registered without their true presences being counted. In this bio-political system, "Every power, including the power of law, is written first of all on the books of its subjects" (de Certeau 140). What remains, however, are unfathomable cries.[65]

These crying, moaning voices awaken Henry to critically renounce his role as a well-assimilated ethnic scribe and a scribing and registering machine of immigrants' bodies; he refuses—or prefers not—to generate further material for the bio-political operation of the scripture economy. An upsurge of guilt and the memories of his bereavement disturb Henry's work and life. For example, a moment of demystification happens when Henry reveals his trauma with his father. In a parody of a scene from Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*,[66] Henry sits beside his father's deathbed, berating his dying father who had been a Confucian tyrant and a capitalist whose life "was all about money" (Lee 49). But after this outburst of meager execration, a melancholy Henry considers, "I thought he would be an easy mark, being stiff, paralyzed, but of course the agony was mine. He was unmovable…Nothing I said seemed to penetrate him. But then what was my speech?" (49). Henry's inquiry leads him to realize that his father has been trying to survive the effects of racism, xenophobia, and humility. Watching over his father's paralyzed body and listening to his last breath, Henry begins to recall how kind, funny, and

---

[65] About this cry, see de Certeau's poetical description in *The Practice of Everyday Life* on page 146.
[66] In many ways, *Native Speaker* is a parody of *Invisible Man*. Such themes from *Invisible Man* of an ethnic male as a traitor and a violent invisible being in the whites' world are the commonplaces Chang Rae Lee deals with in his own novel. The scene of the father's death also deeply corresponds with Ellison's description of his grandfather's death: "On his deathbed he called my father to him and said, "son, after I'm gone I want you to keep up the good fight. I never told you…I have been a traitor all my born days, a spy in the enemy's country ever since I give up my gun back in the Reconstruction" (Ellison 16).

friendly his father was, and he speaks this recollection to himself: his voice

reverberating a silent, imminently dead voice.

To some extent, Henry's metamorphosis to a savage/dreamer bard immersed

in diasporic melancholia is baroque. Baroque, as a mode of poetic relations between

the world and humanity, penetrates into the core of the melancholia that formally

creates multilayered masks. Ethnic identities in the world are masks and shams that

prevent ethnic beings from living truthfully.[67] Identifying with Kwang, Henry

narrates, "[t]hrough events both arbitrary and conceived it so happened that one of

Kwang's faces fell away, and then another, and another, until he revealed to me a

final level that would not strip off. The last mask" (Lee 141). The melancholic masks

of savages and children hide a truth that all of those beings, regardless of their racial

identities, are singular beings. As a matter of fact, Henry has been one of those

unidentifiable beings. However, Henry is not an atypical being; he is also a repetition

of universal, melancholy, and trans-spatial beings for which Bartleby serves as a

model in North American literary history. This literary comparison will explain not

only how Henry becomes universal as well as singular, but also in what condition a

melancholic trans-spatial being can attain the potentiality to become a trans-spatial

bard.

Henry as an Asian Bartleby: From the Formula of Dwelling to Movement

In Herman Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener," "I would prefer not to" as a

formula burgeons and thrives like a rootless, illogical, but powerful germ. Bartleby is

---

[67] According to Benjamin, in melancholics' worlds, "The idea of death fills [them] with profound terror. Mourning is the state of mind in which feeling revives the empty world in the form of a mask, and derives an enigmatic satisfaction in contemplating it" (*The Origin* 139).

a dreamer and becomes an unidentifiable being as soon as he decides to prefer not to scribe; in other words, his being dwells in an imaginary space when he erases the ability to scribe. And, at this moment, his melancholic, slothful, and incomprehensible refusals to scribe ironically grant him freedom, which also contradictorily results in his inopportune death. Bartleby's "I prefer not to" is strange and complex in that the logic in this erratic phrase is "I refuse to operate my ability to do something though I have the potentiality to do it." Bartleby's formula has a logic that halts the operation of the scripture economy to activate inoperativity (or in French *desœuvrement*). However, this refusal does not mean a total removal of the capability to write or a refusal to live; rather, it means to maximize potentiality without the operation of scribing and deploying the biopolitical machine. Agamben continuously uses Bartleby as the incarnation of inoperativity and potentiality. According to Agamben, "Bartleby, a scribe who does not simply cease writing but 'prefers not to,' is the extreme image of [the] angel that writes nothing but its potentiality to not-write" (*The Coming* 37). Bartleby, without identity, becomes an inoperative agent who stymies the operation of apparatuses in the scripture economy.

To some extent, Bartleby is a prototype of an immigrant who reiterates only what he or she can express or what he or she has heard before, who lurks in a burrow outside of the surveillance of the state, who haunts in unexpected occasions and space, who disrupts conversations awkwardly, and who perseveres until he or she disappears. In other words, Bartleby, as Deleuze also understands, is "a man without references" ("Bartleby" 74) like immigrants whose identities are without reference from his former identity. Bartleby's seemingly non-sensible and autonomous

responses and his stoical, resolute unwillingness to do anything asked for or ordered is "very much about deactivating the structure of the law" (Murray 49). Admittedly, Henry, at first glance, seems different from Bartleby; he is able to articulate his words more specifically than Bartleby, and though his world and his melancholia are absurd to the marrow, at least ostensibly he looks like an ordinary Asian American male. However, Henry's dialogue—different from his well-articulated, poetic narratives— has some erratic structures; like Bartleby's formula, there are several formulaic patterns in Henry's answers. First, Henry replies to questions without answering, but frustrating any further conversation by claiming that he does not know what a questioner asks, or he pretends that he cannot understand the context of the question. For example, Henry's common responses include "You tell me" (20), "I guess I know that" (30), "I keep forgetting" (41), "I know enough" (46), "I was just asking" (56), "You never know" (89), "It doesn't exist…I don't have the imagination" (90), "I need to know" (125), and "It ought to mean something" (169). Henry does not seem to rebut the question; he defers, delays, and demurs deliverance of information or opinion within his conversations.

This formulaic language corresponds with Henry's positions, both stationary and mobile. Like Bartleby, Henry tends to stay in covert spaces. For example, in an apartment he inherited from Lelia's uncle, "Lelia and [Henry] tended to dwell in the corners, along the periphery" (Lee 24). When working in his office, Henry does not seem to have a place to sit; he lurks in corners, secret rooms, basements, and so on. After quitting his job, however, Henry becomes a vagabond. Then, do his errant movements contradict his dwelling? No. Bartleby, though he hides like a recluse from

others' eyes and prefers not to move, is called a "vagabond." Henry also dwells and

moves, but both acts do not contradict each other because Henry, like Bartleby,

becomes one example of those unidentifiable beings without ontologically authentic,

legitimate dwelling places. In truth, Henry, like Bartleby, preferred not to spy and

scribe in order not to be spied and scribed himself. The state does not have the

capability to identify these non-stationary vagabonds; in a sense, there is no

difference between moving and dwelling for those unidentifiable beings under the

panoptic, bio-politcal, and technocratic scribing of the state. Still, like Bartleby,

Henry's presence increasingly becomes a void.

Henry becomes a hollow man as well as an invisible man. On one hand,

Henry is invisible because the externality of his Asian appearance is culturally

invisible in the U.S. society; on the other hand, he is a hollow man because his

interior is full of melancholic split egos that also have a potent potentiality to hear the

voices of the dead. Voices of the dead echo more deeply and piercingly in that

Henry's melancholic inner world of memory is hollow. No one could understand

Bartleby because his formulaic responses are echoes of his sublime ethos in which the

dead letters he worked for became voices. The only difference between Henry and

Bartleby is that Henry listens to the voices of the dead, while Bartleby listens to the

voices of the dead letters. Baroque depth, according to Benjamin, originates from this

hollowness that deters any meaningful actions. After several failures to change his

situation—the deaths of Mitt and Luzan, a Filipino shrink whom Henry killed

unintentionally, the collapse of Kwang's utopia, his marriage crisis, and so on—

Henry stops reiterating attempts to make things better because every attempt is bound

to fail; instead, he prefers not to forget those deaths and not to act to change the situation because he finds true freedom in listening to the voices. Though painful, the truth concealed in these voices frees Henry.

Indeed, all these formulas of rhetorical commonplaces (I refuse to collaborate and I prefer not to scribe others' identities) start from one event—the death of Henry's utopian son, Mitt. This event opens the concealed relations between the dead and living beings as well as *the things* and the world. This Heideggerian ontological "event" creates a moment of epiphany that forces Henry to experience a metamorphosis from an Asian Bartleby to a melancholic bard. The epiphany is a result of the hidden Korean meaning of Mitt's name beneath his overnamed identity.

Mitt's Death and the Pitfall of Onto-Theological Identity

Before Mitt died, Henry had remembered Mitt as a persona of his hopes and dreams; Henry narrates, "Mitt, the clean and bright one—somehow, miraculously, ours—runs off with [white kids in the neighborhood] any way, shouting the praises of his perfect life," with a voice "already so beautifully jumbled and subversive and historic. No one, I thought, had ever looked like that" (Lee 100, 103). How can Mitt's voice be beautifully subversive and jumbled? What is the relationship between historicity and aesthetics in this biracial boy's voice? Placed in Henry's hidden memory, Mitt's voice is described as something historically beautiful because his voice, pealing in Henry's memory, seems to envision the utopian space every immigrant in history has dreamed of. Plus, Mitt's hybrid identity is as beautiful as his jumbled and subversive voice, in that his hybrid identity and bilingualism seem to

subvert a homogenous space of pure ethnic identity, as well as a monolinguistic

space, which thus creates a multilingual, heterogeneous utopia.

For example, recalling the perfect translatability between his Korean father

and Mitt, Henry narrates, "When [Mitt] played with my father their communication

was somehow wholly untroubled, perfect in the way, and if there were questions

between them the boy would simply repeat what the old man said, try to echo his

pidgin, his story, learn that talk, too" (Lee 239). Even pidgin seems to lose its hybrid

difference via Mitt's universal speaking, and he seems to exist as an avatar of the

global multiculturalism in which all different voices and cultures coexist peacefully.

In addition, Mitt's ideal translatability comes not so much from mere mimicry as

from his ability to appreciate linguistically *different utterances*. For instance, Henry

narrates, "Mitt was beginning to appreciate the differences in the three of us [Henry's

father, Lelia, and Henry]; he could mimic the finest gradations in our English and

Korean, those notes of who we were, and perhaps, he could imagine, if ever briefly,

that this was our truest world, rich with disparate melodies" (240). Henry's narrations

demonstrate that Mitt's multicultural ideality and translatability seems to operate in

Hegelian dialectics—the gradual sublation of all linguistic differences into singular

ideals—Spirit, Science, Notion, or Identity. But, Mitt's univocality is geographically

limited. For example, on the playground where Mitt plays with other multi-racial

children, Henry "look[s] at all the children, the many colors of them, listening to the

shouting music of their mixed-up voice, inflection of a hundred home languages"

(109-110). Without being identified and influenced by the oppressive scripture

economy, those children, including Mitt, create a harmonious chorale. Only in such

spaces as Henry's father's house or the playground is Mitt capable of bridging linguistic differences and creating univocal harmony. Henry's ideological belief in Mitt's utopian trait, in a sense, is spatially determined.

Reflecting this spatial limit that represents ethnic enclaves' limits, Mitt's ideal linguistic, cultural role as a cross-cultural, cross-generational bridge paradoxically results in his dystopian death; Mitt dies because of the white boys' "dog-pile," a so-called game of mobbing an individual. Mitt's body is crushed by the collective flesh of a white mob. This accident disrupts Henry's only hope of attaining a solid identity in the U.S. because Mitt represents his desire of achieving "a singular sense of his world, a life univocal.... assimilist sentiment, part of [Henry's] own ugly and half-blind romance with [the U.S.]" (Lee 267). Henry's singular sense of the world and its univocality of truth has been an ideological illusion. Witnessing Mitt's death, Henry is disillusioned the ideologies of a model minority or Mitt's utopian hybridity. In this respect, Lelia admits, "[m]aybe it's that Mitt wasn't all white or all yellow…Maybe the world wasn't ready for [Mitt]" (130). Mitt's identity has been in chiaroscuro, in which utopia shadows dystopia. In truth, Mitt's utopian identity is the result of Henry's projection of his own desire. Differentiated from the utopian image, in the vein of the relation between Mitt's death and racial history, Mitt symbolizes the dystopian "earth." "Mitt" can be pronounced in Korean as "밑[*mit*]," which means "the bottom" or "beneath" in English; after Mitt dies, Henry deplores, "Listen, now. You can hear the attempt of his breath, that unlost voice, calling us from the bottom of the world" (107). Mitt suffocated to death beneath a hefty racial history.

In this sense, Mitt is a liminal territory on the identity map of the U.S. Mitt represents a hybridity that reveals the "bottom" of the "ideology of Identity" itself, and the hidden Korean meaning of his name resonates with the unavoidable violence drawn to Mitt's singular presence that cannot be identified in the social space. Even biracial children in suburbia are vulnerable to painful identification via racial terms. Mitt screams, "a *chink*, a *jap*, a *gook*…Charlie Chan, face as flat as a pan" (Lee 103), and mimics the white boys' racial aspersions:"mutt, mongrel, half-breed, banana, twinkie" (103). Although Henry tries to convince Mitt that those racial terms are "just words" (103), these racial signs keep inscribing him and force him to identify himself by these names. Mitt's singular, individual presence is marked and branded by too many racial names.

On the liminal territory within the identity map, Mitt is overnamed as are reified objects. In "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," Benjamin takes up the issue of overnaming. Deconstructing the relation of object and subject in language, Benjamin claims, "*the linguistic being of all things is their language*" (63); in other words, in Benjamin's understanding of language, things have their own languages. However, Benjamin asserts that semiotic language is violent and engenders "overnaming." More specifically, Benjamin critiques the arbitrary Saussurean relation between things and names. The modern understanding of things as objects—designated to be understood, scribed, and labeled by signs (signifiers) by human subjects—prompts overnaming, the violent appropriation and reification of things: in this way, overnaming has created a violent relation of the subject and the object. Benjamin diagnoses this overnaming and asserts that it is "the deepest

linguistic reason for all melancholy…"("On Language" 73). Why is overnaming the

linguistic reason of melancholy? Because, due to violent overnaming, a person loses

her or his original name, which cannot be marked by a mere semiotic sign. Mitt is

overnamed by the many cultural properties of his identity; specifically, his

complexion, voice, hybrid identity, and even his gestures are identified and named

with excessive names. Overnaming is the violence of the identity politics, which

perpetrates naming a being without considering its uncommunicable singularity.

Because of this linguistic and cultural violence of overnaming, Mitt's singular

presence perishes. Mitt's universal translatability becomes obsolete within the context

of racial violence and its oppressive discourses. The white boys harassed and killed

Mitt because Mitt's difference was not registered or scribed in their cultural texts of

Identity.

In this regard, given his overnamed presence in the U.S., Mitt's true name as

"bottom" in Korean is problematic. Mitt's death and his voice pose a question about

the ontological foundation of identity itself. Identity deprives beings of their

singularities. Identity is a totalitarian, unifying discursive apparatus that culturally and

discursively gathers and distributes singular individuals into cognitive categories. The

world is not able to include Mitt's existence because Mitt's identity as a biracial

Korean American child contradicts the discursive, cultural dichotomy of two

mutually exclusive sets—Korean or American. Culture embraces hybridity only

within the limit that hybridity functions as an essentialist strategy to subvert cultural

authenticity or purity.[68] That is, the culturally subversive meaning of hybridity, as

---

[68] In ethnic studies, the significance of hybridity has been a matter of debate. Lowe, for instance, regards hybridity as a subversive cultural agent; she claims that in U.S. colonial history, hybridity

Mitt's jumbled, subversive univocity exemplifies, also causes Mitt to be killed, not

because he has hybrid individuality but because he was *identified* as a hybrid being.

Western culture is founded on the theoretical dogmas of Identity. On one

hand, the seemingly universal idea of *Identity* and identification is grounded within

the limits of Western epistemology; the core of this limit is, according to Adorno, our

belief in "To think is to identify" (5). Proving that hybridity is the cultural, discursive

contradiction within identity is not enough and this proving is susceptible to be

compromised by Identity.[69] The deconstruction of a hybrid identity must start from

the deconstruction of an ontological system of identity *itself* rather than an

empowerment of the cultural significance of hybridity; in other words, the

deconstruction of identity politics should start by looking for the means to make the

cultural dialectics of Identity inoperative. On the other hand, in regard to the

Heideggerian critique of Western metaphysics and de Certeau's scripture economy,[70]

"mark[ed] the history of survival within relationships of unequal power and domination" (*Immigrant* 67). On the contrary, Werbner critically reviews the "elusive paradox" of enthusiasm about hybridity in cultural politics and asks, "But what if cultural mixings and crossovers become routine in the context of globalizing trends?" (1). To this question, one of austere answers the authors of *Debating Cultural Hybridity* present is that there are "limits of cultural hybridity" (*Debating* 2). According to them, the inquiry that he or she has a hybrid cultural identity cannot be free from the entrenched questions of "how much are you hybrid? Which position do you want to be at—if you have Asian-African hybridity, do you want to be categorized in Asian American? Individual singularity and his or her individual difference are undermined under the rule of cultural meaning of hybridity. Hybridity is meaningless as a description of 'culture'" (Werbner 15).

[69] In the Hegelian system, contradiction is the essence of dialectics, but, though "Identity and contradiction of thought are welded together," "contradiction is nonidentity under the rule of a law that affects the nonidentical as well" (Adorno, *Aesthetics* 6). Although cultural identity has emphasized the conceptual superiority of hybridity and its subversive power, it, like cultural difference, has conceptually identified hybridity as a mere contradiction or non-identity; accordingly, the limit of cultural hybridity lies in the cognitive utopia which "would be to use concepts to unseal the non-conceptual with concepts, without making it their equal" (Adorno, *Aesthetics* 10).

[70] Heidegger, in *Identity and Difference*, has tried to find the meaning of "difference as difference." Heidegger argues that Western metaphysics has been founded on *logos* which *onto-theo-logically* "ground and gathers everything into the universal, and accounts for and gathers everything in terms of the unique"(69); thus, it "contains within itself the essential origin of the character of all language, and thus determines the way of utterance as a logical way in the broader sense" (69). The philosopher Heidegger exemplifies is Hegel, and the system he attacks is Hegelian dialectics. Though Western

the scripture economy and identity politics operates by scribing one's identity under the Hegelian *onto-theology*. Even scribing one's name to build one's identity is to foster illusions about the dead.

Thus, Henry refuses to ossify Mitt's presence by mourning, which is also the fundamental reason why he cannot get over his melancholia. For instance, Lelia builds a monument to mourn and commemorate Mitt by collecting the "stuff" or things from Mitt's world; Lelia "go[es] out every morning to wander about the grounds of [Henry's] father's house, poking in the bushes and the trees for hours at a time, as if to follow [Mitt's] last tracts. One morning she returns with objects in her hands, pretty rocks and twigs and big oak leaves" (Lee 248) and builds a twig house. In contrast, Henry disassembles the twig house Lelia built by "Picking it apart, leaf by twig, stone by rock, until [he has] orderly piles of the material," and he "stand[s] up and shout[s] out [Mitt's] name…as loud as with [his] meager voice can" (249). Henry deconstructs Lelia's mourning because he realizes that building a monument to commemorate Mitt is to violently identify him. The things in Mitt's world lost their meanings after Mitt's being is gone. Only by dissembling each object in order to restore their singular beings is Henry able to call Mitt's true name. Henry has to

---

metaphysics has tried to focus on the erudite difference between Being (God, Absolute Spirit, Notion, Logos or History) and beings (individual entities), Heidegger argues that the basis/foundation of their thoughts, especially within the purview of Hegelian's dialectics, is the idea that everything is the same on a fundamental level under the concepts of Ideal, Spirit, Science, or Identity. For example, in "Preface," Hegel lucidly says, "The spirit that, so developed, knows itself as Spirit, is *science*; Science is its actuality and the realm which it builds for itself in its own element" (*Phenomenology* 14). In truth, this teleological, linear Hegelian dialectic purporting for the dialectical sublation of differences has complemented the ideological belief that hybridity is a culturally subversive property that is determined to deconstruct Western homogeneous discourse. Singularity with ontological difference destructs this Hegelian dialectic in that singularity, which is ontologically unique, cannot be sublated, included or belonged to any particular set of universal Identity.

disassemble the heaps of racial names, white bodies, and Mitt's overburdened identities to let Mitt lie in peace.

It is not only Mitt's true name but other immigrants' true names that are hidden beneath their scribed identities. Only unidentifiable voices and things in their world remain to tell how they existed. For example, after Henry's father died, Lelia, cleaning out the house, dispatched all her father-in-law's possessions and "finds faded sheets of lined notebook paper in his desk, completely written over with the American name…he'd given himself but never once used: George Washington Park" (Lee 218). The facts that Henry's father has not used his American name and that he made for the purpose of becoming a true American unconceal his resistance against assimilation; Henry's father, like Bartleby, preferred to remain unidentified rather than to be overnamed by the scripture economy and onto-theology. Yet, the true Korean name of Henry's father is hidden in a void. Imagining how Lelia felt about this, Henry narrates, "And then, [Lelia] begins to shift her consciousness from the dead father to the absent son, her husband. *Is it the coldness of objects*, she wonders, *that persists*?...she tries to think of the things there that might signify him, call his real name" (218; emphasis in original). To Lelia, the true name of her Korean father-in-law is a hidden "cold object" like Henry (Henry's true Korean name of *Byung-Ho* once spoken by John Kwang (296)), and like the true meaning of Mitt's Korean name. Only the things that constituted their worlds testify who they were.

From this perspective, as a melancholic bard, Henry is not able to be estranged from the world of things his father and Mitt left behind; through this melancholic attachment and his poetic storytelling of his father's life and frustrating

efforts to speak aloud his father's lost name, Henry discloses his father's world.[71]

However, this unconcealment is so powerful it results in ruin after Henry's singular

sense of a world collapses. This catastrophe is inevitable because of the unavoidable

impasses in the cultural world of Identity that forms the scripture economy. Henry

narrates:

> I will always make bad errors of speech. I remind myself of
> my mother and father, fumbling in front of strangers. Lelia
> says there are certain mental pathways of speaking that can
> never be unlearned…I always hear myself displacing the
> two languages, conflating them—maybe conflagrating
> them—for there is so much rubbing and friction, a fire
> always threatens to blow up between tongues. Friction,
> affliction. (Lee 234)

The friction is material and ontological rather than cultural. The true names of

Henry's father, mother, Mitt and Henry are concealed ontologically and materially

because their true names and existences are errors in Western onto-theology and

culture. Henry is not capable of speaking aloud the names because his tongue, due to

linguistic and cultural difference, causes friction and conflagration and will result in a

baroque ruin.

Epistemologically (in the mental pathway of speaking) and linguistically,

Henry cannot bridge the different worlds of others—his father and mother, Mitt, and

Lelia, and so on. Instead, in a melancholic mood, he can listen to the voices of the

dead speaking their stories in a true poetic voice. Hereafter, I will show how Henry

speaks as a Bartleby—a melancholic bard.

---

[71] Benjamin's poetic description of melancholia helps understand this, "Melancholy betrays the world
for the sake of knowledge. But in its tenacious self-absorption it embraces dead objects in its
contemplation, in order to redeem them. The poet, of whom the following has been said, speaks from
the spirit of melancholy…The persistence which is expressed in the intention of mourning is born of its
loyalty to the world of things" (*Origin* 156).

Mitt, as an Ontological Threshold: Mitt's Singular Voice and Presence

Mostly, Mitt is described as a being that dwells on the primordial threshold between things and the world and poetically communicates with things. For example, a coin transforms from a mere entity to a poetic *thing* in Mitt's world. Henry's father gives Mitt a coin after Mitt offered him miscellaneous things such as "Dead insects. Live slugs, green pennies, bits of faded magazines. Every kind and condition of bark. Stuff" (Lee 102); after Mitt died, Henry recalls:

> Mitt liked to carry the coin with him. I knew because he would produce it wherever we were and start rubbing the face with his thumb. My father always advised him so, told him some Bronze Age Korean mythology to go with it, the tale of a lost young prince whose magic coin is sole proof of his rightful seat and destiny. (102)

The "stuff" Mitt collected and bartered are things in Mitt's singular world; Mitt names, arranges, and recounts these things to himself "in a small voice" (102). Mitt's coin contains not only his presence and voice but also a narrative connectivity to ancient Korean mythology in which the coin is supposed to be a token of truth that has the capability to prove a prince's true identity in Mitt's world. To some extent, this coin, with Mitt's voice, also brings forth the ontological mood (*Stimmung)* of nostalgia and unconceals the relation of the coin to Mitt's world. Mitt's voice gathers and brings Korean mythology, earth (Mitt's name), sky (Mitt's spirit), and Mitt himself into Mitt's world to turn the mere coin into an ontological *thing*. This thing, on the level of transnational storytelling, is woven in a "story" of Mitt's life, and relates the mystic life of the prince in the Korean folktale to Mitt's life story. Ontologically speaking, Mitt's presence corresponds with the coin because both of

them are poetic thresholds between the Korean world and the American things or

beings. This "*threshold* position" originates from Mitt's singular, unique presence.

Meanwhile, mourning over Mitt's death, Henry listens to things in the world

Mitt lived in. What Henry experiences is the way to the ontological language

Heidegger speculates on and proposes in his oeuvre.[72] It is the ontological differences

between things and the world, living and death, and silence/voice and language that

form a Being's world. Applying Heidegger's ontological lens, the things and world

around Mitt even possess traces of his presence after he died and disclose the original

meaning of being—being-toward-death. Speaking in Heideggerian language, because

a human being is being-toward-death, he or she can listen to the sayings (or words)

from things in the world so as to speak. Although Being turns into nothing, things

possessing the ontological difference of the living and the dead remain as traces of

Mitt's presence so much so that Mitt's voice remains as traces of his Being. For

example, when Henry goes to pick up Mitt's remains after the accident, the nurse

gives him "a plastic bag of his clothes," and he finds in it "a coin in the back flap

pocket of his shorts" (Lee 102). Painfully and poetically tracing Mitt's vanished

presence by haptically listening to the sayings from the coin, Henry, in a melancholic

---

[72] From a Heideggerian perspective, men do not speak; in truth, language speaks, and men only come into "the opening" that reveals things. Heidegger critiques the idea that language is what human beings express or a system of linguistic signs. Language is a creation of relations in a mood between things and the world of *Dasein* by "thinging" things and "worlding" the world, as well as by interpenetration between them; in this process, language gives things their Being. Interpreting the Heideggerian meaning of mood, David A. White claims, "A feeling is a different and unique kind of state. Once this difference is accepted, it will be possible to derive ontological consideration from feeling which have remained hidden because of the unexamined belief that feelings are merely instances of some more general property of "being human." (82). In terms of Heideggerian language, this feeling is also a silent language since it dwells *between* things," the world, and human beings. Within this mood and feeling over the threshold between the world and things, a poet delineates the mood stepping beyond the threshold. This stepping over, or poetic speaking, occurs when the poet listens to the saying from the entities and names them, which turns these unnamed entities into things; in this process, "the thing is gestated by world, and world is only world when a thing is granted from it" (White 65).

mood, narrates: "The coin was warm…and I wonder how long the shiny metal could hold in a heat, if it could remember something like the press of flesh" (102). The coin, in silence, unfolds the truth of Mitt's world because the world to which the coin and Mitt belong is not so much founded on the *onto-theo-logical* relation of object and subject, which also originates as linguistic, semiotic, and cultural difference; rather, it is founded on the primordial relation of things and Mitt's world.

Things and voices gradually change Henry into a melancholic bard or dreaming savage. Another agent that unfolds Mitt's presence as a threshold between the world and things is Mitt's voices from a thing—a tape recorder. After Mitt died, Henry "wanted to hear [Mitt's] voice" and listens to the tapes of Mitt's voice telling his own stories (Lee 110). On one tape, Henry heard "Mitt saying every bad word he knew" (112). On another tape, Henry listens to Mitt's story about his violent and confusing feeling concerning his friend, Alex. According to Mitt's story, he abandoned his favorite dinosaur dolls after his friend, Alex, had told him that "dinosaurs were dumb…they were no brain" (111) and smashed all the dolls' heads with Mitt's bat. To Lelia, who asks why he abandoned his dolls, Mitt answers, it was because "they're *a-stink*" (111). After Lelia corrects "*a-stink*" to "*ex-tinct*," Mitt asks, "Will people get *a-stink*?" and "Will you and Daddy?" (111-12). At the broadest level, Mitt's traumatic experience reveals the violent situation to which he was exposed. Violent images and words thrive in Mitt's language and resonate with the history of violence against so-called Asian savages who, over time, have been suspected by Europeans of not having souls or brains. In this sense, Mitt is one of the dinosaur dolls vulnerable to racial violence. Yet, this episode entails a more

fundamental question about the difference between linguistic difference and ontological difference.

In a sense, Mitt's phonic mistake in pronouncing "*a-stink*" for "*extinct*" discloses the ontological rift in Mitt's world and language. On one hand, this mistake occurs because Mitt is not able to discern the phonic, semiotic difference of two words. On the other hand, "*extinct*" connotes the difference between the living and the dead, while "*a-stink*" connotes the difference between meaning and non-meaning. With these two words juxtaposed, it can be said that Mitt's voice in between meaning ("extinction") and non-meaning ("*a*-stink") unfolds his anxiety about death ("extinction"). In turn, this juxtaposition unfolds another layer of the deconstruction of relations between the two words because it also connotes the mysterious non-meaning of Mitt's voice. The differences between the living and the dead, meaning and non-meaning, and language and voice bring up the real meaning of the ontological pain of stepping over the thresholds and Henry's listening to voices from the dead that sound like animal cries. What predominates is the melancholic mood of the existential pain and angst in Mitt's world; this, in turn, overwhelms and envelops Henry's world.

Another instance shows more clearly this role of voice as a threshold between language and an animal voice and being and death, as well as the melancholic mood and ontological difference between Mitt (the dead) and Henry (the living listener). During his lovemaking with Lelia, Henry's poetic narration elucidates:

> [Lelia] let herself balance on me until she was no longer touching the bed. She knew what to do, what to do to me, that I was Mitt, that then she was Mitt, our pile of two as heavy as the balance of all those boys who had now grown

up. We nearly pressed each other to death, our swollen lips
and eyes, wishing upon ourselves the fall of tears, that great
free anger, that great obese heft of melancholy, enough of it
piling on at once so that sometimes whether we wanted to
or not we made love so hard and gritty we had to say fuck
to be telling the very first part of the truth. In the bed, in the
space between us, it was about the sad way of all flesh,
alive or dead or caught in between, it was about what must
happen between people who lose forever the truest moment
of their union. Flesh, the pressure, the rhymes of gasps.
This was all we could find in each other, this the novel
language of our life. (Lee 106)

Erratically, this passage resonates with Henry's imagination of the moment Mitt died:

"You pale little boys are crushing him, your adoring mob of hands and feet, your

necks and head, your nostrils and knees, your still-sweet sweat and teeth and grunts.

Too thick anyway, to breathe. How pale his face, his chest. Blanket his eyes" (107).

Taking this image into consideration, it is on the bed that Henry and Lelia commingle

into the world of integrated bodies and emulate the moment of Mitt's death. In this

jumbled space of flesh both desiring and desired, Henry imagines that he and Lelia

become Mitt. By experiencing sadistic lovemaking, Lelia and Henry try to feel in a

"great obese heft of melancholy" (106) the same pain Mitt felt when he was dying.

Why are Lelia and Henry possessed by the melancholic mood? The melancholia

both—or maybe only Henry—feel(s) originates from the impossibility of mourning,

as I have argued before. However, the hidden truth underneath this pathological

understanding is that this melancholia in truth originates from the fact that

ontologically no one is able to become Mitt. This melancholic mood is related to

ontological ethics. As Levinas clearly claims, the Other is not another "myself."[73]

Namely, the fundamentally ethical truth is that no one can dwell with me in my

---

[73] See Levinas's *Time and the Other* (74-77).

singular world built upon a projection towards my own authentic ownmost death.

Becoming Mitt is a melancholic illusion. No one can *be* non-being or dead. As such,

Henry and Lelia can only advance infinitely towards the non-being (death) via

desperate efforts to mimic and imagine what Mitt really felt. This is also related to the

ethical impasse of sympathy[74]and mourning. However, as Levinas also holds, this

impossibility engenders the ethical possibility of Eros: Eros is "possible to infer from

[the] situation of death, where the subject no longer has any possibility of grasping,

another characteristic of existence with the other" (*Time* 76). In other words, from

this sadistic Eros nearing to the experience of death, a being can no longer grasp at

any possibility of subjectivity and death, and upon this de-subjectification it is

possible to derive another characteristic of ethical existence with other.

For this reason, the truth that no one is capable of becoming Mitt

ontologically has another hidden truth. This hidden truth is that Mitt's voice discloses

another ontological truth that Mitt is the future of Henry and Lelia.[75] Pain, both as an

ontological pain Heidegger termed to explain poets' painful speaking of "the saying"

from the things[76] and a passion, resonating with Mitt's dying voice, dominates and

envelopes the world of Mitt, Lelia, and Henry. Henry learns that love is tantamount

with listening to non-linguistic voice from the things and the dead. Pain does not

---

[74] As Susan Sontag, in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, claims, the mere representation of sympathy makes us become callous towards the real pain of others (105).

[75] In *Time and the Other*, Levinas profoundly claims, "the Other is the future. The very relationship with the other is the relationship with the future" (77).

[76] According to Heidegger, ontological pain is the pain of speaking. In Greek etymology, pain (*algos*) and speaking (*lego*) are closely connected; namely, the endeavor to articulate others' pain in one's own voice is the two-fold act of drawing their pain into one's language and removing it from oneself by speaking. Heidegger claims: "Pain indeed tears asunder, it separates, yet so that at the same time it draws everything to itself, gathers it to itself. Its rending as a separating that gathers, is at the same time that drawing which, like the pen-drawing of a plan or sketch, draws and joins together what is held apart in separation. Pain is the joining agent in the rending that divides and gathers. Pain is the joining of the rift. The joining is the threshold. It settles the between, the middle of the two that are separated in it. Pain joins the rift of the difference. Pain is the dif-ference itself" (*Poetry* 202).

belong to the *onto-theological* linguistic system but to the animal cry from a mortal

being. Though no one can *understand* the pain of others through language, as soon as

we step into a relation with someone in pain, we can *feel* the pain and *listen to* its

voice and cry; then we can speak of others' pain. The consideration of a being in pain

and speaking of that being is ontologically and ethically painful in this sense.

Musing over Mitt's hybridity, Henry confesses:

> The truth of my feeling, exposed and ugly to me now, is that
> I was the one who was hoping whiteness for Mitt, being
> fearful of what I might have bestowed on him; all that too-
> ready devotion and honoring, and the chilly pitch of my
> blood, and then all that burning language that I once
> presumed useless, never uttered and never lived. (Lee 285)

Henry's ugly dream reveals that he is complicit in the violence that lynched Mitt

because he hoped to frame Mitt into an ideal identity—a white boy. Henry is not able

to appropriately grieve over Mitt in that the "burning language" hides the truth that to

Henry, before beginning to listen to Mitt's voice, Mitt was an ideal image without

bodily presence. Several thinkers have claimed that ambivalent coexistence of hate

and love is a commonplace of melancholia.[77] Henry's phantasmagorical description

of Mitt's perfect translatability paradoxically reveals this ambivalence. His

melancholic hatred originates from his hatred against his incapability to become a

native English speaker who possesses an impeccable identity and whiteness; Henry

hates Mitt because Henry cannot become a perfect native speaker with a solid identity

---

[77] In this regard, Agamben, his *Stanzas: World and Phantasm in Western Culture*, discusses the origin and ambiguity of melancholia. He says that it "is not so much regressive reaction to the loss of the love object as the imaginative capacity to make an unobtainable object appear as if lost" (20). In this vein, "In melancholia, love and hate…coexist…." (*Stanzas* 21). Žižek also adopts Agamben's approach and claims in his "Melancholy and the Act," that "In short, what melancholy obfuscates is that the object is lacking from the very beginning, that its emergence coincides with its lack, that this object is *nothing but* the positivization of a void or lack, a purely anamorphic entity that does not exist in itself" (660).

as Mitt can. Henry has been incapable of saving those who he has loved; in truth he could not save Mitt, his father, his mother, Ahjumhma, Dr. Luzan, or John Kwang because he has also hated them. Nonetheless, Henry's passivity and incapability do not mean that his life fell into fatalism without freedom.

Here is another paradox. Henry's incapability originates from both hatred and love and improper incapability as hatred is a proper capability as love not to do something. Henry loves Mitt, but he prefers not to actively prevent his death because he too much "loves" Mitt. Henry's incapability has a root in the ontological passion of hatred against capability.[78] The facticity of life is that ethical freedom originates from the powerful annihilation of the willful decision to overname and manipulate others like reified objects: if incapability originates from hatred, it also originates from love. Thus, a melancholic ambivalence of hatred and love towards others or things is negative as well as positive because melancholics, who suffer from incapability, are free from the desire for power that forces them to perpetrate something that can inflict pain on others.[79]

---

[78] Critiquing the idea that Heidegerrian ontology is devoid of passion or affect, Agamben claims that the Heideggerian ontological '*Da*' of Dasein" is an ambivalent space of two passions—love and hate (*Potentiality* 198-99). Love and passion are not just passions of beings (*das Man*); our Being has been traversed primordially by love and hate in a mode of thrownness because the facticity of Being is ontologically founded on the "impropriety of love" and "*human beings are those who fall properly in love with the improper, who, unique among living beings—are capable of their own incapability*" (*Potentiality* 204; emphasis in original). Dasein's *Da* is the primordial space of impropriety: it is the space of hate in which love also emerges. The ethos of humanity, in this sense, is the ambivalent coexistence of "possibility, propriety and capability (love)" and "impossibility, impropriety and incapability (hate)" (*Potentiality* 204). Agamben implies that the Heideggerian meaning of freedom is this ambivalence of capability and incapability in the venue of ontological passions.

[79] For example, implicitly critiquing Heidegger's authentic language, de Certeau claims: "…we can distinguish between writing's effort to master the 'voice' that it cannot be but without which it nevertheless cannot exist, on the one hand, and the illegible returns of voices cutting across statements and moving like strangers through the house of language, like imagination" (*The Practice* 159). The mood that dominates Heideggerean language is melancholic since he obsessively fixates his desire on what we permanently lost: the absolute resurrection of the origin of Western ideas which is supposed to *world* the world of the pre-Socratic Greek. Heidegger's obsession with purity and authenticity in language paradoxically founds the violence against different voices and languages. Heidegger's idea of

For this reason, Henry's incapability based on ambivalent passions—love and hate—engenders ethical freedom and poetic speaking; here ethics paradoxically encounters poetics. The ethical choice of incapability due to the hatred towards power opens the possibility of a poetic (phantasmatic) speaking out of the fundamental love towards a being's ontological dwelling space—voice of the dead, a utterly incapable ethos.

However, this potentiality of the poetic speaking and its ethical implication are not ideal, but ambivalent and enveloped in a melancholic mood—the paradoxical mood of love/hatred and capability/incapability. Pain is a perpetual mood in the ruinous vessel of this poetic relation whose style is baroque; thus, Henry's poetic saying is a cacophonous, melancholic dirge. On the contrary, in this vessel, the song set free those who listen to the hidden voice of the oppressed and the deceased in history. In this mood, Henry narrates:

> We will learn every lesson of accent and idiom, we will dismantle every last pretense and practice you hold, noble as well as ruinous. You can keep nothing safe from our eyes and ears. This is your own history. We are your most perilous and dutiful brethren, the song of our hearts at once furious and sad. (Lee 320)

Singing in the ruinous world of the baroque, melancholics, as a collective "we," sing freely regardless of the oppressive identification of the scripture economy which sets

---

"language is the flower of the mouth. In language the earth blossoms toward the bloom of the sky" (*On the Way* 99) corresponds with his dogmatic belief in the authentic relation of the Greek and Germans. For instance, in "Dialogue on Language," which is a transcription of Heidegger's conversation with a Japanese scholar, Heidegger implies a caveat that the danger of untranslatability firmly exists between two different languages; Heidegger even claims "And so, a dialogue from house to house remains nearly impossible" (*On the Way* 5). In this venue, Nicholas Rand, in "The Political Truth of Heidegger's Logos: Hiding in Translation," clearly demonstrates how Heidegger's theoretical effort of "Discovering that German is a shelter for Greek…" is not theoretically convincing since his writings "work with the principle of inter-and intralinguistic homophony, a procedure common to dreams and poetry" (443).

the linguistic or cultural norms and determines who deserves to live. But Henry's and

Mitt's worlds are in a perilous danger as Mitt's untimely death exemplifies. Henry

realizes this danger and becomes one of many immigrant Bartlebys. In what follows,

I will investigate the poetic relation of multiple Bartlebys in *Native Speaker* to

demonstrate how Henry, as a melancholic bard, participates as a member in a chorale

of a coming community. Édouard Glissant opens a new pathway to understand this

relation; his ideas of the poetics of relation and the commonplace reconstructs the

Heideggerian Being and language to show different poetics based on differential

relations of immigrants. Vis-à-vis Glissant's way of transformation, finally, after he

listens to the multiple voices in relation rather than only obsessively listening to

Mitt's voice, Henry breaks free from his scribing position as well as his melancholic

obsession with his ambivalent relations. This is another moment when a new

community emerges and a poetics meets an ethics, and even shows a way to

politics.[80]

Vessels in an Archipelago of Whatever Beings: From Singularity to Relation

Recalling the moment of Mitt's death, Henry narrates, "But we are the living,

remaining on the ground, and what we know is the narrow and the broken. Here, we

are strewn about in the lengthy expanse of an archipelago, too far to call one another,

too far to see" (Lee 106). Figuratively speaking, the differences and abysmal gaps

between singular immigrants or trans-spatial beings are filled with the ocean of

---

[80] Ontological ethics and poetics meet politics via investigating into the animal voice from the dead as well. Agamben, in *Homo Sacer*, implies this new direction by claiming, "a page of the Politics situates the proper place of the *polis* in the transition from voice to language" (7). However, this new path starts from a more fundamental relation between poetics and ethics in that politics, according to Agamben, that is based on the realms of language and culture.

differential relations. This archipelago is an image of the expanse of relations. Setting

out on errant journeys without a filiation to fixed roots and listening to "the dark side

of…impossible memory which has a louder voice" (Glissant, *Poetics* 72) creates the

commonplace vessels in this archipelago to which Henry and other immigrants in

Native Speaker belong. In this sense, the vessel is an important spatial imagery in

Native Speaker, which in several instances unfolds how singularly alienated beings

are linked without identifiable totalities. Literary space is the totality of differences

and imaginaries. Also, Glissant called this heterogeneous totality *chaos-monde*, which

implies that literary or actual relations are opaque and differential. Glissant's concept

of *chaos-monde* is a baroque vision of an archipelago of differential relations. This

mode of the world is filled with voyages of ships or vessels of relations rather than

bridges because this relation in the *chaos-monde* envelopes the impassable,

primordially different, and constantly changing singularities each trans-spatial

being—namely, nomadic immigrants—possesses. Thus, Glissant poetically

articulates:

> Relation, that is destroyed, at every instant and in every
> circumstance, by this particularity spelling out opacities,
> through this singularity, becomes once again the experience
> of relation. Its death as generality is what creates the life it
> has to share…Relation exists in being realized, that is, in
> being completed in a common place. (*Poetics* 203)

Despite its disordered order and opacity, the archipelago of relations among singular

beings in *chaos-monde* has the ambivalence of both connection and disconnection to

immigrants, which is why this relation has a plethora of commonplaces that lead these

trans-spatial beings to have differential, universal relations.

In this regard, Jack, Henry's colleague and a spy of Greek origin, referring to

Mitt's death, says,

> Your boy. Your boy was a perfection…Sometimes I
> suspect of us living that we are marred. The unspoiled must
> take leave of the world. I think they must bear the ills of
> their loved ones…But in my heart I fear they are the
> vessels for our failure. We make it impossible for them to
> live in this place. One day they fill up. Then they sink.
> They disappear. (Lee 164-5)

As Jack posits and Henry agrees, Mitt represents not only the utopian dream every

vessel that transported Asians from Asia to the U.S. in immigration history has

symbolized, but also the painful deprivation of their identities these nomadic

immigrants have had to undergo in order to survive. All immigrants share the dream

incarnated by Mitt in a communal vessel for the future utopia, but this also means no

one can achieve a solid, legitimate, and wholly constituted identity; they die in this

errantry due to heartbreaking shipwrecks.

Thus, the vessel as a baroque imaginary of *chaos-monde* is ruinous totality.[81]

Hoagland, the boss of the spy company, warns, "There is always a picture too big to

see. No one is safe, Harry [Henry], not in some fucking pleasure boat in the

Caribbean, not even in Lovely Long Island and Queens" (46). Within the picture or

the globalized context of the world of Baroque and a *chaos-monde* that is too big and

complex to be understood, there is no pleasant utopian vessel; every vessel is in

danger of a shipwreck or the hostility of strangers in a new land. As the L.A. riots

prove, living as immigrants ambivalently means "anything American, in impressing

Americans, in making money, polishing apples in the dead night…being perfect,

shooting black people, watching [their] stores and offices burn down to the ground"

---

[81] Benjamin investigates "the baroque cult of the ruin" (*The Origin* 178) and elaborates on baroque
writers' literary obsession with piling up fragmentary materials to look for the miracle of a truth.

(Lee 52-3). Spaces of pain-stricken people in the U.S. after these kinds of catastrophes disclose the bareness of beings in this vessel in which all these unidentifiable immigrants are "wading knee-deep in kerosene" where "suddenly your speech is a match" (Lee 285). Even contingent articulation ferociously destructs individuals. In fact, Henry's belief "'I' am safe in this vessel" (265) is an illusion of *chaos-monde*.

Indeed, immigrants in a vessel within an archipelago are bare lives excluded from legal protection, vulnerable to violent identification only to be expelled or branded.[82] For example, Henry watches news that:

> is about a small freighter that runs aground off Far Rocking way in the middle of the night. The Boat carries around fifty Chinese men who have paid $20,000 each to smugglers to ship them to America….The drowned are lined up on the dock beneath canvas tarps. The ones who make it, dazed, soaked, unspeaking, are led off in a line into police cars. (Lee 246-47)

In another news segment, several illegal immigrants "from the cargo ship…describe the conditions on the ship, the lack of plumbing, how some of the passengers died during the 12,000 mile voyage and were wrapped in plastic and cast into the ocean" (327). This news demonstrates that illegal or legal, trans-spatial nomads are eternal stowaways. What's more, their non-identities or their beings as thresholds are veiled under the spectacle from the scripture economy. Those Chinese in the news verify their existences only via the spectacle of the media. A society of spectacle, as Guy Debord speculates, is a world where nothing inexplicable, ontologically different, or singular exists; everything is under the rules of the scripture economy and *onto-*

---

[82] Glissant also points out this danger and potentiality of the baroque. See *Poetics of Relation* (77-79).

theological identity. There is no more safety, rationality, harmony, or depth due to the expanse, contingency, dangerous history, ruinous objects, and insanity of the baroque world, as Glissant also claims (*Poetics* 77). In the vessel, immigrants turn into nomads on the sea, making them unidentifiable by the scripture economy.

To Henry and other immigrants, the ontological angst or melancholy is like a seasickness caused by errantry in a global archipelago. Henry, undergoing the unexpected experiences of listening to voices from the dead who have been hidden in his memory, realizes that he is not different from these bare beings. However, his ontological listening and poetic speaking preclude the possibility of communication for information based on diasporic semiotics in that "while one can communicate through errantry's imaginary vision, the experiences of exiles are incommunicable" (Glissant, *Poetics* 20). Despite this incommunicability and the non-identifiable presences, those bare lives in the vessel of migration, about whom " [The New Immigrant Survey] has no records of birth or entry or naturalization" (Lee 329), are not just a backdrop of the novel, but unfold an unidentifiable, un-unified, unnamed community whose incommunicable relations initiate the charged potentiality for building a new ethos of humanity. Yet, this community is in thick opacity.

In *Native Speaker*, almost all of the female immigrant characters—Helda, Henry's mother and Ahjuhma—represent this new totality of relations embedding ontological opacities. Helda Brandeis, a janitor working at Kwang's office, who "left her family back in what was the old East Germany to make enough money to send for her husband and three grown children"(Lee 61) died "covered in a film of ash" (251) due to a bomb attack plotted by Kwang's Korean gang. "Ash" is the commonplace

figure in the relation of these women's tragic lives, while their lives are relayed and

form an expanse of a differential community. Relations between these trans-spatial

beings are filled with posthumous "things" that unconceal the ontological relations of

their singular, trans-spatial worlds; after Helda died, Henry imagines the money she

earned "[is] air-posted to Germany in a handsomely twined bundle of vellum and silk"

in her honor (262). Resonantly, Ajhumha's cremated ash is "mailed…back to Korea

in a solid gold coffer finely etched with classical Chinese Characters" (81); likewise,

ash from Henry's mother's dead body is sent and "buried in a Korean ceremony"

(77). Like Myung Mi Kim's incomplete letters, all of these women's trans-spatial

dreams of coming back to their home countries come true in the form of a "thing"

(ash) after they died, though this ash gathers their worlds, spirits, memories, earths,

skies, and lives.

Obviously, these women do not know each other; the only commonplace

among them is that they died without legitimate identities as silent subaltern women;

Henry even calls his mother's death "more [of] a disappearance than a death" (Lee

77). However, in the poetic thinking of Others is the moment the poetics of relations

emerges; only at this moment does Being become Relation. Heidegger's idea of

ontological difference is, in this sense, the foundation of this Relation in *chaos-monde*. Though Henry is unable to *understand* Helda, his mother, and Ahjuhma's

singular lives, he realizes that he is related to those beings via their ontological

differences and related, relayed relations in the expanse—the archipelago of relation.

Then how can we understand these women's relation and their singular, but collective

lives in terms of community? Is it possible to think of their relations as new

phenomena of current globalization?

Agamben suggests a potential answer to this question. Agamben calls beings without identities "whatever beings" in *The Coming Community*. Agamben, tracing back to the original meaning of "whatever" in Latin, suggests that "Whatever" is singularity not in "its indifference with respect to a common property (to a concept, for example: being red, being French, being Muslim), but only in its being such as it is" (*The Coming* 1). In this sense, Agamben also terms "whatever being" as "example"; Agamben argues, "one concept that escapes the antinomy of the universal and the particular has long been familiar to us: the example" (*The Coming* 8). The example is a singular being, and its proper place is "the empty place in which its indefinable and unforgettable life unfolds" (Agamben, *The Coming* 10). Paradoxically, Agamben also claims that this exemplary, singular being is a *pure* linguistic being. These pure linguistic, singular beings "communicate only in the empty space of example, without being tied by any common property, by any identity" (*The Coming* 11). This being can be called anything and belong to any group, but it deconstructs any particular, universal names or the generality of a set it belongs to.

In *Native Speaker*, characters lose their true names and are entitled by pronouns. Henry's father and mother lost their Korean names and are called by their titles. Without identities being captured by the scripture economy, those beings become replaceable, and their stories become patterns of a large tapestry. In this regard, Henry narrates, "And the more I see and remember the more their story is the same. The story is mine. How I come by plane, come by boat, come climbing over a

fence. When I get here, I work…I work so hard that one day I end up forgetting the person I am. I forget my wife, my son. Now, too, I have lost my old mother tongue" (Lee 279). "Whatever beings" dwell in *lethe* (forgetfulness) in Greek with silent foreign (animal) voices; but Being as such discloses how their lives are differential and universal. Immigrants came to the new land to become silent strangers without names and identities, but these Bartlebys disclose the fundamentally negative locus of humanity.

The most striking example as whatever being is Ahjuhma. In the novel, Henry does not articulate Ahjuhma's name until the end of the novel. In *Native Speaker*, Ahjuhma, which is the general name for a middle-aged lady in Korean, is just a title for an unidentifiable "whatever" woman in Korea. She is mysterious Koreanness itself who does not represent anything in English, just as Myung-Mi Kim's untranslatable syllables and the Korean pronunciation of Mitt do not represent their true names in English. Ahjuhma even lost connection to her nationality, so "She never called her family in Korea" (Lee 66). Ahjuhma also represents the femininity of women in the third world or a subaltern because even white females cannot understand her. When Lelia, as "[t]he crazy white lady in the attic" (117), tries to communicate with her on an equal gender plane, Ahjuhma frenetically refuses any communication. Lelia, within this limit of linguistic communication, describes Ahjuhma as "an abandoned girl. But all grown up"(73). Lelia's understanding cannot help being limited since she does not recognize that her ideological approach based on white feminism cannot narrow the gap between her and Ahjuhma. Though she can understand Ahjuhma on the level of their gender, Lelia cannot understand Ahjuhma's

nationality or silenced protest. This limit reflects the colonial relation between Lelia

and Ahjuhma. No matter how open-minded a white feminist is, what Lelia expresses

comes out of a condescending, humanitarian sympathy. Though, she is the one who is

capable of pointing out Ahjuhma's "whatever" identity to Henry when she says that

"If your father switched her now with someone else, probably nothing would be

different" (70).

In identity politics, Ahjuhma even becomes *an* anamorphic being or a

monster. Henry depicts her as a monstrous creature: "This woman, I could see, had

deep pockmarks stippling her high, fleshy cheeks, like the scarring from a mistreated

bout of chickenpox or smallpox [….,]" (62); she is also depicted as the anamorphic

being of a "zombie" (65) or "huge trout" (Lee 79). When she goes out and acts like a

child, Henry surreptitiously follows her and views her as a helpless, wild animal.

Ahjuhma even loses her name. Henry "never heard [his] father speak her name in all

the years she was with [him and his father]" (68). To Henry, "She doesn't seem like

she's anything" (68). But, seen under a different lens, Ahjuhma becomes an

abandoned girl, a monster, an animal, a nameless non-creature, or a "whatever

being." She is an example of all the unidentifiable, oppressed Korean women who

can belong to any group but cannot be represented, because if representation is the re-

presentation of the reality or the ideal, something or someone that is out of our

cognition cannot be represented.

Without a name or any identity, and marked by a general exemplary term as a

whatever being, Ahjumha's voice, without being captured within signification, still

echoes in Henry's memory. Henry narrates; Ahjumha "never whistled or hummed or

made any noise, and it seemed to me as if she only partly possessed her own body,

and preferred it that way" (Lee 65). Furthermore, he reveals that:

> She never laughed…spoke only when it mattered when a thing need to be done, or requested, or acknowledged. Otherwise the sole sounds I heard from her were the sucking noises she would make through the spaces between her teeth after meals and in the morning. Once I heard her humming a pretty melody in her room, some Korean folk song, but as I walked toward her doorway to hear it better she stopped immediately, and I never heard it again. (64-65)

Ahjuhma speaks and even sings, but her voice is not signified since her voices are

located in the vessel or thresholds whatever beings dwell in. Mitt's voice is in the

same venue and forms a community of collective voices from the dead where

Ahjumhma's sucking noise resonates with Mitt's voice. Thus, Henry narrates: "And

yet I can never stop considering the pitch and drift of their forlorn boats on the sea,

the movements that must be endless, promising nothing to their numbers within,

headlong voyages scaled in a lyric of search, like the great love of Solomon" (335).

The vessel of the coming community where whatever beings dwell reveals the truth

of the ethos of humanity—voices from the dead—is a forlorn boat wrapped in silence

opening the open for poetical singing. This lyric is errant and full of potentiality of

non-articulation. In this boat of *chaos-monde*, all voices and noises from whatever

beings are in relation, from which a new poetics of relation as a new ethos emerges.

In this regard, Agamben poetically elaborates:

> [In] extreme negativity, man retrieves a Voice, a "final breath of memory", which returns his past to him and intervenes to save him from solitude, forcing him to speak. Philosophy is this dialogue between man—the speaking and mortal being—and his Voice: this strenuous search for the Voice—and, with it, a memory—facing death, assuring language of its place. The Voice is the mute ethical companion running to

> the aid of language at the point where it reveals its ungroundedness. By remaining silent, with its "breath," it assumes this absence of foundation and makes room for it. (*Language and Death* 95)

However, Henry also realizes that this negative, silent chorale in a forlorn boat is raucous. Tuning his own voice to this melancholic choir of whatever beings saturated with the ontological mood of angst and nostalgia, Henry narrates:

> Within every echo from a city storefront or window, I can hear the old laments of my mother and my father, and mine as a confused schoolboy, and then even the fitful mumblings of our Ahjuhma, the instant American inventions of her tongue. They speak to me…not simply in a new accents or notes but in the ancient untold music of a newcomer's heart, sonorous with longing and hope. (Lee 304)

"The ancient untold music of a newcomer's heart, sonorous with longing and hope" is the music in the vessel where all trans-spatial immigrants become schoolboys of history, forming a community of whatever beings. But this space and this language, though captured in the melancholic mood, can show a way to exile from the scripture economy where spectacles dominate our judgment of Asians. Henry's melancholia paves a new way for the understanding of this coming community. On this journey, Henry reveals his true and singular name; he is one of *the whatever beings* in this coming community.

Oh, Humanity….

Herman Melville ends his Bartleby story with the end of Bartleby's life. The end of the short story is telling because Melville enveloped in the narrator's voice screams with a melancholy voice: "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity" (144). What Bartleby leaves behind is just a rumor that he once worked as a subordinate clerk "in

the Dead Letter Office at Washington," and when the narrator thinks of "this rumor, hardly can [he] express the emotions which seize [him]" (144). The narrator implores, "Dead Letters! Does it not sound like dead men?" (144) Why Bartleby prefers to die is unfathomable. Does he prefer to die because he sympathizes with the dead letters that contain human lives? Maybe. However, the narrator says, "on errands of life, these letters speed to death" (144), and the grubman in the prison claims, Bartleby is a "gentleman forger" (142).

My hypothesis is that Bartleby prefers not to live and prefers to die because his personality as a genteel forger or scribe does not allow him to scribe or eat any inauthentic letters or food; like Kafka's hunger artist, Bartleby did not want to eat, only because he could not find anything that he could eat. Likewise, he could not scribe and forge letters anymore because he knows that what he scribes is inauthentic and he will inauthentically die; he is an epicure or a bon vivant who cannot bear the inauthentic food that would upset his stomach and letters that would upset his "gentility" (142). He used to work in the Dead Letter Office with the authority to let inauthentic letters be terminated in flame. Bartleby's motto might be "let inauthentic letters and beings die." If so, the narrator's exclamation, "Ah, Bartleby, Ah, humanity!" is ironic; Bartleby prefers to die because he cannot bear the inauthentic letters' perseverance which corresponds to his own perseverance without authenticity. Bartleby is not a humanist; rather he is a scribe in truth, a man of career. The narrator is a Western humanist who suffers from belonging to Bartleby's truthful world. Yet is there an authentic humanity or authentic letters that Bartleby is looking for? The narrator is seized not by pity but by horror in regards to Bartleby's obsession with

authenticity. Life, authentic or inauthentic, has to continue no less than letters,
authentic or inauthentic, have to continue. For this reason, "Bartleby The Scrivener"
is an absurd comedy.

This is the same with an immigrant's status and the logic behind his or her
presence as *a whatever being* or cultural alien in the land of so-called authentic
Americans. As "uncounted count" in this set of authentic Americans, immigrants'
humanity is erased, and only their careers remain (Chinese cook, Korean proprietor of
grocery store, and so on), and their preferences are to be easily ignored (i.e.
immigrants cannot speak, eat, or live like Americans). Identity politics and cultural
politics strengthen these fixating immigrants' preferences. In turn, these discourses
manipulated by the scripture economy produce unnamable Bartlebys. Only their
screams, poetic speaking, and things in their world show ways to escape Bartleby's
comic-tragic formula.

What, then, about the Asian Bartleby, Henry? Henry "prefers not to be"
Bartleby or a scribe in the scripture economy anymore and "prefers to be" a trans-
spatial bard and an element in the coming community. After he loses his job, Henry
starts to drift through the streets in New York, like Benjamin's flâneur or Bartelby
himself, to find out that immigrants "are all here, the shades of skin I know, all the
mouths of bad teeth, the speaking that is too loud…" (Lee 344). Henry realizes that
immigrants are the whatever beings of the coming community who have been
silenced and cannot be fully accepted as citizens. Those whatever beings live and
move emitting illegible, meaningless, and cacophonous voices. Henry says that
"[t]his a city of words. We live here. In the street the shouting is in a language we

hardly know. The strangest chorale. We pass by the throngs of mongers, carefully nodding and heeding the signs…The constant cry is that you belong here, or you make yourself belong, or you must go" (344). As Henry walks through New York, he feels that he is a part of the heteroglossia that is amplified to produce the cacophonous cries from immigrants who speak various languages. But this heteroglossia is a collective "chorale," not an individual cry. Henry and other trans-spatial immigrants sing together a chaotic global song with other cacophonous voices. This global song is a marching song and song of collective movements. They also do not stop because "It seems to [immigrants] right now that if [they] stop moving, [they] die" (281).

In this regard, what Henry realizes is that he is a member of the inauthentic "whatever beings." His authenticity is tantamount to Ahjuhma's. Henry can survive, not like Bartleby, because he is able to appreciate a different authenticity Bartleby could not see but he belongs to; Bartleby is a whatever being in truth. The authenticity of humanity does not lie in one's ontological and ethnic authenticity, but it lies in the recognition that "I" am one of "many" in a radical equality or a "coming community." Although this means that Henry will become an Asian monster, at least he will survive. Ahjuhma's life is not as tragic as Henry once imagined. Ahjuhma does have her own happiness, though her subaltern status should not be ignored. Moreover, Henry, by becoming a member of the coming community, can become a trans-spatial bard. Trans-spatial beings learn and survive like weeds on the barren lands. Henry is not a native English speaker, and he cannot become one. However, as

a trans-spatial being with transient identities, he will survive like other immigrants who speak different languages.

In the last scene, wearing "a green rubber hood and act[ing] in my role as the Speech Monster" (Lee 348), Henry hears his wife says, "Everybody…had been a good citizen" (349). All these immigrant children's "full names" are spoken loud (348). These names might not survive in the U.S. but their names create a coming community. He listens to "[Lelia's] speaking a dozen lovely and native languages, calling all the difficult names who we are" (349). Henry's English name is called by his wife—who became "Tongue Lady" (347)—and this name interpellates Henry to become a good citizen. However, in truth, wearing a costume as the Speech Monster, Henry becomes Ahjuhma, a child, an animal, or a monster as a permanent minority/foreigner that can become a trans-spatial being. Until the end of the novel, Henry prefers not to waste his potentiality as a "whatever" and unidentifiable being in the trans-spatial zoo in which Mitt's animal cry and Ahjuhma's Korean voice peals and fades. In the next chapter, I will show how their voices in the form of animal cries create ethico-ontological signs.

CHAPTER 3

AN ETHICAL TESTIMONY OF ANIMAL-HUMANS
AS THE VOICE FROM THE DEAD IN *OBASAN*

> The law…rests on the circumstance that all law-preserving violence,
> in its duration, indirectly weakens the lawmaking violence represented
> by it, through the suppression of hostile counterviolence
> (Water Benjamin, "Critique of Violence" 300)
>
> that the line drew itself, making its way
> with conviction in the direction it knew
> to be right across the space, on paper,
>
> and yes, yes, the heart, the eye, the mind
> testify this is right, here, Yosh, hold
> up the drawing, behold the mountain, trust
> the judgment upholding truth through time
> as the man, the mountain, the profile make
> a perfect fit in this right place and time
> for Yosh to kneel again, feel again, raise
> his radiant eyes in peace to face the radiant
> mountain, Heart mountain, Heart mountain—
>
> and begin, again, with confidence, to draw the line!
> (Lwanson Fusao Inada, "Drawing The Line: *For Yosh Kuromiya*" 140)

Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* has been praised as a masterpiece not only for its unique portrayal of ethnicity but also for its powerful testimony about the internment of Japanese Canadians during WWII in both Canada and the U.S. Yet testimony cannot be free from victimizing Japanese Canadians, as the novel is criticized for. These divided responses are rooted in different perspectives about Japanese Canadians'/Americans' internment. In general, Japanese Canadians'/Americans'

relocation and internment in concentration camps have been discussed as a traumatic event in history that needs to be healed. In many cases, however, atonement for the perpetrators' sins results in victimization of Japanese Canadians/Americans because healing from and overcoming this kind of atrocity necessitates a recasting of the event as a moral example to educate people. Victimization is problematic since it can be used as a heuristic strategy to make a people's trauma edifying.

As an instance of this heuristic use of victimization, in *The Politics of Racism*, Ann Gomer Sunahara plainly shows how the Canadian government illegally relocated and incarcerated Japanese Canadians in concentration camps. Sunahara's approach to Japanese Canadian internment is paradoxical; though she compares Japanese Canadians who experienced the concentration camps to "rape victims" because of how they "responded with silence," she treats this "rape" as an "ugly episode in Canadian history" while maintaining that it's clear "time [to] heals most wounds" because "many of the remaining victims can now tell their stories" (1). Her argument implies that the more the victims' testimonies are heard, the better the trauma can be healed, and this particular traumatic experience is a historic episode that must inform her targeted audience—those "born and raised since the WWII, who have known only a tolerant Canada" (vii). In the "Afterword," Sunahara concludes by emphasizing "The importance of constitutional protections for human rights" and the role of education in ensuring these rights (153). To achieve this purpose, she acknowledges that a more thorough investigation of government documents about the Japanese Canadian internment is required for legal justice. As a reader, I am puzzled by her arguments because I wonder how letting victims speak out about their trauma

publicly can heal an experience equivalent to rape, and I wonder how all that violence

can possibly be put behind the victims on the assumption that Americans/Canadians

live in a legal utopia where every victim can restore what she has lost via legal

reparation. Moreover, history is not just material for heuristic purposes. The mere

testimony of once silenced stories is never able to cure victims' trauma because legal

justice is limited and conditional.

One of the great achievements of Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* is its ability to

disclose a historic atrocity, without implying that the past event is only significant

because of its didactic and heuristic functions. However, as I argued at the beginning

of this introduction, to some critics, Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* distorts the historical

reality because it victimizes Japanese Canadians too much or to some, too little.

Those critics' political and cultural understandings of the novel fall within the

expanse of two opposite poles. The first group of critics criticizes *Obasan*'s

misrepresentation of Japanese Canadians as victims, as this victimization prevents

their assimilation into the multicultural utopia. The second group views *Obasan*'s

victimization as a literary strategy to promote the sale of the book. For instance,

Marlene Goldman alleges that narratives in *Obasan* emphasize the victimized

identities of Japanese Canadians. From Goldman's perspective, Kogawa's *Obasan* is

politically incorrect because Japanese Canadians must escape the self-victimization

she sees in *Obasan* in order to reshape their identities and accept "multiculturalism

and hybridity against those of maintaining an insular ethnic identity" (383).

On the other hand, from a staunch ethnic political position, Roy Miki, in his

Broken Entries: Race Subjectivity Writing, poignantly argues that the

historiographical documents in *Obasan* "close the novel with Japanese Canadians framed as the 'other' with no voice and language" (139). Miki also points out that in the novel, "Japanese Canadians…are identified as silenced, bereft of authority, disappeared, assimilated—in other words, as an erased collective that has lost the agency of self-representation" (138); in short, Miki criticizes that the novel ossifies Japanese Canadians into "The 'othered [and] racial object'" (139). Goldman and Miki's political understandings of *Obasan* pertain to the myth that literature about concentration camps should pursue a realistic description of historical truth. These two critics' opposite arguments, regardless of their different political positions, together imply that all the literary ambiguities of the poetic images of death and victims in *Obasan* undermine the historic role of *Obasan* as a testimony about the repulsive historical event of Japanese Canadians' internment.

As a matter of fact, literature about concentration camps has recently become popular given the expanding contexts of globalization, the increasing number of human rights violations, the wars on regional or global levels, and the worldwide media sensationalization in the name of humanitarian purposes. But the veracity of these abhorrent representations of human miseries has been a point of contention. Except for a few cases, testimonial texts tend to be collaborative and tendentious products: writers, interviewers, archivists, librarians, publishers, marketing managers, etc. collaboratively produce a literary work about concentration camps as a mixture of fiction and non-fiction, eliciting a sense of morality from the readers' consciences, (particularly from those of the first world). For strategic reasons, the literature about concentration camps has been rife with accounts of torture, escape, massacre, and

humanity in its lowest forms. These explicitly violent representations raise the ethical

issues of whether it is ethical to represent human suffering without thinking of the

victims' trauma.

As a counterpoint to this trend and taking this ethical issue of representation

into account, I argue that the ambiguous images in *Obasan* strengthen rather than

weaken its power of testimony. In this novel, one of Kogawa's most important

literary assets is her use of literary figures or series of signs, mostly ontological

signs[83]—animals, dreams, memory, and death—to raze the distinction between

animality and humanity. This use leaves a no man's land where only voices from the

dead and animal-humans reverberate. In a sense, these animal images and death

images dominate *Obasan* to maximize the righteous, visceral anger targeted on the

pandemic violence of the state against the beings deprived of human rights. For

example, *Obasan* ends with the protagonist, Naomi, a thirty-two year old Japanese

Canadian, imagining an animal cry from her mother: "How thick the darkness behind

which hides the animal cry. I know what is there, hidden form my stare. Grief's

weeping. Deeper emptiness" (Kogawa 295). This last animal cry from Naomi's dying

mother, after she was radiated from the nuclear bomb in Nagasaki during WWII,

peals through the whole novel. This cry calls forth the ontological significance of the

humanity of the Japanese people, which, in the totality of globalized violence across

different times and spaces, stretches from the Japanese internment camps in Canada

to Nagasaki in WWII, and even to refugee camps around the contemporary world or

rape camps in Serbia. Thus, this animal cry and the animal signs in conjunction with

---

[83] I borrow Deleuze's understanding of signs as he discusses them in *Proust and Signs*. According
Deleuze, art signs are violent signs that affect our affects. Readers' contingent encounters with violent
signs cause violence in their thoughts, which guides readers to find the truth of an artwork.

the signs of the dead and the dream/memory signs in *Obasan* testify to the ontological

truth of humanity in aesthetic, artistic ways to amplify the novel's contemporaneity,

urgency, and universality. These signs in the literary space of *Obasan* ethically

represent concentration camps as the ubiquitous shadows of the state that supposedly

protect citizens' human rights and bio-welfare, without being fettered by mere

political claims of pro/anti-victimization or conformism.

In this chapter, I argue that the artistic signs of animals, dreams, and death in

Obasan are the poetic form of the history of concentration camps, testifying in truth

and uncovering the truthful ethos of humanity. I employ ideas from several

philosophers (mostly Kant, Agamben and Derrida) to produce an ethico-ontological

understanding of the novel. Also, I analyze *Obasan* as an ethico-aesthetic way of

representing the unrepresentable humans' animalized conditions in concentration

camps in light of these thinkers' theoretical understandings of signs, ethics, ontology,

and a utopian/dystopian vision of the coming community that consists of trans-spatial

beings incarcerated in concentration camps.

Aunt Emily's Testimony and Its Limit

Obasan is about two Japanese Canadian families' past experiences of

internment. Naomi Nakane, the novel's narrator, recalls her experience of childhood

and relocation when she lived with her maternal aunt Obasan (a general name in

Japanese for an aunt or other elderly woman in the family, and whose real name is

Aya Nakane) and paternal aunt Emily Gato, an activist trying to sue the Canadian

government in order to disclose the truth and bring about justice for Japanese

past data for historic justice thus falls into an abysmal paradox, deconstructing her own ethos or credibility. The limits of Aunt Emily's legal activism are consonant with the limits of literature about concentration camps.

Testimonies in the literature about concentration camps are centered on the assumption that only writing and recording victims' experiences can deliver the truth of those experiences. However, this linkage between writing and justice is a product of Western discourses mediated by their ideological tradition of justice as legal justice in the written form; "Justice," in the Western tradition, takes the form of writing (for example, Moses' Ten Commandments) and has at its core written contracts between social members. Correspondingly, writing, regardless whether it is fictive, legal, mythic, or factual, in the form of scriptural industry as a state apparatus, according to de Certeau, "combin[es] the power of accumulating the past and that of making the alterity of the universe conform to its models, [this] is capitalist and conquering" (*The Practice* 135).

Internationally and domestically, this function of writing and its connotation with justice as a contract between two parties—those who write and those who are written—have created a colonial narrative that, as Homi Bhabha maintains, has initiated the formation of post-colonial nationality and its consciousness.[85] Writing has geopolitically represented loci of governances; in this respect, Western literacy has its origin in governing others—postcolonial savages, strangers, or immigrants—

---

[85] de Certeau also proves how the literature about concentration camps is also a colonial text in "Montaigne's 'Of Cannibals': The Savage 'I'." In this chapter, de Certeau traces how Western writings, especially travelogues, have romanticized the "savage's utterance and their experiences" (i.e. Rousseau's "noble savage") with the thesis: "savage society is a body in the service of saying. It is the visible, palpable, verifiable exemplum which realizes before our eyes an ethics of speech" (*Heterologies* 75), while the savage's "speech makes [Westerners'] writing possible by sinking in I. It induces it. But the written discourse which cites the speech of the other is not, cannot be, the discourse of the other" (*Heterologies* 78).

Yet parliamentary democracy pertains only to the contractual consensus among legal citizens, and not suspicious enemies. For instance, "The newspaper clipping from the Toronto Star" in the novel shows how Aunt Emily naively believes in Canadian government and citizenship:

> Nearly 20,000 Canadian citizens will be deprived for another year of one of the fundamental rights of citizenship, the House of Commons decreed last night. They are the Canadians of Japanese origin who were expelled from British Columbia in 1941 and are still debarred from returning to their homes….Defenders of the restrictions denied they were motivated by racial considerations….Maj. Gen. G.R. Perkes (PC Nanaimo) suggested there would be "crimes of revenge" if the exiles were permitted to return home now. In war, he said, the innocent suffer with the guilty; there was still hatred among the white people of B.C., and he thought the government was wise in giving the old sores another year to heal. (237)

This historiographical clipping clearly shows the paradoxes of the situation in which Japanese Canadians were placed and how naïve Aunt Emily's rigid, ideological beliefs in democracy and citizenship are under the eyes of Canadian government. Under Major Perkes' euphemistic explanations lurks the truth that the Canadian government is not willing to legally protect the potential enemies, Japanese Canadians, anymore because they are not authentic Canadian citizens at all, and therefore their citizenships are deprivable. The deprivation of citizenship, in a modern nation state, is equivalent to the deprivation of human rights, which consequently blurs the zone of distinctions between citizens, humans, and animals. For instance, Aunt Emily testifies in a document that "the government has requisitioned the Livestock Building at Hastings Park, and the Women's Building to house 2,000 'Japs

pending removal'… We are the billy goats and nanny goats and kids—all the scapegoats to appease the blindness" (Kogawa 105).

Under certain legal situations—states of exception according to Benjamin and Agamben—Japanese Canadians as animal-humans cannot be sacrificed due to the Canadian government's "humanitarian purpose," though they cannot be recognized as citizens nor as humans either. In other words, what the Canadian government, as a democratic political system, wants for the sake of their moral conscience is not to slaughter Japanese Canadians, but to relocate them to concentration camps in order for those lives to be neither seen, heard, nor victimized by others except by the government. But this is not a unique case. In fact, since the inception of concentration camps, all inmates have embodied the paradoxical logic of human rights. Concentration camps are built not to deprive humans of their human rights, but to fully actualize human rights only by excluding those who are not humans. Accordingly, the only moral decision for the government to take toward those beings without human rights is to build an enclosed facility to gather up and incarcerate those animal-beings. Following this logic, it is logically wrong to say that in the camps, the inmates' human rights are deprived, for they are not considered human in the first place.

Where does this paradox come from? From where does the idea of citizens against immigrants as the enemy of the citizens of domestic and global spaces originate? How could the Canadian government be hostile towards citizens while celebrating its hospitality? Where does the contradiction of cosmopolitan citizenship and war initiate? One of the origins is the Kantian paradox of hospitality and hostility

upon which the modern state and the idea of cosmopolitanism as a global rule of human rights are founded. Kant proposes in his "Ideas for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" that if we can build a cosmopolitan federation of all nations, this commonwealth will bring about global peace, and all world citizens will live together as citizens of one nation. But is the Kantian cosmopolitan all-inclusive? Isn't Kant's commonwealth exclusive towards foreigners just as Thomas Hobbs' commonwealth is?[87] Is there any restriction on the world citizenship of cosmopolitans, for example, Japanese Canadians during WWII? There are hidden paradoxes and antinomies in Kant's utopian vision. Kant, in discussing cosmopolitanism, asserts: "[s]ince men neither pursue their aims purely by instinct, as the animals do, nor act in accordance with any integral, prearranged plan like rational cosmopolitans, it would appear that no-law governed history of mankind is possible (as it would be, for example, with bees or beavers)" (*Political* 42).

Here Kant tries to sublate both animality and cosmopolitanity—which is the perfectly rational status of a world citizen—to purport the establishment of the ontological, political, and ethical space of contemporary humans; however pessimism dominates this ideal because Kant knows that this vision is not possible in the phenomenal world. This pessimistic vision is related to the European history in which Kant lived; during this time, Europe went through violent revolutions, colonialism, and constant wars. Yet turbulent history does not exclude the necessity of the teleological and transcendental ends in human history from Kantian history that progresses towards perpetual peace and cosmopolitanism; Kant implies that wars and

---

[87] In *Leviathan,* Thomas Hobbs also proposes the "commonwealth" can stop wars and bring forth an eternal peace in the world. But he explicitly excludes foreigners from this commonwealth (227).

bloody, global conflicts are indispensable steps to achieve a utopian end of history. Wars that are inevitable in humanity, Kant implies, are in essence animality. Kant puts forth, "all human talents would remain hidden forever in a dormant state, and men, as good-natured as the sheep they tended, would scarcely render their existence more valuable than that of their animals" (*Political* 45). Then, Kant sarcastically says, "man is an animal who needs a master…but this master will also be an animal who needs a master" (*Political* 46). All men, until they achieve their cosmopolitan status, are animals who dominate other animals; Kant is more Darwinian than Darwin is. For this reason, Kant proposes the necessity of a noumenal, cosmopolitan law that cannot be swayed by phenomena—namely "a perfect civil constitution" for the commonwealth as an international federation (*Political* 47).

However, are his federation and its constitution applicable to all humans? Here comes the knotty status of strangers in the West. Though this cosmopolitan federation is under noumenal laws, there are strangers who do not or are not able to have world citizenship. Kant takes on this issue and discusses "hospitability" which "means the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone else's territory" (*Political* 106), but his idea of hospitality as a moral response to strangers is limited because it would be applicable only "so long as [the stranger] behaves in a peaceable manner in the place he happens to be in" (*Political* 106). Therefore, "the stranger cannot claim the right of a guest to be entertained, for this would require a special friendly agreement whereby he might become a member of the native household for a certain time" (*Political* 106). What, then, about those strangers who are not guests and cannot be civilized enough to make "a special

friendly agreement," such as the Asians in the concentration camps who had the same heritage as the enemy of the state?

Derrida targets this paradox in the Western idea of hospitality in his essay, "Hospitality." After investigating the genealogy of the hospitality in Western discourses, Derrida maintains that hospitality presupposes two conditions: the host is the master of the house, and absolute hospitality is not possible if there is a threshold or door. Thereafter, Derrida inquiringly elaborates: "[Hospitality] is [something] to come which does not appear and never appears as such, in the present…Thinking hospitality starting with the future, this future which does not appear, or which only appears there where it is not awaited as present or presentable, this is the thinking starting with death no less than birth" ("Hospitality" 261). Hospitality is the master's concept, so immigration as an invitation to the U.S. or Canada comes to mean "custom service and a police control" ("Hospitality" 260). In this fashion, hospitability as a future-oriented term is utopian, so it is impossible in the present moment because hospitality is "now" the exclusionary logic of the host. In truth, the host is bound to enforce exclusionary laws over the borderland as a threshold.

In this logic, Japanese Canadians could be treated hostilely though they were initially invited to Canada under the auspice of Western hospitality. They were Kantian animals that were violent but could be regarded as guests until the others, the Japanese in Japan, proved that they were in fact beasts and dangerous animals. Hostility was hidden in hospitability under the name of global citizenship, cosmopolitanism, and a racism-free Canada. The Canadian government's hospitality in this case, however, was just a Kantian mask of Hobbes' Leviathan.

Laws to Exclude and Bare Life

To top the brutal absurdity and paradox of hostility and hospitality, the state believed it was righteous to take away at any time the Japanese Canadians' human rights because the nature of their citizenship was temporary and tentative from its origins. That is to say, there is a quintessential lacuna in human rights in terms of the legal system—law is effective only on the condition that it judges whether the convicted is guilty or not guilty or legally responsible or not responsible.[88] The law cannot deal with the ethical and ontological question of who is human and who is not. This is also related to the limit of bio-politics in which the form-of-life a human holds is to be divided into the bare life and the legal life of a registered national citizen, which is not applicable to the Japanese immigrants since they are guest-citizens without proper identities. In addition to this paradox of human rights and Japanese Canadians' legality in the state, there are three more paradoxes in Aunt Emily's testimony that deconstruct the credibility of her claims themselves—the paradox of the historic "I," the responsible "I," and the speaking "I." Aunt Emily's testimony is based on the claim that she, as a representative of historical justice, is responsible for others who are oppressed; thus, she is collecting documents to represent them and speak *for* them.

The first paradox of Aunt Emily's position comes from her belief of her role as the "speaking I" as the "testifying I." Compared to Aunt Obasan, Naomi's silent aunt, who is a typical subaltern woman, and whose "language remains deeply

---

[88] Agamben holds, "As jurists well know, law is not directed toward the establishment of justice. Nor is it directed toward the verification of truth. Law is solely directed toward judgment, independent of truth and justice" (*Remnant* 18).

underground[…,] Aunt Emily…is a word warrior" (Kogawa 39). Aunt Emily is a word warrior as she emphasizes the speaking "I" instead of the living and feeling "I." Her speech is mediated by the writing system and its scripture economy; only rational and factual documents and speech based on them are significant. Acknowledging this, Naomi says, "All of Aunt Emily's words, all her papers…are like scratchings in the barnyard, the evidence of much activity, scaly claws hard at work. But what good they do, I do not know—those little black typewritten words—rain words, cloud droppings…the words are not made flesh. Trains do not carry us home…." (226). Aunt Emily's words, metonymic chains such as "rain words" and "cloud droppings," lose their content and become empty speech because they lose "the flesh" through which her speech can obtain its *ethos,* which means the ontological dwelling place of humanity in Greek. The ontological foundation of words is in a living corporeal speaker; without Aunt Emily's presence ("flesh"), words lose their material origin and become traces of speakers' voices.

Aunt Emily's words lose their credibility as soon as she claims "reconciliation can't begin without mutual recognition of facts" (Kogawa 219). Facts cannot be true testimonies because the words cannot penetrate into the truth of the event that only the dying person or the dead, disabled to speak, can tell; survivors or who could not experience near-death cannot testify exactly how atrocious the experience was. With respect to the testimony of concentration camps, Agamben relates the separation between the speaking "I" and the living "I" to the affect of shame as the ontological foundation of testimony:

> But precisely this impossibility of conjoining the living
> being and language, *phone* and logos, the inhuman and the

human—far from authorizing the infinite deferral of signification—is what allows for testimony. If there is no articulation between the living being and language, if the "I" stands this disjunction, then there can be testimony….Testimony takes place in the non-place of articulation. In the non-place of the Voice stands not writing, but the witness. And it is precisely because the relation between the living being and the speaking being has the form of shame, of being reciprocally consigned to something that cannot be assumed by a subject, that the ethos of this disjunction can only be testimony—that is, something that cannot be assigned to a subject but that nevertheless constitute the subject's only dwelling place, its only possible consistency. (*Remnant* 130)

The ethics of testimony initiates as the infinite ethical possibilities of the most inhuman situation humanity can be situated in; these negative ethical possibilities, according to Catherine Mill's interpretation of Agamben's quote, are an "ethics of survival insofar as what is borne witness to is *zoe* or the inhuman in every human being…Testimony derives from the constitutive desubjectification in every subjectification such that there is no final full appropriation in the human being's having language" (208). Subjectification ontologically embeds desubjectification in that the speaking "I" produced by subjectification embeds its other self—the living and bodily subject as "I." Even in dialogue, Othering is inscribed on our speaking bodies.[89] In other words, the division between the speaking "I" and the living "I" happens whenever "I" speaks; to speak or testify the experience of the living "I," the living "I" must be excluded in the language, while the living "I" cannot say what it experienced without this alienation.

---

[89] In a similar mood, Ian Chamber elaborates, "We need in particular to pay attention to those conditions of dialogue in which the different powers, histories, limits and languages that permit the process of 'othering' to occur are inscribed" (12).

This paradoxical exclusion of the living "I" from the speaking "I" also correlates with the paradox of a person's historical responsibility. Recognizing this paradox in Aunt Emily's testimony, Naomi poignantly critiques Aunt Emily's naiveté: "What, I wonder, was Aunt Emily trying to accomplish through all this correspondence? She was no doubt keeping the home fires burning and shouting 'Democracy' to keep the enemy at bay. But all of this belongs to yesterday and there are so many other things to attend to today. All the details of death that are left in the laps of the living" (Kogawa 53). Naomi sees the core of the problems in Aunt Emily's die-hard eagerness to find the facts from history untarnished. History and the past make sense only through the venue of the present. However factual Aunt Emily's historiographical finds are, people are dying around the world, and the camps still exist "now" and "here." Aunt Emily's moral prerogative that she is trying to be responsible for the past events excludes the living bodies' current situation on the earth; Aunt Emily's ethical stance is instable because her responsibility is limited to specific past events and is bound to exclude living bodies and their presences. However, this limit is inevitable because testimony and its responsibility are always already limited.

In essence, responsibility is problematic. Responsibility is founded on the original sin of Western civilization in that, as Derrida observes, "[s]acrifice, vengeance, cruelty, all [are] inscribed in the genesis of responsibility and moral conscience" (*The Gift of Death* 114). This brutal history of responsibility occurs because responsibility was originally endorsed by legality. The state's legal responsibility is essentially established on the exclusion of illegal immigrants, as the

government documents on Japanese Canadian internment prove; that is, legal

responsibility sets the limit on who is responsible and who is not responsible for acts.

A person can have absolute responsibility, only on the condition that a subject can be

infinitely responsible for any event in history and for every Other.

Accordingly, the idea of infinite responsibility is mystic to a large extent.[90]

Moreover, Aunt Emily's ethical position contradicts her legal responsibility. As a

result, the statement "I am responsible" is essentially paradoxical; legal responsibility

must be partial, while ethical responsibility is too infinite to be actualized. And, this

paradox undermines testimony's ethical proposition in that it entails infinite (legal or

ethical) responsibility for justice. All these paradoxes in the foundation of Aunt

Emily's testimony—*I*, as a historic subject whose essence is a Canadian citizen,

articulate my testimony in *written facts* to be fully responsible for the past victims—

exclude truthful testimony. In truth, testimony is the inscription of sacrifice,

vengeance, and cruelty by those who did not stand in the position of those who die

bearing witness to these historic atrocities. Against Aunt Emily's politics, Aunt

Obasan's silence and age-worn and fatigued body represent ethico-ontological

perseverance and silent speech with her attendance to others as well as her care for

---

[90] Ethical and religious responsibility, as Levinas claims, is different from legal responsibility because ethico-ontological responsibility requires infinite responsibility. But to be absolutely responsible for the Other paradoxically means to be irresponsible in reality. Levinas' absolute responsibility and duty fall into religious, fanatic responses to the Other's calling for because, as Derrida posits, "I am responsible for any one only by failing in my responsibilities to all the others, to the ethical or political generality" (*The Gift of Death* 71). In this regard, Zižek ironically maintains in *Violence* that because of the ethical illusion of "our emotional-ethical responses…[such as] reactions of sympathy to suffering and pain that is witnessed directly," a killer's "shooting someone point-blank is for most of us much more repulsive than pressing a button that will kill" Asians in wars (43). Ethics lose its power when it confuses a stranger's violence with systematic violence towards collective strangers. As Zižek poignantly posits, "the claim that I am responsible for others' pain infinitely also hides another perverse proposition that I cannot be responsible infinitely for others' pain, thus I do not need to be responsible or I am nothing, so that I do not need to do anything, though I can be infinitely responsible." In this sense, Badiou in *Ethics* clearly disagrees with the idea of the fundamental responsibility and ethics of the Other since this ethics denies the subject's will to change the situation.

Others. But even Aunt Obasan cannot fully inhabit the fundamental ethico-

ontological realm, because only those who are dying and bearing witness to his or her

own or others' deaths can be infinitely responsible for others' pains.

Given these paradoxes, Agamben claims that testimony of the true experience

in concentration camps is limited to *Muselmann*, a derogatory term referring to the

disabled prisoners dying of starvation in Auschwitz; Agamben notes, "in Auschwitz

ethics begins precisely at the point where the *Muselmann*, the 'complete witness,'

makes it forever impossible to distinguish between man and non-man" (*Remnant* 47).

Muselmann dwells in the third realm of humanity, ethics, physiology, medicine,

politics, and ontology[91] to testify to the true ethical realm without intervention from

legal responsibility or political activism. In this gray zone, legalized significances of

humanity and morality blur their boundaries in front of this undecipherable chaos of

ethos in which a human being's "*Da*" is deprived of the Heideggerian authentic

human ethos, "*Dasein*." As bare lives without legal humanity, *Muselmann* are

mutilated, tortured bodies, roaming like zombies with neither consciousness nor the

ability to speak, waiting for a death scheduled by rational calculation for irrational

purposes, such as how the cost and guilt for killing a person can be offset by the

benefit of letting him or her die as *Muselmann*. Testimony without these subhumans'

voices and presences becomes a testimony with lacuna because it loses the core of

ethics; that is, as Agamben claims, "no ethics can claim to exclude a part of humanity,

---

[91] Agamben posits, "At times a medical figure or an ethical category, at times a political limit or an anthropological concept, the *Muselmann* is an indefinite being in whom not only humanity and non-humanity, but also vegetative existence and relation, physiology and ethics, medicine and politics, and life and death continuously pass through each other. This is why the *Muselmann*'s 'third realm' is the perfect cipher of the camp, the non-place in which all disciplinary barriers are destroyed and all embankments flooded" (*Remnant* 48).

no matter how unpleasant or difficult that humanity to see" (*Remnant* 64). Thus, "The

*Muselmann…*is the threshold of a new ethics, an ethics of a form of life that begins

where dignity ends" (*Remnant* 69). Namely, *Muselmann* is the foundation from which

ontological ethics begins. Without considering this zero point of humanity, ethics

cannot be all-inclusive, and this ethico-ontological approach would not be entrapped

in the infinite responsibility or limited legal responsibility because it would show the

spectrum of humanities and responsibilities from which a subject can determine the

limit of one's responsibility.

Accordingly, *Obasan* is not a work written only for the political purpose of

giving testimony about Japanese Canadian internments, despite what many critics

think.[92] In fact, *Obasan* deals with the global situation of humanity placed in the zone

of indistinction between animality and humanity. Kogawa's extension of historical

atrocity to the atomic attack in Nagasaki shows this universality in *Obasan.* Mr.

Gower's molestation of the young Naomi and all other prevalent global violence in

Obasan reveals the truth that we, all of us, include *Muselmanns.* Though it is partly

understandable given her situation, the claim that Aunt Emily's testimony is ethical

because her political and legal protests are ethical is preposterous. Insofar as ethics is

enclosed within political forums such as legal debates on citizenship, the exclusion of

some humans is inevitable, as current immigration issues in the U.S. prove. The more

citizenship is emphasized, the more humans have to be deported and expelled. The

---

[92] Many critics have focused on the question of whose testimony—Obasan's silence or Aunt Emily's legal testimony—is truer between. For example, in "Minority History as Metafiction: Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*," Donald C. Goellnicht analyzes Obasan as a historiographical metafiction. He also targets the contrast between Aunt Emily's explicit testimony and Obasan's silent testimony in the form of a postmodern dialectic of speaking, listening, and writing. But, few people have focused on Naomi's own poetic testimony.

logic of concentration camps is the same across times and spaces: Japanese Canadians

and Jews had to be incarcerated not only because they could not prove that they were

humans to be treated in humanitarian ways, but also because their speech and

presences were not classified as elements of humanity endorsed by ethics.

In this sense, *Obasan* suggests a new form of ethical testimony. Agamben

clarifies which type of testimony can be ethical:

> Testimony takes place where the speechless one makes the
> speaking one speak and where the one who speaks bears the
> impossibility of speaking in his own speech, such that the
> silent and the speaking, the inhuman and the human enter
> into a zone of indistinction in which it is impossible to
> establish the position of the subject, to identify the
> "imagined substance" of the "I" and, along with it, the true
> witness. (*Remnant* 120)

If we are to take Agamben's point, then how can we make testimony truthful and

infinitely responsible for even the lowest form of humanity placed in the zone of

indistinction between animality and humanity, as well as life and death? Moreover,

how can we ethically represent this fundamentally ontological humanity in a literary

work? All these inquiries convolute around *Obasan*'s visceral, vivid, and poetic

image of humanity and its ethico-ontological foundation. For example, against Aunt

Emily's claim that Japanese Canadians are Canadians, so they need justice, Naomi,

denying Aunt Emily's firm belief in the assumption that she is speaking for her

responsibility as a historical subject, describes the significance of a differential "we"

with the image of plants:

> Where do any of us come from in this cold country? Oh,
> Canada, whether it is admitted or not, we come from you
> we come from you. From the same soil, the slugs and slime
> and bogs and twigs and roots. We come from the country

> that plucks its people out like weeds and flights them into the roadside. We grow in ditches and sloughs, untended and spindly. We erupt in the valleys and mountainside…sprouting upside down on the prairies, out hair wild as spiders' legs, out feet rooted nowhere. We grow where we are not seen, we flourish where we are not heard, the thick undergrowth of an unlikely planting. We come from cemeteries full of skeletons with wild roses in their grinning teeth. We come from our untold tales that wait for their telling. We come from Canada, this land that is like every land, filled with the wise, the fearful, the compassionate, the corrupt. (Kogawa 271)

To Naomi, Canada is just a name of a country, and Japanese Canadians are not just citizens but minorities who dwell in "ditches and sloughs" like weeds. Japanese Canadians are in permanent exile or diaspora because their feet are "rooted nowhere," and they are not genuine plants in Canada but unwelcome, misplaced ones by "an unlikely planting." To the state, Japanese Canadians were as unlikely and disagreeable as unwelcomed guests who can turn into a hostile enemy.

However, this ambivalence hides the fundamentally ontological realm of images. In this quote, the weed, the symbol of Japanese Canadians, corresponds to the death image of "skeleton" and is parallel to repulsive animal images such as a "spider's leg." By lying with the images of the dead, Japanese Canadians can have their "untold tales that wait for their telling" so that their voices, though unheard before, toll the knell for the historic violence they endured. Therefore, death, dying animals, and traumatic dreams as images and signs dominate *Obasan* as examples as demonstrations of the true testimony. In this context, true communication or testimony is possible only on the condition that Naomi plunges into her traumatic memory in which the deaths, dreams, and animal signs speak in forms of their images

whose center is occupied by Naomi's dying mother and her animal cry; Naomi has to listen to "the speech that frees com[ing] forth from that amniotic deep" (Kogawa 6) where a meek animal being's voice spirals up. To begin this journey, she also has to run into a cryptic series of these images as signs.[93]

I call these images signs, following Deleuze's idea of the sign. In *Proust and Signs*, Deleuze defines signs not as semiotic signs but aesthetic, creative, and generative images filled with unidentifiable affects and their violently deconstructive power that razes down readers' paralyzed worlds. These signs form a particular series in accordance with several series of configured sets of images and repetitively pummel readers' unresponsive sensitivities. The violent, affective traits of the signs from the images in *Obasan* function in this way. Gradually these series of signs reveal the ethics of humanity and the potential domain of true testimony. In what follows, I will show how *Obasan* can present the true testimony through various series of signs and their final conflation into an ontological series of signs that resonate with the ethos of humanity.

Animal and Dream/Memory signs

While *Obasan* is about Japanese Canadian history, the work has been acclaimed for its poetic dictions. Magnusson even classifies *Obasan* into a new genre—"proem," namely, a hybrid of poem and prose, because *Obasan*'s "characteristic style is poetic and imagist rather than novelistic and discursive" (59).

---

[93] Charistina Marie Tourino, in her "Ethnic Reproduction and the Amniotic Deep: Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*," extensively discuss the overall meaning of "amniotic deep" as the core of ethnicity and femininity. She understands this "amniotic deep" as a metaphor that is "profoundly life-giving and even spiritual, but also as destructive" (142).

Yet encounters with violent signs in *Obasan* for both characters and readers are painful. Signs force characters to illuminate the traumatic experiences that they had latently shrouded in order to hide all Japanese Canadian characters' vulnerability. Albeit vulnerable and isolated, each sign is linked and located within a different series. There are three correlative series of signs in *Obasan*: animal signs, dream/memory signs, and ontological signs of facticity. Animals in *Obasan* mostly represent an allegory of victims and predators. For example, in *Obasan*, Japanese Canadians are described as "a caged bird" (107) and "a special kind of low animal able to live on next to nothing" (123). In concentration camps, the government "wouldn't let…Jap females into the men's building…'to prevent further propagation of the species'"(Kogawa 116). In these quotes, the bio-political logic of eugenics prevails on the condition that Japanese Canadians become beings without their proper humanity, as I discussed previously. Under this discursive re-categorization, the victims' vulnerability turns a Japanese internee into "a wounded bird, battering the ground in an attempt to balance" (28). On the one hand, these images of caged, abandoned, and victimized animals represent young Naomi's limited worldview filled with loss, fear, and her melancholy over the dead. That is, Naomi, as a young girl, sees the world in a mix of fantasy and reality to escape the misery she experiences; thus, animals become traumatic signs representing incomprehensible realities. On the other hand, imaginary language and phantasmatic worldview is related to "Naomi's longing for a 'living' or 'freeing' or 'wordless word,' a purer language in which the broken mosaic of speech is repaired" (Magnusson 60). In other words, dwelling in the interstitial space between the two aunts' opposite worlds—Aunt Obasan's world of

silence and Aunt Emily's world of vehemently political words—Naomi finds her own poetic or corporeal words in the form of allegorical animals, dreams, and/or the images of the dead.

For example, Naomi's father, who died during the relocation, metamorphoses into a frog in Naomi's world of fairy tale. When Naomi and Stephen, her brother, play around in a swamp, she finds a crippled frog which reminds her of her father; she "think[s] [she]'ll call [her] frog—short for Tadpole or Tadashi, [her] father's name" (Kogawa 246). Naomi's association of her father's name and "tadpole" is ironic because it shows how she regards her father as an immature animal or a being in transmutation or metamorphosis. In Naomi's fabled, allegorical world, her father, separated from Naomi due to governmentally forced relocation, loses his maturity. Naomi keeps raising the crippled frog, but when her father dies, it disappears magically; Naomi narrates, "Once I find it in a corner of the room covered in fluff. And then it is nowhere. The bowl sits empty on the table. My last letter to Father has received no answer. When the snow falls and covers everything. I hardly know that it is snow. The sky is the underbelly of a fish" (249). After the frog is gone, Naomi replaces the image of the frog with the image of a fish to suggest her father's return to the embryotic form of the fish. This replacement is approximately the devolutionary state of the frog. In contrast to the famous fairy tale "The Princess and the Frog," instead of the frog metamorphosing into a prince, Naomi's frog returns to the original form of life: the fish form of a fetus. Naomi imagines and plays with this fantasy because she cannot accept the truth of her father's death during the internment. This

is childish but also poetic, thus this is powerful. Naomi accepts this tragic truth by poetically transforming the reality into a phantasmatic, poetic space.

Furthermore, the series of animal signs in *Obasan* represent power structures and their political hierarchies in human society. For example, one day Naomi sees a white hen peck yellow chicks to death in a wired chicken coop (Kogawa 70). The allegorical configuration of animals in the relationships between the white hen and the chicks, at first glance, seems to represent the victim-predator relationships between Japanese Canadians and the Canadian government. This allegory via color, in the constellation of all-inclusive victimization, is prevalent in *Obasan*. For example, the victim's color, yellow, reoccurs throughout *Obasan*; the color of pawns in Stephen's game are yellow, and even the name of the game is "The Yellow Peril," which historically referred to the Asian American immigrant influx.

This allegory includes one more register— motherhood protecting against evil predators. After Naomi's mother quickly rescues all the live chicks when she sees this tragic happening, Naomi is impressed by her mother's eyes that "are steady and matter-of-fact—the eye of Japanese motherhood" (Kogawa 71). Although Naomi's mother has the power to rescue the chicks, in the larger picture, she is a victim, deprived of such political power to save her own children. Yet, even victims become predators. The stereotyped relationships between the yellow, vulnerable chicks and the demented white hen change the hierarchy of color in time; Naomi narrates, "When the yellow chicks grow up they turn white. Chicken Little is a large Yellow Peril puff" (181). The yellow chick will grow up to become a white hen which has the potentiality to peck its chicks to death again. The roles of aggressors and victims

overlap, and the oppressed can oppress more vulnerable beings. On this potentiality, the logic of victimization faces cul-de-sac but open truly fundamental ethos of humanity—vulnerability.

Under the strongest apparatus of violence on the state and/or international levels, all humans belong to one single community—the community of victims—and they cannot be differentiated from the vulnerability of animals. Glissant's commonplace suggests this global universality of victimization. Glissant's *lieu commun* (a site of community), according to Oakley, comprises an ethics of "a total inclusiveness of humanity" (*Common Places* 39). Glissant's commonplace is "appositional," as Glissant puts it, so that it can relay and relate to all forms of humanities with the infinite responsibility for those who are in the zone of indistinctions between animality and humanity. The general political systems aggravate this kind of all-inclusive victimization. As Hobbs, Foucault, and Agamben argue, it is paradoxical that the *nomos* (the system of normal governance) of the state is founded on natural order. As Kant's aforementioned example of cosmopolitanism testifies, in the modern world, to a large extent, global and local legal systems are based upon the assumption that human beings are dangerous, irresponsible, irrational, and rascal animals who must be controlled by punishments and disciplines regulated by the legal systems. For this reason, only legal contracts among the Hobbesian animal-humans can sustain legal justice. That is, the law, which is supposed to be derived from non-natural, political logic, derives from nature and the natural moral system.

Correspondingly, in *Obasan*, two animal signs present two opposite

omnipotent powers of the ethics of nature and the politics of the state: the "King bird"

and "a hawk." The "King bird" is depicted as a magnificent symbol of pre-civilized

natural harmony, a totemic emblem of Native American heritage and an omnipotent

spirit that judges human morality. Still, Naomi fears the King bird because it is

displaced into an image of an ontological calling of conscience:

> King bird was a conductor that called all the birds together
> to some auditorium in the woods where people couldn't
> go… By the time we get home, it's late afternoon. The long
> shadow is like a giant wing, a mountainous King bird
> hovering over us, listening to our whispers and stories, alert
> for lies. Is it at midnight the King bird will descend to cut
> off our tongues? Which lies, I wonder as I fall asleep, has
> the King bird overheard today. In the night, I dream of a red
> red bird, tiny as an insect, trapped in a whirling well.
> (Kogawa 168)

The omnipotent image of the King bird contrasts with the image of the small red bird

in Naomi's dream. The King bird's moral adage is simple—"do not lie." This simple

moral code, is so powerful that, under the force of this raw morality, Naomi turns into

a helpless tiny red bird. In this respect, the King bird's "animal call" resonates with, if

adopting the Heideggerian concept, the call or "appeal" of conscience as an

ontological call to refresh the idea that we are finite beings tethered by our finitude.

Likewise, this echoes the possibility of Levinas' infinite ethical responsibility of

staying truthful toward Others always. [94] Yet, here the King bird's "thou shalt not lie"

---

[94] In "Truth of Disclosure and Truth of Testimony," denying psychism that objectifies and fixates human experience into intelligibility, Levinas connects the ontological relation of truth and freedom via testimony; he argues, "[r]esposnibility for the other does not amount to a beginning: my relation with another freedom does not fit into a free decision. The two freedoms cannot be gathered in a presence" (*Basic* 103). Therefore, Levinas's responsibility "for the other is precisely this relation with an unthematizable infinity" (103). Levinas' testimony in fact is a testimony toward God, thus it is not

commandment has a vehement side; it threatens to cut off Naomi's tongue, banning

Naomi's speaking, if she lied. To some extent, the King bird's call resonates with the

transition from a natural ethics to a political, legal system.

The King bird in this sense represents a latent, collective guilty consciousness

as the natural origin of human civilization's ethical order, which Freud discusses in

terms of the superego. Naomi's guilt is connected to the collective guilt of "becoming

a member of the human community, and with the help of technique guided by

science, going over to the attack against nature and subjecting her to the human will"

(Freud, *Civilization* 55). The King bird's call of conscience in advancing civilization

becomes a totalitarian desire only to include those who share the guilt of

victimization into this community.

In *Obasan*, this ethico-ontological call from the King bird contrasts with—but

shares the potentiality of violence—the political call from an animal sign that

represents the state power: a hawk. The narrator compares the hawk to a state power,

as Naomi describes: "an order-in-council that sails like a giant hawk across a chicken

yard, and after the first shock there is a flipping squawking lunge for safety. One

swoop and the first thousand are on ships sailing for disaster. I can remember the

chickens in Slocan, their necks and tiny heads thrust low, diving for shelter, one time

that a hawk came circling down" (Kogawa 225). The hawk symbolizes the law and

order of the state, the so-called order-in-council that orders the Japanese Canadians'

internment.

---

free from the onto-theological tradition. Here I am on the side of Levinas's ethics, but I do not adopt his religious context though it is undeniable that Kogawa's novel is profoundly based on her Christianity. There are significant number of articles dealing with Kogawa's Christian ideas in *Obasan*. See Patricia Harrison's "Genocide or Redemption? Asian American Autobiography and the Portrayal of Christianity in Amy Tan's The Joy Luck Club and Joy Kogawa's Obasan."

To escape this mighty bird-of-prey, small birds like Naomi's "red, red bird" or chickens, the symbol of victims, hide. The hawk symbolizes, to some extent, that the origin of the state power is bio-political power, which means that the state's constituted power emerged from the constituting bio-elements—namely, people placed at the zone of indistinction between nature and the state. In this sense, the hawk's state political system is as violent as the King bird's natural morality, which reveals the problematic zone of indistinction between ethics and politics. Naomi and the other victims are scared of both the King bird's ethical call *and* the hawk's political call because both are connected via modern politics. Thus the King bird and the hawk reveal how ethico-ontological ideas change into political violence in Western history. Examples can be violence against minorities in the form of ethnic cleansing such as Auschwitz and Japanese Canadian/American relocation, though obviously there are differences in degree and historical backgrounds. In order not to be violent and oppressive, the world of ethics and morality the King bird symbolizes has to be differentiated from the political order the hawk symbolizes.

Japanese Canadians were relocated and incarcerated in the concentration camps because the ethical imperative that rational beings must treat others not as a means but an ends comes from the hidden, dark questions of who decides who is rational enough to be treated ethically. Suppose the Canadian government relocated Japanese Canadians for humanitarian moral ends. Under the auspice of an ethical good, on the one hand, people can be politically excluded; on the other hand, under the name of a political decision, certain humans can be ethically framed as evil so that they must be massacred. These impasses in the idea of the ethical foundation of the

political order in Western discourse cause everyone to become both a victim and a

perpetrator at the same time. The origin of this paradox is the conflation of ethics and

politics, which discursively began when Aristotle subordinated ethics to politics as I

discussed in the preface.

This ubiquitous madness, too broad and deep to be recognized by an

individual, changes everyone into agents of violence, which even changes the purity

of arts. For example, Stephen, Naomi's brother, disappointed by the untidiness of the

house they are relocated to and the consequential leg injury he suffered, heads out to

the field and "whacks his crutch into the grasses, scattering the butterflies. Each wing

bears two round circles of gold…they are infant eyes, staring up at us bodiless and

unblinking…his crutch like a scythe. Within moments, the ground and grasses are

quivering, with maimed and dismembered butterflies…'They're bad,' Stephen says

as he wades through the weeds. 'They eat holes in your clothes'" (Kogawa 145).

There can be two interpretations of this symbolic scene. On the one hand, Stephen's

fury comes from the analogy between the butterfly and himself as a victim; he cannot

bear the idea that he became a victim or vermin that eats holes in the symbolic

clothing of Canada. Stephen kills the butterflies to restore his self-confidence and

escape his own victimization. On the other hand, Stephen's fury at his expulsion from

his hometown and his resulting physical invalidity and mental distress is drawn to the

butterflies, whose infant eyes on their wings symbolize not only the innocence

Stephen lost, but also his lost dream of becoming an artist like his father and other

family members. Gifted with genius in music like his father, Stephen tries to become

a pianist, but his dream is thwarted by the relocation. In some sense, this pattern on

the butterflies' wings suggests the crisis of aesthetic representation about the traumatic experience Stephen undergoes.

However, Stephen finally restores his artistic genius to become a world-famous pianist later; likewise, Kogawa also turns her painful experience into stunning artistic signs of death, pain and love. Although ubiquitous violence deteriorates art, *Obasan* gains its aesthetic power from death signs and the painful cries of animals and characters. All dying animals give out their last sounds and reveal how "the Death angel passes over" (Kogawa 181). These death signs are aesthetic signs that violently affect readers' emotions under the auspice of an ontological mood of melancholy—an eternal mourning over the victims and the dead. Indeed, a thick, fuzzy atmosphere hovers around the signs of violence. Violence is an imperceptible sign imbued with melancholia. The foggy atmosphere of violence and death in the world of signs in *Obasan* relay another series of signs—the dream and memory signs. Naomi's dreams and memories are traumatic and symptomatic, and its signs recapture the past moments of becoming a victim of violence; in this sense, the narrator claims, "The memories are dream images" (132).

As such, memory images from the past, after being stored in unconsciousness, emerge in dreams. Thus, memory images become dream images, with the memory images attaining the potency to envision the future. Let's start with memory images as memory signs. Memory signs in *Obasan*, like Deleuze's Proustian signs, involuntarily evoke imagination without conceptualization or voluntary reminiscence, unfolding a pure past that is different from the present, but coexists with the present and propels the future via dream signs.

In this sense, Naomi in *Obasan* describes how memory images permeate into

and capture Naomi and Aunt Obasan:

> All our ordinary stories are changed in time, altered as much by the present as the present is shaped by the past. Potent and pervasive as a prairie dust storm, memories and dreams seep and mingle through cracks, settling on furniture and into upholstery…But we're trapped, Obasan and I, by our memories of the dead—all our dead—those who refuse to bury themselves. Like threads of old spiderwebs, still sticky and hovering, the past waits for us to submit, or depart. When I least expect it, a memory comes skittering out of the dark, spinning and netting the air, ready to snap me up and ensnare me in old and complex puzzles. Just a glimpse of a worn-out patchwork quilt and the old question comes thudding out of the night again like a giant moth….I notice these days…how the present disappears in [Obasan's] mind. The past hungers for her. Feast on her. And when its feasting is complete? She will dance and dangle in the dark, like small insect bones, a fearful calligraphy—a dry reminder that once there was life flitting about in the weather. (Kogawa 30-1)

While dusting and searching the attic—a reservoir of the past—after the death of

Uncle (Obasan's husband), Naomi and Obasan happen to see a spider web; this

moment functions as an epiphany causing Naomi's memories to resurface

involuntarily and give her insight into the imagery associations of memory with

"dust" and the "spider web." Namely, the dust and the spider web are two signs of

memory in this passage. Dust, as a memory sign, seeps into the narrator's mind in this

molecular movement. The memory does not dwell in the past, but always waits "for

us to submit, or depart." Memory as pure memory in totality, as Bergson argues,

coexists with the present to change the present. In other words, memory, in the form

of dust, internally infiltrates into people's presents and fills them, while memory as a spider web passively ensnares Naomi and Obasan to make them victims.

In contrast, the present is a husk or a hollow "insect bone" whose substance is an extract of the memory. Correspondingly, humanity would become hollow if not for memory, but memory is also involuntarily seeping into us through abysmal cracks of dreams or in a moment of epiphany leading to the traumatic past. In this sense, memory's power of captivity is not just negative. It is also positive because it can lead Naomi to find the true freedom and truths in her pure memory—duration—which is not just individual memory, but connected to the collective duration, forming a network or a poetics of relations with others such as Aunt Obasan. Notably, the one who is caught in the spider web is not just Naomi alone; she is captured/taken captive with Obasan as well. Through sharing these painful captivities and their trauma, they can create relations whose poetic images lead to dream images and their signs. In sum, through involuntary memory,[95] Naomi discovers the network of collective memories she and Obasan share—the memory of the dead and Naomi, Obasan and other Japanese Canadians' painful history.[96]

However, this does not mean that there is only pure memory. Alongside pure memory, traumatic bodily memory negatively coexists. To Naomi, this spiraling down into painful personal memory and the collective history open the humiliating, atrocious trauma of being molested by a white male. Mr. Gower, an old white neighbor, molests Naomi and "tells [Naomi] not tell [her] mother" (73), and "caresses

---

[95] Involuntary memory and pure memory comes from Bergson's theory. My thesis here is based on Bergson's *Matter and Memory* as well as Deleuze's interpretation in *Bergsonism*.
[96] This corresponds with Deleuze's understanding of Proust's "organless body to signs of one nature or another" (*Proust* 182).

[Naomi's] head as if [she] were a small animal" (Kogawa 75). This trauma shuts

down Naomi's world to protect her vulnerable, exploited body and mind. This

prohibition renders trauma latent in her dreams and restrains Naomi's speech; Naomi

says, "Speech hides within me, watchful and afraid" (69). This traumatic event

trapped inside the vulnerable individual unconsciousness emerges in bizarre dream

signs in association with other moments of victimizations during the relocation. And,

this reiteration of dream signs leads to the collective memory of history, expanding

personal trauma into the historical trauma of war and international violence. For

example, Naomi's dream about two couples of men and women and a robot dog

unfolds an apocalyptic view of history in a science fiction style. Naomi describes her

dream:

> I drift back down into white windless dream. The distance approaches and the roots of trees are prayers descending. Fingers tunneling. Wordlessness. The mist in the dream swarms like the foam of dry ice on the weatherless mountainside. Together, from out of another dream or from nowhere, the man and woman arrive. Their arrival is as indistinct as the fog. There is no language…For a flickering moment, she appears as she once was, naked, youthful, voluptuous. But the mirage fades….Her body, a matching squareness, is dense as earth…We do not greet them but the man looks at us…His glance is a raised baton. Like an orchestra of fog we join them and toil together in the timelessness….but at some subtle hour, the white mist is known to be gray, and the endless labor has entered our limb….There is in the forest huge gentle beast—a lion or a dog or a lion dog. It belongs to man. Its obedience is phenomenal…I see that the inside of the mouth is plastic. The animal is a robot…a house of cards silently collapses…One of her arms is now connected to her shoulder by four hooks locked to make a hinge…She

> begins to speak but the words are so old they cannot be understood. (Kogawa 33-35)

The narrator tunnels down through the "white," "windless" dream—her unconsciousness—only to find a "worldless" space. This worldless space, interestingly enough, is devoid of the "world," "wind," "weather," and "language." This bare stage may well refer to a pure ontological space mediated by nothingness or death. In other words, deprived of world and sky, in this purely fertile space, humanity dwells with bodies that are "dense like earth." These humans seem to be full of a primitive, innocent life force. Without any trace of the living world, the being's "ontological place" or "Da" of Heidegger's Dasein is unconcealed; in particular, the woman's body representing pure sexuality and fertility symbolizes the origin of life itself. Implicitly, the new-arrived couple who enters this space represent Naomi and Stephen's parents, who died during their relocation in WWII."

Through her dream image, Naomi finds connectivity to the dead and their ontological world. But an apocalyptic catastrophe is envisioned. The metallic robot dog with a plastic mouth symbolizes not only the nuclear bomb that eventually kills Naomi's mother, but also the moment when the fabled animal signs shed their fantasy and show the ontological situation of humanity and the menace of the state's violence symbolized by the hawk and Western morality the King bird represents. The mutilated body in her dream is, in fact, Naomi's mother's body, a lost origin insofar as her mother's body is brutally maimed like the earth is scorched and maimed by technology. Through the layers of dream images, Naomi finally bears witness to her parents' death via series of memory signs and dream signs. This is a moment of

revelation of the ontological space of truth. If the first woman is Naomi's split ego or double, she bears witness not only to the death of her parents, but also to the death of herself and maybe her brother. Ironically, Naomi can attain the power of testimony only in the dream and pure memory where she both dies and speaks about her future and other family members' previous deaths simultaneously. In this sense, this dream signals the end of paradise and yet, opens a series of signs—signs of life and death which have the power of true testimony in the ethico-ontological sense that Aunt Emily's documented testimony cannot deliver.

Ontological Signs and True Testimony

One of the most striking, disturbing series of signs in *Obasan* is the filthy sign of the bodies of the dead.[97] The vivid and visceral messages they contain give rise to a new ethical question about the impossibility of the near-death testimony of *Muselmann*. Also, the sonic signs from dying animals call forth readers' self-reflection of their ontological ground. In several instances Naomi hears cries from the dying animals that penetrate violently into Naomi's world. After Naomi is relocated to Slocan, she muses on the association of animal signs and their deaths,

> There it is Death again. Death means stop. All the chickens in the chicken coop, dim-witted pinbrains though they are, know about it…If anything goes overhead—a cloud, an airplane, the King bird—they all seem to be connected to one another like a string of Christmas-tree light. Their orange eyes are in unison, and each head is crooked at an angle watching the overshadowing death. They stop for a moment, then carry on

---

[97] Filthiness has been the general topic in Asian American women's literature as Monica Chiu observes in *Filthy Fictions: Asian American Literature by Women*. Chiu's analysis, however, mostly focuses on the cultural aspects of these filthy images in literature, and I want to extend this discussion to include philosophical questions as well.

as death passes by…Hospitals are places where Death visits.
But Death comes to the world in many unexpected places.
There is that day on the way to school. (Kogawa 183)

Death becomes an overarching sign in Naomi's world. Naomi can physically sense death; she sees, hears, smells, and even touches death in multiple forms. For example, Naomi and Stephen, on their way home from school, see Tak and Seigo, Japanese friends of young Naomi's, kill a white hen that had pecked her chicks to death. At that moment, Naomi bears witness to "the chicken's quivering, the plump body pulsing and beating like a disembodied heart…[and then] there is no sound from the chicken except a strange squeaking noise from the wings as if they are metal hinges" (Kogawa 185). This squeaking sound resonates with another scene when she hears "the voice…weak—a faint steady mewing" (188) from a kitten that is killed by a girl with white hair though she denies that she did it. Why do these children, regardless of their ethnicities, kill animals? Is it just because of the prevalence of violence due to war and their internment? Is there something more? Notably, these children kill animals because they share vulnerabilities with the animals. In society in general, children are at the lowest rung of the social ladder when violence ensues. The children in the novel kill the animals because they want to victimize something in order to get compensation for their own victimization. The previous example of Stephen's killing of the butterflies shares almost the same context. Violence prevails because it causes vulnerable ones to find more vulnerable beings. Therefore, animals' cries hit the limit of humanity.

Another set of the death signs is the images of animals/humans' corpses. The ontological signs of death in the novel are morbid, material, and paradoxical. For

example, when Naomi goes to a nearby swamp, she describes an image of a dead tree in contrast with a living animal sign: "On the far side of swamp…[t]he only tree here is dead. Its skeleton is a roost for a black-and-white magpie that I often see angling across the sky" (Kogawa 244). This contrast between the sign of the dead (here, the tree as a skeleton) and the sign of the living (the magpie) repeats similarly two more times. First, it appears more grotesquely in Naomi's grandmother's dream: Grandmother Gato in Japan writes in her letter to her daughters that "as in a dream, I can still see the maggots crawling in the sockets of my niece's eyes" (Kogawa 281). Again, this dream turns out to be the reality and repeats in Grandmother Gato's experience in Japan; when she roams Nagasaki ruined by the atomic bombing, she bears witness to a repulsive scene where:

> a woman was utterly disfigured. Her nose and one cheek were almost gone. Great wounds and pustules covered her entire face and body. She was completely bald. She sat in a cloud of flies, and maggots wriggled among her wound. As Grandma Gato watched her, the woman gave her a vacant gaze, then let out an animal cry. It was [Naomi's] mother. (286)

All these images of death and life conflate into Naomi's mother's last animal cry before she dies. These unbearable moments of witnessing the dead bodies or animal cries from dying bodies ironically are the ethical moments when the speaking "I" can ethically engage in a true testimony from the dying or the dead. Also, this is the ontological moment of revelation in that it discloses the ontological truth that "human is nothing other than the agent of the inhumans, the one who lends the inhuman a voice" (Agamben, *Remnant* 120). It can be said that the maggot is the living "I"

turning into the speaking "I" through Grandmother Gato's bearing witness to the

dying *Muselmann*, the true witness—Naomi's mother.

In this sense, Aunt Obasan's endless repetitive phrase, "Everyone someday

dies" seems to be too true a commonplace to have specific significance; yet, this

truism dominates the foundation of philosophy—facticity,[98] the ontological truth that

the essence of our being is time, and this ontological time (Heidegger's ek-sistence)

are meaningful because we all die in the future. This repetitive, differential, and

grotesque series of the paradoxical coexistence of the living and the dead—e.g.

creepy maggots eating flesh and crawling up from the dying and the dead, the last

animal cry from a defaced, disfigured living dead—conflates all previous series of

signs (the animal signs and memory/dream signs). Despite their grotesqueness, the

maggots crawling out of the sockets of human eyes and wounds uncover the hidden

truth beneath the traumatic signs in dream and phantasm-covered reality. When flesh

is gone and the capability to speak is deprived, this abject being lets out ineffable,

unintelligible animal cries from the deceasing living "I." Embodying this animal cry,

the maggots symbolize the living "I" whose speaking is impossible. The improper

ethos of dying bodies or the dead has the potentiality of proper testimony.

To listen to the true testimony, Naomi obsessively replays the squeaking,

meaningless sound from her mother's last animal cry in her imagination. Why does

---

[98] Facticity has been the limbo of the non-philosophical foundation of the lived body upon which philosophers transcendentally think and reflect. As existentialists such as Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger suggest, the truth of our beings cannot be unconcealed without granting thought into the facticity of lived bodies and their immanent world of being (living) and nothing (death) determined by their ecstatic characters of mortality. If living is proper and death is improper, facticity possesses both. In this sense, Agamben "underscores how facticity entails an irreducible element of non-originality, and therefore of nonpropriety. The improper is the very mark of finitude" (Steinbock 4). Philosophically, bodies' factual existence and their final forms bring up rationally improper moods and irrational affects.

Naomi replay these sounds in her mind? One answer can be that Naomi is under the

foggy, ontological mood of "shame" which ironically relates to "love."

Shame and Love

In *Obasan*, the experiences of desertedness, dislocation, alienation, and

estrangement form the mood of being's vulnerability and its facticity. Recalling her

experience of relocation, Naomi elaborates on her ontological mood via the image of

a clearing: "There is no beginning and no end to the forest, or the dust storm, no edge

from which to know where the clearing begins. Here in this familiar density, beneath

this cloak, within this carapace, is the longing within the darkness" (Kogawa 131).

Naomi's description here is full of ontological anxiety formed from an anxious

waiting for the unknown, sinister future without Naomi's active searching for a way

out of the destiny the dense forest symbolizes. In some sense, the sign of the clearing

alludes to the Heideggerian clearing where Dasein unconceals and conceals the truth

and freedom. The clearing exists under the bright truth, but all geo-political situations

prevent these vulnerable beings from achieving freedom and unconcealing the truth

of their world. However, within the dense obscurity caused by zones of

indistinctions—human and inhuman, law and nature, *nomos* and state of exception,

citizen and *homo sacer*, and non-camp and camp—the identities and subjectivities of

those relocated surplus-beings become "chips and sand, the fragments of fragments

that fly like arrows from the heart of the rock. [They] are the silences that speak from

stone. [They] are the despised rendered voiceless" (Kogawa 132). Japanese

Canadians become molecular beings and "disappear into the future undemanding as

dew" (132). Yet, what about the art signs that Naomi, impersonating Kogawa, is creating?

Not so much does Naomi become suspicious of legal testimony as she becomes suspicious of the power of art. Naomi asks: "After the rotting of the flesh, what is the song that is left? Is it the strange gnashing sound of insects with their mandibles moving through the bone marrow?" (Kogawa 294).[99] Pretentiously imagining the pain inmates in camps experience is unethical because it fails to listen to the real witness who could not survive. Those so-called vivid representations of camps that emphasize forced grief and realistic representations or heroic adventures (i.e. *Schindler's List*) denigrate the meaning of true testimony. Maybe, the best way to artistically deliver the pain of those oppressed is to stop sensationalizing with vivid representation and instead maximize the artistic imagination and opacity. It is the opacity that truly unconceals the facticity of humanity, though opacity belongs to impropriety and improper artistic production. Artistic opacity becomes the artistic membrane that protects vulnerable memories and the living "I" against violent representation. Finally, the art sign becomes "love" about which Naomi says:

> Once I came across two ideographs for the word "love."
> The first contained the root words "heart" and "hand" and
> "action"—love as hands and heart in action together. The
> other ideograph, for "passionate love," was formed of
> "heart," "to tell," and "a long thread." The dance ceremony
> of the dead was a slow courtly telling, the heart declaring a
> long thread knotted to Obasan's twine, knotted to Aunt
> Emily's package. Why, I wonder as she danced her love,
> should I find myself unable to breathe? The Grand
> Inquisitor was carnivorous and full of murder. His demand

---

[99] Naomi's critiques on the artistic representation of human pain correspond with Adorno's famous dictum that "to write a poem after Auschwitz is *barbaric*" (*Prisms* 34).

> to know was both a judgment and a refusal to hear. The more he questioned her, the more he was her accuser and murderer. The more he killed her, the deeper her silence became. What the Grand Inquisitor has never learned is that the avenues of speech are the avenues of silence. To hear my mother, to attend her speech, to attend the sound of stone, he must first become silent. Only when he enters her abandonment will he be released from his own…My mother hid her love, but hidden in life does she speak through dream? Her tale is a rose with a tangled stem. (Kogawa 273-74)

As Naomi describes, the hieroglyphic Chinese ideograph of "Love" (愛) contains such morphemic parts as "heart" and "hand" and "action," and "passionate love" (热愛) is comprised of the morphemes of "heart," "to tell," and "a long thread."[100] To elaborate with philosophical connotations here, the character for "love" implicates affect, care, and praxis, while the character of "passionate love" implicates affect, speech, and a continuum of relations. The most interesting part in this quote is the image of a long thread. In *Obasan*, the long thread of love connects each individual into an amorphous idea of community. This line connects every member of the Japanese Canadian community without segregating anyone from the community. This community of love encloses and protects vulnerable bare lives from the enforced violence and actualizes their potential power to change their fixed identities with subtle movements.

What's more, this line in the quote delivers the voice from the dead as the ethical testimony by materially linking "Obasan's twine, knotted to Aunt Emily's

---

[100] Ueki, in her essay "*Obasan*: Revelations in a Paradoxical Scheme," understands these characters differently. I agree with her interpretation that the first letter refers to Aya Obasan, while the second letter refers to Aunt Emily. However, here, I present a different interpretation because I argue that Kogawa's use of Chinese characters transcends this parallelism.

package" (Kogawa 274). The silence of the living being standing as a disabled *Muselmann* before the speaking "I" unconceals the truth that "the avenues of speech are the avenues of silence" (274). The silence is also full speech with the ultimate potentiality for those who listen, as Naomi demonstrates when she reiterates the same sentence multiple times, "Mother, I am listening. Assist me to hear you" (Kogawa 288). By Naomi's attentive listening to her mother's animal cry while being enveloped in her ontological mood of shame love can finally blossom like "a rose with a tangled stem." Love is not a pleasant affect but a painful endeavor to bear witness to these filthy ontological signs. Through connecting via the line of love, what Naomi feels is not just grief but shame.

As such, grief cannot be the rightful mood felt in understanding camps and *Muselmann*. Grief belongs to sentimental judgment, a guise over the deeper emptiness that is the shame. Thus, Naomi implores, "Grief wails like a scarecrow in the wild night, beckoning the wind to clothe his gaunt shell. With his outstretched arms he is gathering eyes for his disguise…This body of grief is not fit for human habitation. Let there be flesh. The song of mourning is not a lifelong song" (Kogawa 295). The speaking "I," through enunciation, foregrounds his or her subjectivity with the background of his or her ethos. The fundamental structure of love is to unconceal one's facticity and its ethos of a silent *Muselmann,* as well as ontological shame. Then how can we explain this ontological shame? Agamben, quoting Keats' letter about the relation between the poetic experience of shame and desubjectification, maintains, "It is almost as if the shame and desubjectification implicit in the act of speech contained a secret beauty that could only bring the poet incessantly to bear

witness to his own alienation" (*Remnant* 113). The poetic power of desubjectification

under the mood of the shame caused by speaking about the unspeakable position of

inhumanity paradoxically brings forth a truthful aesthetic world. In this sense, it is

only in poetic articulation that a person can testify fully and ethically, just as the stem

of the rose for articulation in a poetics of line emerges from Naomi's mother's

maimed body. Instead of Aunt Emily, Naomi, with shame and love, via her poetic

narratives imparts the signs of non-human beings such as animals, signs from dream

and memory, and ontological signs of corpse and animal cries. These narratives

testify truly about her mother and others, a silent community of the oppressed.

> Eventually Naomi prays about her shame:

> > Martyr Mother, you pilot your powerful voicelessness over the ocean and across the mountain, straight as a missile to our hut on the edge of a sugar-beet field. You wish to protect us with lies, but the camouflage does not hide your cries. Beneath the hiding I am there with you. Silent Mother, lost in the abandoning, you do not share the horror. At first, stumbling and unaware of pain, your open your eyes in the red mist and, sheltering a dead child, you flee through the flames. Young Mother at Nagasaki, am I not also there?... I hear the screams and feel the mountain breaking. Your long hair falls and falls into the chasm. My legs are sawn in half. The skin on your face bubbles like lava and melts from your bones. Mother, I see your face. Do not turn aside….Your leg is a tree trunk and I am branch, vine, butterfly. I am joined to your limbs by right of birth, child of your flesh, leaf of your bough….Gentle Mother, we were lost together in our silences. Our worldlessness was our mutual destruction. (Kogawa 290-91)

In this passage, Naomi invokes her mother in five different ways: martyr mother,

silent mother, young mother, mother in a tree form, and gentle mother who share

Naomi's own worldlessness. Each phase signifies a different becoming and goes through rhythmical ups and downs in vulnerable images. The first martyr mother is the mother endeavoring to protect her children with angelic sacrifice and religious devotion, no matter how difficult. But this commonplace version of mother is mute and full of white lies; what's more, this version of mother is belligerent and paradoxically suicidal since the paradoxical image of her protection attends the image of a missile. In this sense, the metonymic link between martyr and motherhood is fragile because mother hides her painful cry, the animal cry, which cannot be mobilized like the powerful missile of voicelessness. Naomi's mother's martyrdom is in essence an illusion because it paints a pretentiously rosy picture of the bare lives beneath the concealment as blessed victims; that is, a martyr is a product of an ideological apparatus covering the ontological mood of "the shame." Naomi can share her mother's suffering not by mourning over her martyrdom but by attuning herself to her mother's cry of ontological shame.

Increasingly, Naomi's persona, transmuting and transfusing into parts of her mother's body, senses the worlds her mother bears witness to as a *Muselmann*; that is, the narrator goes through the experience of being thrown into the mother's silent bare life filled with animal cries and thus gains an ability to give true testimony. In this way, "the young mother" in Nagasaki is a mother-daughter transfused by *Muselmann* dwelling in an ethos of humanity. In the end, grafted into a petrified mother, the narrator feels safe again.

True Testimony and Poetics of Subtlest Thin Lines

Herb Wyile, in "Making a Mess of Things: Postcolonialism, Canadian Literature, and the Ethical Turn," anticipates the ethical turn in literary criticism and proposes that "the ethical utility of literary texts may well reside most of all in their lack of amenability to clear judgment." With this anticipation, Herb emphasizes literature's "fruitful dialogue with life" (831). Thus, the most violent and unethical images can be ethical because of their opacity and complexities. Human corpses and animal cries can be the most ethical images because they can deconstruct readers' ossified morality. In the end of the novel, Naomi, after finding the truth of her mother's life and how she died, narrates:

> What stillness in this predawn hour. The air is cold. In all our life of preparation we are unprepared for this new hour filled with emptiness. How thick the darkness behind which hide the animal cry. I know what is there, hidden from my stare. Grief's weeping. Deeper emptiness…. Through the open doorway I can see the faint shaft of light from the kitchen across the living-room floor, straight as a knife cutting light from shadow, the living from the dead. (Kogawa 295-96)

Naomi is waiting for the dawn from which life will begin, but she knows that the night is long, and waiting is filled with emptiness because the memory of her mother beyond the darkness is filled with an animal cry that she cannot see or hear directly. The thin line between light (life) and darkness (death) is too faint to be seen clearly. But this thinness is the aesthetic threshold from which true testimony can be spoken through the dying victim's animal cry. From this thinness, art and true testimony can occur. In a nutshell, because of the creation of Naomi's sensitive narrator-body and her art-signs, I claim that *Obasan* can be a true testimony. In the next chapter, I will

show another possibility that continues the thin line of distinction between art and

life, about which I will exemplify by discussing clones' lives and their arts.

CHAPTER 4

CAN TRUTH FREE *YOU*?
A CLONE ARTIST'S POST-HUMAN QUESTIONS IN *NEVER LET ME GO*

> The subject…is gone,
> because identical duplication ends the division that constitutes him.
> The mirror stage is abolished by the cloning process—or
> …is monstrously parodied therein.
> (Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil*, 115)
>
> In an aversion to animals the predominant feeling
> Is fear of being recognized by them through contact.
> The horror that stirs deep in an obscure awareness
> That in him something lives so akin to the animal
> That it might be recognized.
> (Water Benjamin, "One-Way Street" 66)

Never Let Me Go, on the surface, seems to be a typical boarding-school narrative until the readers suddenly discover that the students in *Never Let Me Go* turn out to be "biotechnological slave[s]" (Carroll 62) or bodies for organ harvests. The novel raises interesting questions that lead to thought experiments in the tradition of science fiction as a speculative fiction.[101] These thought experiments are fertile for a mapping of the contemporary world because they unveil critical issues raised by the novel and are related to the current issues such as cloning, euthanasia, ethnic cleansing, and so on. This critical mapping is possible because of Ishiguro's unique

---

[101] According to Darko Suvin, this cognitive estrangement is a core and genetic element of science fiction or the speculative fiction. Science fiction is different from the fantasy novel or the fairy tale because it is based on cognitive speculation about the actual world by estranging it into a virtual space and time where the readers run into the same problems our society has had or is supposed to have. *Never Let Me Go* is in this vein of cognitive estrangement. However, the narrative in the novel goes no more beyond the traditional set of realism than the hard SF. The narrative breaks down the hermeneutic expectation of the implied readers in order to explore the more problematic untimely space and the shaky ground of modern subjectivity.

style and literary techniques: a self-deceptive narrator, the appropriation of the

conventional Victorian novel and gothic setting, an enclosed Kafkaesque space and

animal-humans, absurd and macabre images and settings, untimely space and

historical reflection on micro-political fascism, a careful erasure of ethnic, racial and

gender traits, and an ironic distance between the novel and the narrator and the author.

Ishiguro's literary devices, such as the "fictional landscape of imagination" or

the "character as a metaphor" substantialize the novel's deep philosophical questions.

First, the "fictional landscape of imagination" creates an unconventional space and

time out of conventional ones. For example, in an interview, Ishiguro explained that *A

Pale View of Hills* is about the very specific time and space (like Baktin's

"chronotope" as a time and space of a novel) of Nagasaki in 1950s. This product of

the "fictional landscape" of imagination (Sawim 105) possesses universal questions

about humanity, humans' absurd captivity to their destiny, and the uncanny truth of

human violence. This eagerness to create a universal chronotope may hide Ishiguro's

desire to go beyond his ethnic identity or his immigration experience.

Ishiguro's unconventional use of conventional characters is especially

unique.[102] The clone in *Never Let Me Go* and its world are metaphors just as is the

English butler in Ishiguru's *The Remains of the Day*[103]. The clone as a metaphor is

deconstructive because "Ishiguro takes away this 'as if' quality" (Britzman 308). The

"as if" quality represents the potentiality of a different understanding of the novel in

---

[102] About Ishigruo's *Never Let Me Go*, critics mostly focus on narratological questions. Mark Jerng, in "Giving Form to Life: Cloning and Narrative Expectations of the Human," takes on the connectivity between form and life as narratives. Keith McDonald, in "Days of Past Futures: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as 'Speculative Memoir'" discuss narratological element as the autobiographical memoir in *Never Let Me Go*. Reader response criticism and narratology have been central issues in *Never Let Me Go* because of very unique narratological techniques Ishiguro is famous for. I will discuss this frequently, but my chapter more focuses on philosophical and ethical aspect of the novel.
[103] See Ishiguro's interview in *Conversation with Kazuo Ishiguro* (100).

terms of different times, spaces, and characters' identities. The novel becomes more and more absurd and uncanny as readers discover how similar the clones are to humans and begin transposing themselves and their childhood memories with the clones' circumstances. As "clone" becomes a metaphor, the metaphorical structure via fictional representation saturates the novel's literary space with multiple meanings and layers that realistic novels cannot achieve.

As a metaphoric character, a clone has an infinite potentiality of different identities that expand and deepen the scope and layers of novel. As soon as a reader applies one identity to the clone, the whole novel's meaning changes. Although the clones act like typical school children and then teenage students, their ontological status and the veiled setting of the novel turns a clone's life story and those of her friends to dystopian science fiction.[104] This post-human twist in typical teenagers' eschatological questions about truth and life (Toker & Chertoff 166) prompts potently fundamental questions about humanity, animality, and the origin of human civilization in the context of the dialectic between utopia and dystopia, where a clone narrator's dreamy voice hides the uncanny truth of the world to which she belongs. The clone's human voice itself asks ethico-ontological questions about our world— such question as "how can we live with non-human beings that belong to the same world we belong to but have a different or better form-of-life?" Did not Westerners ask the same question when they encountered savages and animals with suffering faces?

---

[104] Mark Jerng considers a similar question of Ishiguro's reworking of the form of life: "how might human life and cloned persons share a space and context, how might they respond to one another?" (391)

These ethico-ontological as well as (post)colonial concerns lead to deep question regarding the clones in *Never Let Me Go*: what is meaning of truth and freedom? There are four truths in *Never Let Me Go* that I will explore: the spatial truth of utopia and dystopia, the ontological truth of freedom, the ethico-political truth of the anthropological machine, and the aesthetic truth of the clone artist as true artist. These truths will be disclosed gradually in the novel to relay such questions as: are the clones' world different from the humans' world?; why don't those students-clones try to escape? If the novel itself is a critical review of human history, what event is Ishiguro pointing to? What is the meaning of art if art means creation? And finally, how can we explain Ishiguro's melancholic tone in the novel? These questions feed into the larger question about the significance of an ethnic writer's intention in erasing his own identity from his novel.

The Unreliable Non-human Narrator and the Dialectics of Utopia and Dystopia

Never Let Me Go is filled with the narrator's nostalgic, romantic recollections that contradict readers' logical assumptions. Kathy is an unreliable narrator, and her fragmentary memories are jumbled and punctured with narrative potholes where truth and questions lurk. Kathy's intentional lack of explanation about her identity and her foggy memory results in an unreliable, skeletal narrative structure which requires readers to cognitively participate by asking deeper questions and thereby bringing the readers out of the epistemological cave and into the daylight. For example, the first page of the novel begins with Kathy's curious reflection on her career:

> My name is Kathy H. I'm thirty-one years old, and I've been a
> carer now over eleven years. That sound long enough, I know,

but actually they want me to go on for another eight months, until the end of this year….Now I know my being a carer so long isn't necessarily because they think I'm fantastic at what I do....I'm not trying to boast….My donors have always tended to do much better than expected. Their recovery times have been impressive, and hardly any of them have been classified as "agitated," even before fourth donation. Okay, maybe I *am* boasting now…. (*Never* 1)

Kathy's narrative is marked by an ironic mood and is filled with mysteries; she is

boasting and not boasting at the same time. On the textual level, such terms as

"donor" and "carer" deepen the mystery of the narrative, calling into questions

readers' logical assumption that Kathy might be a nurse working in a hospital where

patients donate organs; yet, obviously it is not possible for a human being to survive

multiple organ donations.[105] In addition, Kathy's self-analysis of her career masks her

individual personality and drives readers to consider her identity solely in terms of

her career; she is more clearly identified as a laborer than as a person. The reason why

she emphasizes her work as key to her identity relates to her own ontological

problem: she does not have a true human essence but only functions in the social

space, not as a human being but as a clone or a product of genetics. However, Kathy

paradoxically claims that "Carers aren't machines" (4), which belies her identity as a

clone. This apophasis paradoxically reveals the truth that Kathy is in some sense an

organ-machine. To make the novel more ironic, Kathy uses her narrative to relieve the

pain of a donor who wants "to remember Hailsham, just like it had been his own

childhood" though he knows he was close to "completing" (the donation-machine's

---

[105] The unreliable narrator is a common literary device Ishiguro uses in his works. In an interview, Ishiguro called it "self-deception," and clearly explained: "I am interested in narrators who are trying to evade certain truths about themselves and about their parts. They are, in other words, dealing with the language of self-deception" (*Conversation* 23).

jargon for dying) (5). Kathy's storytelling functions to ameliorate the pain of dying

clones. She is a good carer in that she is a good storyteller and a good soother.

However, it is only because she is good at mixing truths and lies that Kathy is

a good storyteller. While *Never Let Me Go* is written in a genre of memoir, Kathy's

obvious unreliability undermines the trustworthiness of the genre. Jerng also points

out this unreliability and argues Kathy's role as an unreliable clone narrator results

from her inability "to traverse the gap between what she knew and understood in the

past and what she knows and understand in the present" (385). This gap also

gradually extends as events in Kathy's memory become sporadic and contradictory;

she even intentionally hides some part of her memory to hide her emotions. Kathy's

narrative is full of details but at the same time elusive and deceptive.

Kathy's narrative describes Hailsham, by and large, as a utopian orphans'

commune, but she does not fully testify to what really happened at Hailsham.

Descriptions of incidents in Hailsham are porous, concealing uncanny secrets. For

example, in Hailsham, there is a mysterious activity among students called the

"Collection." In truth, the Collection hides the secret that Hailsham is an organ

factory. Though ostensibly living in a commune-style community, the students in

Hailsham are permitted to keep their individual collections. The collection itself is,

Kathy explains, "a "wooden chest with your name on it, which you kept under your

bed and filled with your possessions—the stuff you acquired from the Sales or the

Exchanges" (*Never* 38). In terms of a materialistic analogy, the box full of trinkets

metaphorically represents the student's body. Should the items be thrown away, the

box will be empty; likewise, the clones' bodies become husks without organs after the

completion of their donations. As Carroll interprets, the students' economic activity

"underlines the commodified status of their condition" (62). To put it more finely,

Madame, a mysterious lady who regularly visits Hailsham, collects students' artwork,

which also poignantly reflects the fate of the students whose organs will be

"collected"—in truth, harvested—in the end. Moreover, the physical collection also

signifies the psychological recollection—the box is filled with memories. Kathy and

other students store their items in the box just as they keep their memories in their

recollection; without this collection/recollection they will lose all of their past, their

identity, and their precious relationships each other. Contrasted with the students'

emotional attachment to their individual collections, the collection also symbolizes

the reification and objectification of their bodies as commercial products. This reveals

the sinister dystopian aspect of the utopian Hailsham.

To the extent that the students are compared with laborers, "Collection" in

Hailsham critiques the bio-economy and bio-politics[106] of the current world. In

another morbid example of connectivity between a mysterious word and clone's body,

students describe their injuries as "unzipping." When Tommy, a boy bullied by other

students because of his quick temper and bad taste of art, suffers from an accidental

gash on his arm, students start joking about the accident grotesquely, saying that the

skin in Tommy's body will open to let organs slide out, like "unzipping" a bag. Kathy

narrates:

> The Reason I was talking about all this was because the
> idea of things "unzipping" carried over from Tommy's
> elbow to become a running joke among us about the

---

[106] According to Negri and Hadt in *Empire*, in global bio-politics and bio-economy, people who possess only their bodies for unworthy work live by using their bodies. In many senses, Hailsham hides the dystopian side of the current bio-capitalism.

> donations. The idea was that when the time came, you'd be able just to unzip a bit of yourself, a kidney or something would slide out, and you'd hand it over. It wasn't something we found so funny in itself; it was more a way of putting each other off our food. You unzipped your liver, say, and dumped it on someone's plate, that sort of thing. (*Never* 87-8)

Perhaps Ishiguro is simply offering a macabre joke by the associating of the clones' organs with the food we human beings eat every day. This "unzipping," as a metaphor of opening a body stuffed with organs, suggests that a clone's skin is analogous to a plastic wrapper that protects precious organic products. It also satirically links the clones' organs with the organs of animals kept in a plastic wrapper that people buy and sell in supermarkets. Like executive managers in a meat factory, the guardians keep instructing the students to avoid any accident or injury because the main concern of the school is to provide a sustainable supply system of fresh intact human organs for the world outside Hailsham. The logic behind the utopian idea of providing student donors a "democratic" commune in Hailsham is an ideological apparatus that veils the dystopian super-capital system in which bodies are products.[107] Bio-politics is one focus of the novel which also critically reflects and acerbically criticizes the current global bio-capitalism; that is, within bio-politics, in the novel, the students as bio-objects can be collected, exchanged, and transacted in a similar way to how human organs cross the borders of the third world to the first world in the current global space. In truth, Hailsham is an organ factory or a camp where living products are raised for commercial purpose by human beings. This bio-politics in the form of a

---

[107] I call this system super-capital since it goes beyond the modern capitalistic system. In fact, within this bio-economic system, even human organs are valued as equivalent to corporeal capital whose significance is superimposed on the traditional meaning of capital established on the idea of the labor rather than the body.

bio-farm or bio-camp in an untimely space reflects our world in which objectification and reification have been critical terms to define the ontological situations of human beings in capitalism. In fact, Hailsham is not the utopia of Kathy's narrative but dystopian bio-camp.

Etymologically "Utopia" is "no-space" in Greek, which implies that utopia does exist in reality. In this sense, it can be said that utopia cannot be the space of truth, but just a space of untruth, provided that truth signifies the reality of dystopia. Hailsham is in the dialectics of dystopia and utopia based on the two-fold spatial essence of truth and untruth; the students believe that Hailsham is a utopia, but in truth it is a dystopian organ-farm. In turn, even if Hailsham is a dystopia in truth, it is also a utopia for human beings because human beings can live better and longer than before due to the systematic supply of fresh organs. Thus, the students can see the truth as beings-in-the-clones' world, but it will be concealed as soon as disclosed because they are subject to epistemological, ontological limits within the human beings' world. Initially, the world of clones coexists but contrasts with the world of human beings. Like Hailsham, the novel's illustrated "Norfolk" is a striking example of this coexistence of two different worlds within the dialectics of utopia and dystopia.

In a sense, Norfolk seems to be more utopian than Hailsham in that it does not seem to conceal a dystopian aspect. During Miss Emily's class about "different counties of England," (*Never* 64) Kathy, along with other students, gets curious about "a gap in Miss Emily's calendar collection" because "none of them had a single

picture of Norfolk" (65). Norfolk is mysterious space to both the students and the

readers. Kathy narrates:

> [Miss Emily] wave her pointer over the map and say, as a
> sort of afterthought: "And over here, we've got Norfolk.
> Very nice there …. [people] bypass it altogether. For that
> reason, it's a peaceful corner of England, rather nice. But
> it's also something of a lost corner." A lost corner. That's
> what she called it, and that was what started it. Because at
> Hailsham, we had our own "Lost Corner" up on the third
> floor, where the lost property was kept; if you lost or
> found anything, that's where you went. Someone—I can't
> remember who it was—claimed after the lesson that what
> Emily had said was that Norfolk was England's "lost
> corner," where all the lost property found in the country
> ended up. (*Never* 65-66)

Why does Miss Emily call Norfolk a "lost corner" and depict it as "peaceful corner of

England"? And, why do clones believe that this is the space where they will "find"

what they have "lost" but cannot recover right now? On one hand, Norfolk seems to

be a childish fantasy; Kathy confesses, "Sure enough, by the time we were twelve or

thirteen, the Norfolk thing had become a big joke" (*Never* 66). Or, it might be the

generic fantasy land because "at that stage in [the students'] lives, any place beyond

Hailsham was like a fantasy land" (66). On the other hand, the students

problematically believe in Norfolk "in the most literal way" because they believe that

anything "left behind in fields" would be collected in Norfolk. Because of this

function of Norfolk as a utopian lost-and-found, Ruth recalls later, "when we lost

something precious, and…we couldn't find it, then we didn't have to be completely

heartbroken. We still had that last bit of comfort, thinking one day, when we were

grown up, and we were free to travel around the country, we could always go and find

it again in Norfolk" (66). Norfolk signifies to the students that the freedom "lost" in Hailsham and may be "found" in the world out of Hailsham.

Interestingly, Norfolk is the space that signifies two different series of meanings for Miss Emily (or human beings in general) and the students. What is just a "lost" corner to Miss Emily is the space where "lost" objects can be "found" to clones; in the human beings' world, Norfolk is just a nostalgic space. On the contrary, to clones, Norfolk is a liminal space in that its signification embeds both the utopian fantasy of "found" and the dystopian reality of "lost" at the same time; indeed, Norfolk signifies the students' hidden desire for freedom. More ironically, what are found in Norfolk are not originals but replicas. For example, in the real Norfolk, when Kathy and Tommy "found another copy of that lost tape of [Kathy's]," and Tommy asks whether what they found is "the *actual* one" or not, Kathy answers, "I have to tell you, Tommy, there might be thousands of these knocking about" (*Never* 172). There is no "*actual* one" that Kathy lost. But, Kathy also paradoxically narrates, "[the tape] was mainly a nostalgia thing, and today, if I happen to get the tape out and look at it, it brings back memories of that afternoon in Norfolk every bit as much as it does our Hailsham days" (173). Paradoxically, the lost items reemerge and are found as replicas in real Norfolk, but their untruthful essence as a sham also contains the truthful lost memories of Hailsham.

Given that ontologically the students are tantamount to reproducible commercial objects without essence, Norfolk as a lost-and-found in Hailsham represents the morbid reality that the students as well as their memories and childhoods are objects that can be "lost" and later "found" as replicas. And, from this

perspective, the students ironically would not be free until they die. Through an inverted lens, Norfolk in truth can be seen as a landfill to which everything that is "left behind" or "completed" is delivered; likewise, the students' wishes and hopes as well as their bodies without organs are destined to be abandoned like their precious items. Though they look forward to finding what they lost, they will find only replicas. Norfolk embeds several paradoxes in terms of existence and knowledge. It is the space of objects and the space of memories; it is also the space of truth as well as the space of false copies. It is the space of truth and the space of illusion; but, it is the destination where clones will discover at last that they cannot be free until they die. Why does Norfolk open only to clones? Is it because this space belongs to clone's world? Why is the clone's world different from the human beings' world? All these questions center on the uncanny encounter of the human being and clone worlds. This question leads to the question of true humanity.

Paradoxes of Uncanny beings and Uncanny Truths

Much science fiction compares aliens to social outcasts. And, most of these instances of science fictions have asked the same questions—what is true humanity and what will the future of humanity be? How can we determine who is human and who is not human? A possible answer is that humanity depends on a representational system, according to what kinds of beings can be categorized as humanity.[108] But this categorization is always arbitrary and violently exclusive. Reflecting these aspects of

---

[108] To deconstruct these systems of discriminative humanity, Donna Haraway, with an ironic intent, wrote "A manifesto for cyborgs: science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s," and attacks an ontological representation system that discriminates humanity from inhumanity through a "science" that deems some privileged groups as true human beings. See Haraway, especially 13.

a representation system of humanity, *Never Let Me Go* reveals differential relations

between humanity and inhumanity. For example, to surprise Madame, the students

make a plan to suddenly rush up to her. As soon as Madame sees them, she "was

afraid of [students] in the same way someone might be afraid of spiders" (35). After

the students witnessed this unexpected reaction from Madame, they burst into tears.

This scene critically shows that the students were disappointed not only because they

realize their ontological difference but more painfully that such difference is bad to let

Madam to be scared. Kathy muses upon the reason of Madame's fear:

> So you're waiting, even if you don't quite know it, waiting
> for the moment when you realize that you really are
> different to them; that there are people out there, like
> Madame, who don't hate you or wish you any harm, but
> who nevertheless shudder at the very thought of you—of
> how you were brought into this world and why—and who
> dread the idea of your hand brushing against theirs. The
> first time you glimpse yourself through the eyes of a
> person like that, it's a cold moment. (*Never* 36).

Kathy speculates that Madame, like other human beings, shudders because she

happens to gaze into students' origin or essence. Madame may consider touching

these unnatural beings as taboo. Human beings might not hate or wish to do any harm

to the clones, but they feel ontological anxiety as soon as they truly gaze at these

beings whose origin and essence is unnatural. If so, is Madame's fright merely due to

the difference of their origin, the idea that they are unnatural creatures unnaturally

created, as Kathy supposes? Maybe or maybe not. To Madame, clones may be

dangerous "animals" not because they might attack her but because they are a taboo

that must not be touched. And, they are taboo precisely because they represent

something too "akin" to humanity. Ontological unfamiliarity on the surface hides an abysmal ontological familiarity.

In his writing on uncanny, Freud lays out the etymological ambivalence of the word: uncanny, in German *das Unheimliche,* means secret and unfamiliar but it also paradoxically shares the meaning of the antonym— *das Unheimliche* (familiar, tame). Upon this etymological explanation, Freud, interpreting Hoffmann's story, "The Sand-Man", claims that an uncanny feeling emerges when a familiar infantile wish for an inanimate object to become animate comes true in reality or in fiction. In some sense, clones replace human beings' unactualized childhood fantasy of animated objects posing as their double.[109] Clones are animate dolls in a sense. But, ironically, human beings feel anxiety or angst when they really encounter something revived after it was "lost" and was forgotten a long time ago.

Paradoxically, just as human beings wish to live as permanent children,[110] clones do because they die before they get old. In this regard, Kathy narrates, "I'm sure somewhere in your childhood, you too had an experience like ours that day; similar if not in the actual details, then inside, in the feelings" (*Never* 36). As she narrates, Kathy represents human beings' lost childhood. It is possible that the world outside Hailsham is a dystopia where children do not exist at all, given that all human characters in the novel are adults. Regardless, clones represent what has been forgotten and lost—the innocent childhoods of human beings. However, this similarity brings about *das unheimlich* (unfamiliarity, mystery)which is also *heimlich* (familiarity) because, by this comparison, the threshold of humanity and inhumanity

---

[109] See Freud, "The Uncanny," (141).
[110] Interestingly, Ishiguro in an interview points out how children are "almost worshipped as precious things and everything must be done for them" (Bigsby 17).

becomes blurred. Subsequently an uncanny mood reverberates throughout whole novel, raising existential questions about clones and human beings and the meaning of the epistemological, ontological truth itself; that is, are clones just false beings? Are they the incarnation of the uncanny dreams of human beings? If utopia hides dystopia and familiarity hides unfamiliarity, doesn't truth also hide untruth?

From a philosophical perspective, Heidegger claims that the essence of truth for Being is freedom, and the mood or attunement for Being is uncanny angst, which sheds light on the obscure world of *Never Let Me Go*. Heidegger, in his "On the Essence of Truth," says, "the openness of comportment as the inner condition of the possibility of correctness is grounded in freedom. The essence of truth is freedom" (123). Why freedom? Because the essence of freedom is "Letting-be" beings, which is etymologically linked with the term *aletheia*—truth in Greek—that also means disclosure (Heidegger, *Basic Writings* 125). For free beings, truth is the disclosure as what they are. However, "because truth is in essence freedom, historical man can, in letting beings be, also not let beings be the beings which they are and as they are. Then beings are covered up and distorted. Semblance comes to power. In it the nonessence of truth comes to the fore" (Heidegger, *Basic Writings* 127).

What Heidegger claims is complex, but it is clear that historical man intervenes in the disclosure of the truth by concealing it under semblance or sham. More paradoxically, though unfamiliarity and mystery are the nonessence of truth, truth is not only the familiar whole of beings but also the unfamiliar mystery that "points to the still unexperienced domain of the truth of Being (not merely of beings)" (Heidegger, *Basic Writings* 131). Historical man is susceptible to untruth primordially

since he is erring and "astray in errancy" (Heidegger, *Basic Writings* 133), which suggests that this man is always on a journey to find the truth out of errancy. Only through this condition of errancy can Dasein be free to disclose the truth. The truth is not only epistemological but ontological enough to let beings be themselves. Men always try to understand the truth in the world in terms of correctness and are always subject to error, yet this errancy is paradoxically the chance for men to renew their standards.

In the novel, Kathy and Tommy pursue the truth like detectives, but their journey for the truth starts from mystery and errancy. For example, Kathy doesn't understand when Tommy discloses to Kathy what he heard from Miss Lucy—the ontological truth that they are clones. However, recalling Tommy's revelation later, Kathy observes, "if these incidents now seem full of significance and all of a piece, it's probably because I'm looking at them in the light of what came later— particularly what happened that day at the pavilion..."(*Never* 79). What Kathy does, as the narrator, is also to recall her fragmentary memories and present a big picture of truth. Truth remains undisclosed until the epiphany of "letting beings be," which in the novel means letting clones be clones themselves without being captivated under errancy and mystery, is manipulated by the organ-harvesting system.

Notably, truth is to be concealed as soon as it is disclosed, and this is part of reason why the students cannot achieve the essence of truth—freedom. For example, when Miss Lucy discloses the truth, students did not react because they were afraid of being awakened from their utopian dream. Miss Lucy discloses:

> "The problem, as I see it, is that you've been told and not
> told. You've been told, but none of you really understand,

and I dare say, some people are quite happy to leave it that way. None of you will go to America, none of you will be film stars….You were brought to this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them, have been decided….If you're to have decent lives, you have to know how you are and what lies ahead of you, every one of you." (*Never* 81)

Miss Lucy reveals the truth that all students' wishes for their future are shams and that the students are destined to donate organs and then to be terminated; nonetheless, the students endeavor to dismiss these truths. Rather, the students respond to Miss Lucy's appalling revelation listlessly and "were pretty relieved when she turned to look out over the playing field again" (*Never* 81). After the disclosure, among the students; "there was surprisingly little discussion about what she'd said. If it did come up, people tended to say: "Well so what? We already knew all that." (82). Why does Miss Lucy say that the students are "told and not told" the truth and why do the students pretend not to listen to the truth? Why do the students ironically say that they already knew the truth? In answer to these questions, Tommy explains later "[I] thought it possible the guardians had, throughout all years at Hailsham, timed very carefully and deliberately everything they told, so that we were always just too young to understand properly the latest piece of information. But of course we'd take it in at same level, so that before long all this stuff was there in our heads, without us ever having examined it properly" (82).

As Tommy speculates, the truth might have been distorted and manipulated too systematically and sophisticatedly for students to realize its signification. However, if what Kathy recalls is correct, students might have been afraid of the truth. The truth is like the glaring sun which everyone avoids looking at directly in

fear of going blind, even though it gives freedom as a reward. Though the students

dimly know that they are destined to be butchered for the sake of human beings, they

do not commit suicide or resist the system, not only because they have been

indoctrinated to the guardians' ideas, but also because they don't want to wake up

from their mystified dreams and illusions. The students, including Kathy, decide to

remain intoxicated to the utopian dream of the world where they become movie stars

or supermarket workers, avoiding discovering the truth that all these dreams are false.

The more they deny facing the truth, the less free they become, and the more students

remain captivated under the power of untruth. However hard the clones try to live

under untruthful illusions, the truth waits in the open to be disclosed at any moment.

Another event of mystery and errancy make it possible for Kathy and Tommy

to look for truth. This mystery stems from Kathy's uncanny encounter with Madame.

One day, a young Kathy, alone in her dormitory, dances to the music while pretending

to cradle an imaginary baby. Sensing the gaze of a person behind her, Kathy finds

Madam standing outside in the hallway, watching her dancing. Kathy glimpses in

Madame's eyes "something else, something extra in that look I couldn't fathom" (72).

Confronted with this gaze, Kathy feels as though she is being scrutinized by

omnipresent eyes that "can see right inside" (73). Kathy narrates:

> I froze in shock. Then within a second or two, I began to feel a new kind of alarm, because I could see there was something strange about the situation. The door was almost half open…but Madame hadn't nearly come up to the threshold. She was out in the corridor, standing very still, her head angled to one side to give her a view of what I was doing inside. And the odd thing was she was crying. (*Never* 71)

Kathy feels uncanny when she sees Madame crying in front of her. At this moment,

Kathy feels that she wakes up from the dream and faces the truth. Also, Madame does

not come across the threshold. The threshold signifies the thin line that separates two

different worlds of two different kinds of beings. Crossing the threshold is dangerous

and intimidating to both Madame and Kathy because crossing can compromise and

eradicate the anthropological, ontological differences that make it possible for their

two different worlds to exist at the same time and in the same space. The structure of

the gaze between Madame and Kathy is interactive, not unilateral. In response to

Madame's reaction, Kathy also feels an uncanny shudder against Madame and

speculates on the reason for Madame's fear. Interestingly, in this exchange, each party

sees something in the other's gaze. And, this interaction serves to "jerk [Kathy] out of

[her] dream,"—the moment of (un)canny disillusionment which discloses the truth

across the threshold between two different worlds. Madame's shudder and Kathy's

feeling of strangeness happen simultaneously because of this moment of truth.

However, the truth is prone to be veiled by limited knowledge. For example,

when Kathy shares this occurrence with Tommy, he presents his version of truth;

"Madame's probably not a bad person, even though she's creepy. So when she saw

you dancing like that, holding your baby, she thought it was really tragic, how you

couldn't have babies. That's why she started crying" (*Never* 73). Tommy assumes

Madame felt sympathy for clones' infertility. But, when Kathy and Tommy visit

Madame years later, Madame reveals her truth of what she felt:

> I saw something else. I saw a new world coming rapidly. More
> scientific, efficient, yes. More cures for the old sickness. Very
> good. But a harsh, cruel world. And I saw a little girl, her eyes
> tightly closed, holding to her breast the old kind world, one that

she knew in her heart could not remain, and she was holding it
and pleading, never to let her go. (*Never* 272)

Madame's elaboration of her truth resounds with Benjamin's understanding of

Angelus Novus in "On the concept of History" (392). Benjamin allegorically

interprets Klee's angel of history as resisting the wind from the past and looking to

the past with eyes opened wide with sadness. Correspondingly, Madame envisions

Kathy standing against an upcoming apocalypse with nostalgic affection for the

former, kind world. In Madame's imagination, Kathy, like the angel of history, is

forced to move from the lost paradise—Hailsham—into the future, though her own

future is already destined. Madame speculates that Kathy, like Madame herself, must

irresistibly detach herself from the fragmented memories of the past, while gazing at

the heap of "lost" friends, love, childhood, etc. This is the truth of Madame's

shudder—she shudders and feels uncanny when she encounters a clone dancing to

nostalgic music because she envisions the future of the clones' world as more human

than the world of human beings. Kathy is bound to misunderstand Madame's uncanny

reaction because of the errancy in their relationship in the ontological representation

system itself. Still, truth is uncanny and Kathy's misinterpretation furnishes a way to

find the truth. As soon as Madame's secret is revealed, familiarity changes into

unfamiliarity just as Benjamin's angel of history changes into a clone that is a

futuristic, scientific being.

In other words, Kathy is a non-human Dasein who can project herself into the

future and death. Kathy is also a permanent child who, as an animate doll, encounters

human beings as an incarnation of the lost wishes they once had. The paradox of the

uncanny mirrors the paradox of truth and untruth. Reflecting on the news that

Hailsham is closed, Kathy recalls a foreboding incident:

> Then after a while a van pulled up, maybe thirty yards ahead of me, and a man got out dressed as a clown. He opened the back of the van and took out a bunch of helium balloons, about a dozen of them, and for a moment, he was holding the balloons, while he bent down and rummaged about in his vehicle with the other. As I came closer, I could see the balloons had faces and shaped ears, and they looked like a little tribe, bobbing in the air above their owner …So we just kept walking, the clown and me, on and on along the deserted pavement still wet from the morning, and all the time the balloons were bumping and grinning down at me. Every so often, I could see the man's fist, where all the balloon strings converged, and I could see he had them securely twisted together and in a tight grip. Even so, I kept worrying that one of the strings would come unraveled and a single balloon would sail off up into the cloudy sky. Lying awake that night… thought about Hailsham closing, and how it was like someone coming along with a pair of shears and snipping the balloon string just where they entwined above the man's fist. Once that happened, there'd be no real sense in which those balloons belonged with each other anymore. (*Never* 212-13)

First and foremost, why does Kathy *worry* about a balloon? The meaning of this

allegory is not obvious, but Kathy's nightmare thoughts suggest the balloons are

clones whose lives are under the clown's control. As plastic bodies without organs,

the balloons represent clones' bodies without organs. The balloons smile artificially

and disappear once they deflate; likewise, the clones die after they are disemboweled.

Hence, the balloons are interpreted as clones/objects without spiritual essence or

organs, simulacra whose ontological foundation is merely to copy human faces. The

clown may represent Hailsham or a bio-economic system that uses them for

commercial purposes. In this context, the parking lot is a Kafkaresque space in which utopian wishes turns into sick jokes.

However, in this allegory, Kathy's position is paradoxical. Kathy emotionally sympathizes with the balloons in two ways. On the one hand, Kathy, sympathizes with "a" balloon, worrying if "one of the strings would come unraveled and a single balloon would sail off up into the cloudy sky"; she *worries* or feels anxiety over the situation in which only "one" balloon is set free. On the other hand, Kathy sympathizes with all balloons collectively, and worries that all the balloons remain in captivity without having a chance to be free. With such conflicting sympathies, Kathy reveals that she fears being the one free balloon left alone; thus, she hopes that the whole bio-economic system, including Hailsham, will not let her go free alone or die alone. On the other hand, she also wishes that she, together with all the other students, would be set free from captivity. In this regard, Kathy knows well that the time of her own existential choice is at hand. Death is set for her; thus, she knows that she has to make a resolution to die alone or live alone with all her friends gone. In other words, she has to choose between the two-fold wishes of "*never let me go*," which hides paradoxical wish of "*let them go*" and "*never let them go*," which hides the third meaning of "let me go." The threefold allegory reveals that the truth for Kathy is paradoxical; Kathy can choose to become donor and die like the other friends for whom she has cared, or she can choose to live to see others dying. The paradox deepens because of paradox of freedom; Kathy can be free only to the extent that she chooses to die. In the end, Kathy chooses to die and become free to reveal the truth; her narrative is a testimony before she dies.

Heidegger explains this uncanny relation of freedom, truth, and resolution in his "What is metaphysics?" This short philosophical essay starts with questions about the relations between (human) beings and science. Heidegger, claiming that (modern) "Man—one being among others—"pursue science," elaborates that, "What should be examined are beings only, and besides that—nothing; beings alones, and further—nothing; solely beings, and beyond that—nothing" (*Basic Writings* 95). Heidegger's ontological questions start from "nothingness" which science cannot explain. Heidegger suggests that such fundamental moods, such as boredom or angst, irrupt because of this nothingness and whole of beings in indistinguishability (*Basic Writings* 101). "It" which makes a person feel uncanny is nothing's world. While nothing hides every being under it, things "turn toward" human beings; in this existential event, Dasein, as an errant being that lost his or her home, faces nothingness and reveals the truth.

This idea of the uncanny anxiety of Dasein in terms of nothing clarifies the stakes of the allegory of the clown and the balloon. More or less, if the clown lets the balloons go, they will hover free in the air as pure Dasein. This is the authentic way Dasein achieves its freedom; freedom originates from disclosing the truth that "Being itself is essentially finite and reveals itself only in the transcendence of Dasein which is held out into the nothing" (*Basic Writings* 108). Truth, at the first glance, though painful to accept and causing anxiety, is uncanny and makes it possible for a being to be free. Kathy sympathizes with the free balloons, and then feels anxiety about the possibility that she will be left alone. Kathy does not have a home or the origin of her childhood memories. In the allegory, clones are entangled under the control of the

clown where they "linger in tranquillized familiarity" enchanted by shams, running away from their ontological situation of "not-being-at-home," ignoring the uncanny situation (*Being and Time* 177). However, though artificially "grinning down at" Kathy, the balloons secretly wish to be set free and remain in the uncanny nothingness in the air. Now, it is time to be disentangled from the clown's grip and to be set free to hover in the air facing nothingness—namely, death and truth. Therefore, Kathy realizes that she also "might now have to act on pretty soon or else let them go forever" (*Never* 213). Kathy ultimately decides to accept becoming existentially alone by accepting the scheduled death in order to be free.

At the second glance, another irony intervenes into this authentic, existential resolution because Kathy is a product of science—namely, a scientific creature without an ontological foundation of existentiality or any possibility of becoming Dasein, technically speaking. In this paradoxical context, all the questions that Heidegger asks of uncanniness and nothingness reveal the truth of the scientific existential meaning of non-human Dasein. Heidegger concludes his article by reflecting on the first question he asked about scientific existence and emphasizes the need for the metaphysical study of Being, nothing, and truth.[111] This claim gains an uncanny mood when it is applied to the clone's world, because clones, which exist on the same level as animals and soulless objects in the Heideggerian world, cannot "be" Dasein since they have different world, and are not authentic beings. Both Kathy's existential decision to become a donor and Tommy's quest for the truth are meaningless in the Heideggerian world. It is because they are beings without an

---

[111] Heidegger claims, "The presumed soberness of mind and superiority of science become laughable when it does not take the nothing seriously…Only because the nothing is manifest can science make beings themselves objects of investigation." (*Basic Writings* 109)

origin/original. Undeniably, clones are the "scientific existence" *par excellence*. They are, at best, just commercial products or copies without original. This paradox deconstructs the hidden contradiction between original and copy that has been prevalent from the beginning of Western metaphysics, Plato's hierarchization of Being, copy, and simulacra.

The Original and the Simulacra

Never Let Me Go parodies the allegorical parable in the *Republic*: Hailsham is Plato's cave where prisoners are chained so that they cannot see the truths outside of the cave but are instead forced to accustom their eyes and ears to see and hear only images and words, namely simulacra, from the shadows within the cave. For instance, when the students moved to the Cottages after graduating from Hailsham, they went through adolescence pretending that they were normal human beings by doing what they learned by TV programs. Kathy narrates how the veterans there imitated what they observed human actors doing on TV: "I began to notice all kinds of other things the veteran couples had taken from TV programs: the way they gestured to each other, sat together on sofas, even the way they argued and stormed out of rooms" (*Never* 121). Obviously, the students have no access to any information about what human adolescents are doing in the real human world except through media.

Like the prisoners in the *Republic* who believe that the shadows on the wall are real, the images and stories on TV become reality and set guidelines for students' behaviors. Kathy points out how they are just mimicking shadowy images by claiming, "Anyway that's not how it works in real families. You don't know anything

about it" (124). Ruth, like other prisoners in the parable, does not want to open her eyes wide and denies Kathy's claim. However, the students are not just looking at the shadowy images like prisoners in Plato's cave but they are also as shadowy beings, simulacra themselves; clones live "back in the shadow" (265). In Plato's hierarchical system of representation of originals and copies, there are differences between copies and copies of copies that are bad copies or bad pretenders because they are too far distanced from the original essence. Plato calls the bad copies simulacra; they do not have an ontological foundation since they badly pretend to be good and beautiful.[112] Simulacra are ephemeral, false, and immoral. This is related to the students' mixed feeling about their "original" or "possibles"

The students refer to their gene-parents as "possibles"; and Kathy relates, "when you saw the person you were copied from, you'd get some insight into who you were deep down, and maybe too, you'd see something of what your life held in store" (*Never* 140). The students, including Kathy, cannot help but be curious about their gene-parents just like orphans who wonder about the identity of their true parents. During a discussion with other students about their "possibles", Kathy explains, "since each of us was copied at some point form a normal person, there must be, for each of us, somewhere out there, a model getting on with his or her life" (139). The students regarded these possibles as the normal models, and themselves implicitly as copies from these originals. Hearing a veteran's rumor that Ruth's possible looks exactly like her and exists in Norfolk, Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy

---

[112] In Plato's philosophical sphere, " it is superior identity of the Idea which found the good pretension of the copies, as it bases it on an internal or derived resemblance …[simulacra] pretend to underhandedly, under cover of an aggression, an insinuation, a subversion, "against the father, and without passing through the Idea" (Deleuze, *Difference* 257).

accompany veterans to Norfolk to look for Ruth's possible. There they find a woman who looks like Ruth's double working in an office. The possible seems to come straight out of Ruth's dream in which she is working as an office clerk; thus, Ruth gets really enthusiastic about what they have found. But, "the more [the students] heard her and looked at her, the less she seemed like Ruth" (163); in fact, eventually they realize that the office woman was not Ruth's possible. Feeling depressed and abject, Ruth deplores, "We're modeled from *trash*. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren't psychos. That's what we come from. We all know it, so why don't we say it? A woman like that? Come on…If you want to look for possible, if you want to do it properly, then you look in the gutter. You look in rubbish bins. Look down the toilet, that's where you'll find where we all came from" (166). According to Plato's representational system of ideals and copies, though clones "exist" as simulacra, they do not "exist" as beings with essence in the world of human beings. As Ruth claims, the students might be bad copies of the unprivileged social minority; and, they might be non-existent habitants in the world of simulacra. Besides, as Britzman asserts, this conversion of simulacra and the originals corresponds with the untimely space of Hailsham because the students believe that their gene-parents determine the future of their lives (316).

Ruth's claim casts ontological questions about the *raison d'être* of clones, specifically the relation between original and copy. In accordance with Ruth's hypothesis, the clones are rubbish entities in the ontological hierarchy since they are bad copies of bad models. Maybe, their memories and existential meanings lie in heaps of junk. Even that which constitutes their identities and memories is regarded

as rubbish. For example, when Ruth arrives at the Cottage, she decides to throw away her collection because she finds out that the veterans do not have their own collections any more. When Ruth throws her items in a bin bag, she "couldn't stand the idea of putting them out with rubbish." So, Ruth asks old Keffers, who is a human groundkeeper of the Cottage, to take the bag to a charity shop instead. But, later Ruth says that those items should be in "some bin somewhere" (*Never* 131). Ruth's collection symbolizes her precious memories and even her body without organs; by extension, Ruth's body and memories are on the same level as rubbish.

On the contrary, Kathy argues that models of simulacra do not exist. Kathy disagrees with the idea of possibles as their models because "Our models were an irrelevance, a technical necessity for bringing us into the world, nothing more than that" (*Never* 140). Kathy fundamentally challenges Plato's ontological hierarchy and poses an anti-Platonic ontology some postmodern philosophers have proposed. For example, according to Gilles Deleuze or Jean Baudrillard, the non-existence and non-ontological-foundation makes it possible for simulacra to have subversive power. Deleuze especially argues against Plato's ontological hierarchy of Ideal, good copy and bad copy (simulacra), saying that "the copy of the copy, cut off from reference to a model, puts into a question about the model-copy system as a whole, and confronts it with a world of pure simulacrum" (Roffe 241). Deleuze claims that Plato's ontological hierarchy is founded on a representation system that determines the worth of something by how similar or the same it is as the Idea; but, the simulacra do not have any reference to the world or the model; rather, they constitute the reality.[113] For

---

[113] Deleuze interprets that the models or Ideas do not exist but only simulacra come up to the surface to form identities of beings. In the same vein, emphasizing power of simulacra to subvert the Plato's

this reason, Deleuze posits that simulacrum has potentiality enough to subvert Plato's

ontological hierarchy, not only because it cannot be reconciled by the categories of

the same or the similar which inevitably downgrade simulacra to rubbish, but also

because it is based on the world of Others. Without similarity to the model or

originals, existing only within the world of Other, simulacra escape from Plato's

ontological hierarchy and remain free. Ruth's idea of bad copies of bad models,

which represents Plato's ontological system, contrasts with Kathy's arguments that

the students are clones without any relation to the originals; that is, no student can

find his or her original in the world. Kathy and other students acknowledge that in the

world of simulacra without models, "it was up to each of us to make of our lives what

we could" (140). Ironically, the most primordial being is someone who is at the

lowest position in the ontological hierarchy.

Correspondingly, Tommy also says: "I don't see how it matters. Even if you

found your possible, the actual model they got you from. Even then, I don't see what

difference it makes to anything." (*Never* 165). Nothing matters since they are

simulacra in the world of simulacra. Thus, if they can be free from the idea of model

or original within the Plato's representation system, clones will be free entities—like

balloons in the air set free from any representational system or ontological hierarchy.

Only by reaching this condition can the clones get out of their nostalgic wish and

wake up from their dreams. The subversion of the Platonic ontological hierarchy is

significant in the actual world as well because it reflects the contemporary world

---

ontological system, Deleuze claims, "The simulacrum is built upon a disparity or upon difference. It internalizes a dissimilarity. This is why we can no longer define it in relation to a model imposed on the copies, a model of the Same from which the copies' resemblance derives. If the simulacrum still has a model, it is another model, a model of the Other (*l'Autre*) from which there flows an internalized dissemblance" (*Difference* 258).

where Others are regarded as non-humans or inhuman beings, such as prisoners in concentration camps or clinically-defined vegetables on life support. However, the clown, a system, holds the strings and prevents the students being set free. Systems in which Hailsham exists and Madame and Miss Emily manipulate the students' memories, wishes, and ideas sustain Plato's ontological hierarchy in terms of humanity.

All in all, clones, in accordance to this ontological hierarchy, are things without origin/originals—ontologically homeless beings. Their thingness itself is uncanny since it emerges in "nothing." With the standard slipping away, the clones—balloons—will hover free in nothing. But, this freedom does not guarantee happiness to Kathy and the students because it leaves them alone to face nothingness, in other words death. Kathy's decision reveals the truth of the world where the anthropological machine operates. The truth is not only in Kathy's wish of "Never Let Me Go" as the dilemma of truth and untruth as well as freedom and captivity. Broader social truth of an anthropological machine that embeds colonialism and imperialism is the second level of this chapter.

Anthropological Machine and Apparatus of Clone-cide

Post-graduation, Kathy and Tommy seek out Miss Emily and Madame at a Victorian house to ascertain the truth of rumors that clone couples may secure a deferral. If their artwork proves that they are a true love match, they may postpone their donations. Here, Kathy and Tommy discover another side of the truth. Miss Emily reveals that their education, including art education that has been to prove the

clones' humanity, a similar premise of colonial education apparatuses. When Kathy and Tommy state their desire for a deferral, Madame calls them "poor creatures," and explains that she has no power to grant it. Outraged at her hypocritical answer, Tommy cries out, "Why did we do all of that work in the first place? Why train us, encourage us, make us produce all of that? If we're just going to give donations anyway, then die, why all those lessons? Why all those books and discussions?" (*Never* 259).

In response, Miss Emily reveals a partial history of Hailsham and her initiative of a pseudo-humanitarian movement. The clone business started in the early fifties when "there wasn't time to take stock, to ask the sensible questions because it provided new possibilities…to cure so many previously incurable conditions" (*Never* 262). At that time, "people preferred to believe these organs appeared from nowhere, or at most that they grew in a kind of a vacuum" (262). For the clones' sake, Miss Emily and Madame endeavored to change the idea that clones are less human than human beings. Miss Emily adds, "Hailsham was considered a shining beacon, an example of how we might move to a more humane and better way of doing things" (258). They built Hailsham and other camp systems under the camouflage of educational facilities not only to prove that these creatures had the capability to learn and possess souls, but also to find a way to harvest organs from clones in a more humane way than previously. Miss Emily and Madame were leaders of this clone-tarian movement.

Yet Miss Emily also confesses that she was afraid of the students: "We're all afraid of you. I myself had to fight back my dread of you all almost every day I was at

Hailsham…But I was determined not to let such feelings stop me doing what was right. I fought those feelings and I won" (*Never* 269). Interestingly, in her confession, such emotional reactions as pity and knowledge contradict each other; though Miss Emily has tried to suppress her dread and fear of the clones in order to prove her idea of clones as beings with souls, she could not suppress uncanny feeling in response to these living dolls. Miss Emily represents the radical idealistic demagogue/intellectual who tries to disregard the hypocrisy that is latent in her movements in history. For example, a young Kathy recalls witnessing Miss Emily, in a classroom alone, "pacing slowly, talking under her breath, pointing and directing remarks to an invisible audience in the room" (45). Though Miss Emily recognizes that Kathy is gazing at her, she naturally "turned away to fix her gaze on some other imaginary student in another part of the room" (45). Miss Emily's gaze reveals the truth of her world. In Miss Emily's world, the clones are non-existents; they are primordially invisible. Miss Emily only idealizes clones as an uncivilized tribe that is supposed to need the humanitarian help and education to prove their souls. Miss Emily's blank eyes in response to Kathy standing before her reveal that she does not have any interest in actual clones' lives; at best, she has just tried to prove that her idea is right. In Heidegger's scheme discussed earlier, she is the scientific modern man who perpetrates errancy via her reason and science.

Indeed, Miss Emily is a prototype of an anthropologist who treats real clones not as live beings but as a control group for her experiment. Miss Emily's idealistic stance reflects the modern discourses of the humanities and social sciences, especially modern anthropology. Humanities and social science have tried to differentiate

themselves as more ethical than the hard sciences such as biology or physics. Nonetheless, soft sciences have been complicit with the hard sciences for political purposes, as the case of eugenics during the early twentieth century illustrates.

However, given the more miserable conditions in which the clones were situated before Hailsham opened, has not Miss Emily's project at least been helpful to the students? According to Madame and Miss Emily, clones from Hailsham were in a much happier situation than other clones in the world. The students in Hailsham are just a control group for the social experiment that represents other clones in the world. Miss Emily, after her project turns out to be a failure and the schools she had run closed, defends her initial intentions by saying that "we challenged the entire way the donations program was being run. Most importantly, we demonstrated to the world that if students were reared in humane, cultivated environments, it as possible from them to grow to be a sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human being" (*Never* 260). Miss Emily's ideas reflect and therefore challenge the modern idea of education as a system that aims to enlighten insensitive and unintelligent bare lives to make them civilized, sensible beings.

Besides, Miss Emily and Madame have been part of the anthropological machine that works to discern the human from inhuman. Though the students' situation is better than that of the other clones, they are deprived of a chance to resist the system. Form an ethical standpoint, Miss Emily's project was bound to fail from the first because she tried to prove the existence of the clones' soul not to free them but to use them. In applying to the clones criteria that have been used to determine who possesses humanity, they could not avoid failure. Miss Emily and Madame, with

or without intention, have inhibited the clones from discovering the truth of the system; their knowledge is complicit in the power generated by operating the anthropological machine. If Miss Emily and Madame tried to convince people of clones' humanity, they disprove that clone essence is similar to the essence of humanity, as I argued before. All these propositions are shams if the quality of humanity cannot be determined by the presence of a soul. Maybe, one's will and material conditions determine the essence of humanity and the arts.

Finally, Miss Emily acknowledges this paradox and reluctantly admits, "We were virtually attempting to square the circle. Here was the world, requiring students to donate. While that remained the case, there would always be a barrier against seeing you as properly human" (*Never* 263). Regardless of their initial intentions, the "humanitarian" guardians run Hailsham as a way of isolating those unnatural creatures from human world. In the outside world, visible and invisible fences were built around clones to protect not only clones but also human beings. Inclusion is at the same time exclusion in that clones are excluded from human society while becoming obsessive about living together with other clones; thus, clones never let other clones go. The system has kept the collectivity of clones by incarcerating them in enclaves to prevent collective revolts against human society. The anthropological machine teaches clones to learn to not demand that they be treated equally as human beings. They are educated to accept that they are essentially different from human beings and to resign themselves to their fates.

In this sense, the idea of the fair treatment of clones is just an ideology for maintaining inhuman operations. By and large, the Hailsham guardians have never

been managers of the system or revolutionaries; they are at best gatekeepers rather than lords of the castle. Thus, Tommy was right when he said, "[t]here's probably people higher up than [Madame], people who never set foot in Hailhsam" (*Never* 177). This relation between knowledge and power creates the discourse used to justify various oppressions of minorities throughout history. With help of such activists/scientists, colonizers collected artworks and cultural products from the native tribes, and then they held exhibitions to show that these bare lives are not animals. Missionaries and anthropologists tried to prove that people of "exotic cultures" needed civilization, without which their bare lives could not attain their humanity. Though Miss Emily claims that her project is innocent and ethical because she and her colleagues tried to save those unnatural beings from "existing only to supply medical science" or as "shadowy objects in test tubes" (*Never* 261), it is questionable whether there is much difference between Miss Emily's project and systems before and after her movement. From the beginning, clones have been guinea pigs in the test tube under the utopian excuse of a humanitarian project.

Yet, there is a moral lesson in this, so to speak, as Miss Emily explains the public's support and attention for Hailsham was "swept away" because of the Morningsdale scandal. A typical crazy scientist, Morningsdale, "offer[ed] people the possibility of having children with enhanced characteristics… [he]'d taken his research much further than anyone before him, far beyond legal boundary" (*Never* 264-5). The idea that "a generation of created children who'd take [people's] place in society…[c]hildren demonstrably superior to the rest of [human beings]" (265) scared people, who feared the eradication of difference between inhuman clones and

humans. If clones were able to reproduce, the anthropological machine that operates

to differentiate human from inhuman grinds to a halt. Though educating the

colonized, slave, and lower classes in actual history, the colonizers, slaveholders, and

elites never believed that those inhuman animals could be better than themselves.

These beliefs came, however, not so much from the belief in the colonists' own

superiority as from a fear of similarity. In this regard, eugenics scientifically disguised

the fear that minorities might assume the power the social majority possessed. The

seemingly unreasonable, inhuman idea of ethnic cleansing originates from the

reasonable fear that those inhuman beings might have humanity.

Analogously, after Hailsham closes down, a more brutal future than Miss

Emily claims awaits the clones. The anthropological machine now deprives the clones

of even utopian fantasy. But as we have seen in the allegory of clown and balloon, it

is also possible that the future will open better chances of change. Given the allegory

of Plato's cave, the closedown of Hailsham destroys the cave. The clones "escape,"

opening two future possibilities—they go blind like the long incarcerated in Plato's

cave or they find ways to resist the system. Modern humanitarian projects prove that

ideological fantasy gives way to revelations which offers the potential for revolutions

and changes. As Miss Lucy claimed, clones need to face the truth for better, freer

futures. When Tommy protests with this issue, Madame admits: "Yes, in many ways

we *fooled* you…but we sheltered you during those years, and we gave you your

childhoods…knowing what lay in store for each of you…You would have told us it

was all pointless, and how could we have argued with you" (*Never* 268). Madame

cannot let go the idea that they gave the clones decent lives and the chance to become

human even temporarily. But clones might not need to be limited to humanity. Clones have a chance to build their own community with different ideas. The pedagogical ideals of Madame and Miss Emily are to enchant the students with the ideological fantasy of utopian self-development rather than to let them face the truth. As Miss Lucy claims, what intellectuals and activists had to do is to demystify the students' fantasies, let open their eyes to the truth, and let them be free.

Significantly, Kathy and Tommy realize that their privileged selection concealed elsewhere those "students being reared in deplorable conditions, conditions…Hailsham students could hardly imagine…living in "vast government 'homes,' which if a clone saw, he or she will not sleep for days" (*Never* 261, 265). There are real Others in the world that the Hailsham students cannot represent, those Other clones raised and butchered like animals more brutally. The muted voices of real Others underlie the voices of students.

Kathy and the other students could not let their memories and friends go since they were "fearful of the world around" (*Never* 120) them. To be outside Hailsham means to awaken to the fearful nightmare where real Others, real Agamben's *Muselmanns*, are dying and bearing witness. Only when they lie on their deathbed do they face the truth. Nonetheless, while Kathy and other students survive long enough to testify, the true Others who bear witness to the systematic clone-cides under the juridical authority of the State die without the chance to tell their stories. After hearing Madame and Miss Emily's stories, Tommy, dejected and disappointed, reverts into the young Tommy who used to go into fits of frenzy, who could not "speak" coherently. On a field, Tommy was "raging, shouting, flinging his fists and kicking

out" (274) because his last hope, that of a deferral for himself and Kathy, has

vanished. Yet, Kathy, observing a calmed Tommy, says, "I was thinking…about back

then, at Hailsham, when you used to go bonkers like that, and we couldn't understand

it…I was thinking maybe the reason you used to get like that was because at some

level you always *knew*" (275). Tommy admits, "Maybe I did know, somewhere deep

down. Something the rest of you didn't" (275). Tommy, who expresses his anger and

tries to peer into the truth, is the only one who veritably knows the truth, and this

reflects that he is a true artist who reveals another dimension of truth related to art.

Poiesis and Tommy as a Clone-artist in Clone's World

Tommy dies as a tragic hero who ends up finding truth but has to face his

destined death nonetheless. Primordially, he has been a clone-doll but, ironically, he is

also the artist. Tommy recalls Pygmalion who fell in love with what he created—an

animated doll. His drawings present the answer for the last but the most abysmal

questions in the novel—why does Tommy draw imaginary animals with mechanical

organs and what is the signification of this artwork? Why does Ishiguro present artists

and artwork continually in the novel? What is the truth of art education for the

clones? More curiously, what is meaning of creation, original, and copies as

simulacra, in terms of art and what does art critique? These questions also lead to

meta-fictional question of why Ishiguro write this novel. Tommy is an artist-persona

Ishiguro in the other novels deliberately creates to represent his own perspective of

the contemporary roles and relations of art, artwork and artist.

Never Let Me Go parodies of Plato's utopia in light of not only ontology but also art. In Plato's world, art is perilous in his utopian republic in that art can perpetrate untruth and immorality. Agamben argues that beneath Plato's lies anxiety because "the power of art over the soul seemed to him so great that he thought it could by itself destroy the very foundations of his city." Thus, for Plato, art has the uncanny power of destruction and the creation of new unnatural beings. And this relates to the guardians' mysteriously uncanny reaction to Tommy's artwork. In Hailsham, the students are evaluated by "how good you were at 'creating'" (*Never* 16). Creativity is the barometer of humanity in Hailsham. On the contrary, what guardians taught was not how to be creative but how to follow the instructions and produce artwork according to standard. Only Tommy resists the standards and truly "creates" what he really feels, which leads guardians to reproach his uncreative activity and his classmates to bully him. The Guardians get mad because they think that Tommy intentionally tries to downgrade his capability for painting; from their perspective, Tommy produces "work that seemed deliberately childish, work that said he couldn't care less" (*Never* 20). His intentional distortion makes it possible for him to cross the line of humanity set by the anthropological machine. He is even treated like a naughty animal-being. Even Miss Lucy, who at first attempts to appease Tommy by dismissing the ultimate value of creativity later admits that creativity matters: "Listen, Tommy, your art, it is important. And not just because it's evidence. But for your own sake. You'll get a lot from it, just for yourself." (108). What Miss Lucy asserts goes beyond the idea that art proves one's humanity and soul, but why does Miss Lucy then say that art means more than evidence for Tommy?

This question relates to the paradox of the truth and untruth of the Gallery. From the beginning, the Gallery has been veiled under mystery and what Heidegger calls errancy among the students. However, no one except Tommy asks the questions, "What is this gallery? Why should she have a gallery of things done by [the students]?" (*Never* 30). About the whole mystery, later, Tommy presents a theory to explain the signification of the gallery, "We never got to the bottom of it, what the Gallery was for. Why Madame took away all the best work. But now I think I know…. [Miss Lucy] said they revealed what you were like inside. She said they revealed your soul" (174-5). And, Tommy claims that artwork functions as evidence for Madame to determine "what's a good match and what's just a stupid crush" (176) for clone couples.

Tommy's explanation almost hits the target but something remain amiss—the gallery is not for collecting evidence to prove the existence of the soul and compatible love but only the soul. Artwork functions to prove non-human beings can have human souls in their unnatural bodies. Madame wonders if "art bares the soul of the artist" (*Never* 254). In other words, does art disclose the truth of a being's essence whether the agents of creation of artworks are human beings or non-human beings? This question relates to the question of the origin of art. Heidegger asks this question through the phenomenological reduction of three agents—art, artist, and artwork. Circling these three agents in art, Heidegger discloses that the origin of the artist and artwork is art. According to Heidegger, the truth of artwork does not dwell in exhibitions or museums, but in setting up a world ("The Origin" 43).

But the Gallery is not the place where work can set up a world since it does not "open the Open of the world" ("The Origin" 44). Scientific understanding via reason cannot disclose the truth of art since the earth that brings forth and brings back artwork should "remain undisclosed and unexplained" ("The Origin" 45). The strife between these two forces, which constitutes art, is not possible in the artwork placed in an exhibition or a gallery since art does not have its origin in spectators' aesthetic judgment. The gallery is a space for spectator's enjoyment, not for artist's creation. According to Agamben, aesthetical judgments based on Kant's paradoxical theses of subjective aesthetic judgment[114]gives art away from the artists' power of creation to the problematic judgment of spectators. In this sense, the gallery becomes a place for the spectator, a "fully" human one such as Madame who is presumed to have the taste to appreciate art.

The spectators who visit Madame's gallery might have appreciated clones' artwork not to appreciate the art in those pieces but to relieve them of their guilt of using clones for their organs by hypocritically praising the works of art, marveling at how much those unnatural creatures have been enlightened, thereby proving the power of education for animal-beings. Thus, in the world of gallery and spectators, art is forced to go through a radical separation between no-longer-being and not-yet-being. On the one hand, in the gallery, the artwork is deprived of its original power, trapped in the past, and, on the other hand, the gallery is a space devoid of potentiality

---

[114] Opposing an artwork as imitation, Kant in *The Critique of Judgment* emphasizes the spectator's aesthetic judgment and tries to show that the beautiful is not even concerned with whether the object of an artwork exists or not. He claims, "now when the question is if a thing is beautiful, we do not want to know whether anything depends or can depend on the existence of the thing, either for myself or for anyone else, but how we judge it by mere observation (intuition or reflection)" (47). And he also said that "we easily see that, in saying it is *beautiful* and in showing that I have taste, I am concerned, not with that in which I depend on the existence of the object, but with that which I make out of this representation in myself"(47; emphasis in the original).

for future creation. For example, artwork extorted from African people in the eighteenth century and displayed in New York's Metropolitan Museum no longer has its world and origin. The clones' artwork does not have its world but is placed in the human spectators' world where artwork exists merely for collecting more money to run Hailsham.

On the surface level, Madame never collected Tommy's artwork because it was regarded as rubbish. Deeply seen, only Tommy is able to produce real artwork in his clone world. Human beings are not able to accept Tommy's artworks because they exist outside of their perception and appreciation in accordance with the spectator's aesthetic judgment. Madame cannot display Tommy's artwork in the gallery because Tommy's artwork reveals the violent truth of his world and himself. And, this is also the reason why only Tommy can disclose the truth of their beings and world. While other students just depict the world of human beings following the standards established by the anthropological machine, Tommy discloses his own world by presenting the essence of truth—the creation of his own world and his freedom. As a spectator, Kathy cannot fully appreciate Tommy's animals: "What I was looking at was so different from anything the guardians had taught us to do at Hailsham, I didn't know how to judge it" (*Never* 187). Kathy cannot judge Tommy's drawings because she does not have capability for judgment insofar as the drawings are out of the realm of judgment because they present something that cannot be represented and appreciated by spectators.

Though misunderstood and undermined by everyone else, Tommy's artworks contain truth and are signifiers of freedom. Tommy's drawings or sketches consist of

descriptions of animals, his first portraying an elephant in the grass. If Tommy is an animal-being, the truth is hidden under the veil of the background of the drawing. The elephant signifies Tommy himself who is situated in grass that symbolizes the mysteries that hide truth. Indeed, Tommy, like an animal, cannot escape from captivity in the human beings' world. He does not try to escape but devotes himself to artistic creation instead. Tommy is an animal-clone-artist. This analogy between the animal and Tommy makes his imagined animals more problematic in the context of the meaning of art itself. Showing his sketches of imaginary animals which were inspired by an old children's book, he elaborates:

> The thing is, I'm doing them really small. Tiny. I'd never thought of that at Hailsham. I think maybe that's where I went wrong. If you make them tiny, and you had to because the pages are only about this big, then everything changes. It's like they come to life by themselves. Then you have to draw in all these different details for them. You have to think about how they'd protect themselves, how they'd reach things. (*Never* 178)

According to Tommy's interpretation, the animals have to be tiny because the world these animals are dwelling in is not big enough for these imaginary animals to be animated and live free. In other words, the animals have to be tiny because the world in which they are dwelling is too big, which also means that beings are not just beings but beings-in-the-their world, which means that those beings are captivated in their world. The imaginary animals refer to clones in the world. However, in whose world do these imaginary animals and clones dwell—the world of clones or the world of human beings or the world of art? Why does Tommy say that bringing these beings to life does not make sense in reality?

Agamben's critical work on aesthetics, *The Man without Content*, insightfully contributes to this discussion. Broadly speaking, Agamben's aesthetics aims to destruct (or deconstruct) the foundation of aesthetics. Simply stated, Agamben destroys aesthetics because it renders contemporary people dissociate from the transmissibility of the original meaning of art, namely *poiesis*. Discussing the Greek meaning of pro-duction, Agamben regards *poiesis* (ποίησις) as the origin of art. *Poiesis*, as Heidegger also points out in his writings, means bringing into being[115] and disclosing truth (ἀ-λήθεια). In accordance with Heidegger's arguments, Agamben concurs that the ancient meaning of producing artwork is to bring forth truth or disclose the truth. However, contemporary people have lost this meaning, which leaves contemporary artists producing or creating artwork in terms of praxis as practice, forgetting the energy of *poiesis*. But, Agamben's position does not dismiss the signification and difference of contemporary art but forces readers to consider a new understanding of modern, contemporary art in terms of reproducibility, and paves a new way out of the tradition or origin, even though his mood is melancholy.[116] All Agamben's arguments begin from Plato's antagonism towards art.

In a sense, what Tommy wishes is to actualize this forgotten power of art which makes it possible for him to unveil truth and create artworks to bring forth

---

[115] "The Greeks, to whom we owe all the categories through which we judge ourselves and the reality around us, made a clear distinction between *poiesis* (poiein, "to pro-duce in the sense of bringing into being") and praxis (*prattein*, "to do" in the sense of acting). As we shall see, central to praxis was the idea of the will that finds its immediate expression in an act, while, by contrast, central to *poiesis* was the experience of pro-duction into presence, the fact that something passed from non-being to being, from concealment into the full light of the work. The essential character of *poiesis* was not its aspect as a practical and voluntary process but its being a mode of truth understood as unveiling, ἀ-λήθεια" (*Man without* 68).

[116] Toker and Chertoff point out that readers' sympathy with clones generates melancholy of the reader's self-reflection on his or her life—namely, "the melancholy of the brevity of ordinary life, its transience, the transience of the truest of true love, and the inevitable transformation that recycle another classical topos—that of the three ages of man: leaner, 'carer,' case" (178).

beings on canvas.[117] The animation of imaginary animals is uncanny since it is

mysteriously untruthful as well as truthful. Truth as an ontological and aesthetic event

happens in creation; it brings forth a being from imagination into presence. As a true

artist, Tommy discloses the truth of his world and his own being as an animated doll

that is a copy of a human being. The imaginary animals do not represent Tommy or

the clones, though; they do not "re" present to mimic the original because there is no

original in the world of simulacra. Imaginary animals are just beings in the world

Tommy has created. They have the power to disclose the truth; the grotesque

appearance of the imaginary animals discloses the grotesque truth of the world where

human beings exploit inhuman beings (animals, savages or clones). More

interestingly, the animals have mechanical organs. Kathy appreciates Tommy's

drawing and narrates; "In fact, it took a moment to see they were animals at all. The

first impression was like one you'd get if you took the back off a radio set: tiny

canals, weaving tendons, miniature screws and wheels were all drawn with obsessive

precision, and only when you held the page away could you see it was some kind of

armadillo, say, or a bird" (*Never* 187).

Yet, why does Tommy depict mechanical organs? This closely relates to what

Agamben argues about the crisis of contemporary artwork. Contemporary artwork

reveals the truth of the world where technology and industrial division of labor allows

artists to produce ready-made works or pop artworks. Agamben ascribes these

---

[117] Heidegger also relates truth and art with uncanny; "At bottom, the ordinary is not ordinary; it is
extra-ordinary, uncanny. The nature of truth, that is, of unconcealment, is dominated throughout by a
denial. Yet this denial is not a defect or a fault, as though truth were an unalloyed unconcealment that
has rid itself of everything concealed…Truth, in its nature, is un-truth" ("Origin" 53).

phenomena to the crisis of *poiesis*.[118] Because of this loss of original energy of art as *poiesis*, the artist in modernity "has now definitively lost his content and is condemned forever to dwell, so to speak, besides his reality" (*Man without* 55). Tommy's artworks cannot satisfy the spectators since they disclose the truth that the spectators, human or clone, cannot accept in terms of their aesthetic standards, which have been mediated by anthropological machine. Tommy's drawings reveal that not only clones but also human beings are machines with mechanical organs. Thanks to the technological supply of clones' organs, it is obvious that human beings can replace their organs whenever they wish. Human beings become in true sense machines. If the origin of art is the disclosure of truth, Tommy discloses the truth of a world in which technology dominates and bio-capitalism operates the anthropological machine to artificially use living beings as a means rather than an end.

Paradoxically, in this sense, the world of clones and the world of human beings commingle to produce the world of machine that Tommy unveils through his imaginary animals with mechanical organs. The world of machine is also the world of simulacra. Tommy's drawings consist of different copies of the same animals or the same pattern of entities. Kathy narrates, "It came to me that Tommy's drawings weren't as fresh now. Oaky, in many ways these frogs were a lot like what I'd seen back at the Cottages. But something was definitely gone, and they looked labored, almost like they'd been copied" (*Never* 241). Kathy says that Tommy's artwork is a copy of the previous ones, repeated but with differences. Reproducibility is possible

---

[118] "If the death of art is its inability to attain the concrete dimension of the work, the crisis of art in our time is, in reality, a crisis of poetry, of ποίησις. Ποίησις, poetry, does not designate here an art among others, but is the very name of man's doing, of that productive action of which artistic doing is only a privileged example, and which appears, today, to be unfolding its power on a planetary scale in the operation of technology and industrial production" (*Man without* 59).

because of the crisis of originality in contemporary art. This is closely related to what

Benjamin argues in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical

Reproduction." Benjamin asks what happens when we place a copy in new situations

when the aura of art decays. Benjamin's answer is positive.[119] Tommy's works then

linger on threshold between *poiesis* and *techne* because they are reproductions with

and of difference without an original. If someone reproduces again and again with

difference in each replica, the original will be erased and only act of creation—

poiesis—remains to create the world of replicas or simulacra. Moreover, this

reproduction with difference, in the context of art, discloses the external truth of the

world and the internal truth of artist.

Benjamin argues that the contemporary filmmaker penetrates reality like a

surgeon, while painters touch reality like a magician. Tommy has both positions; he

penetrates the inner truth of clones and human beings by depicting mechanical

organs; also, he can touch the world he dwells with distance.[120] Tommy reveals the

truth of the internality and externality of the clone's world; he reveals not only the

internal world of mechanical organs, which reveals the truth of human organs, but

also the external world where bio-politics dominates to exploit these living beings.

Tommy's paintings, regarding his two-fold artistic power, present "difference" from

---

[119] In comparison, Agamben lingers in the limbo of both the stances of Heidegger, who only emphasizes the authenticity of art as poiesis, and of Benjamin, who proposes a new perception attuned with new technology and base structure. Rather than maintaining a strict stance about the loss of origin in contemporary art, Agamben tries to reveal all controversial aspects of the relation of originality and reproducibility. As Agamben maintains, the reproducibility of artwork deconstructs the originality of artwork and belongs to the techne. In this sense, Agamben argues, "*Reproducibility (intended, in this sense, as paradigmatic relationship of nonproximity with the origin) is, then, the essential status of the product of technics, while originality (or authenticity) is the essential status of the work of art*" (*Man without* 61; italics in original).

[120] "Magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman. The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web. There is a tremendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law" ("The Work of Art*"* 233-34).

the reality. What he creates does not remain in his world but expands into a different

presentation of different objects. Kathy narrates:

> [Tommy] showed me three separate sketches of a kind of a
> frog—except with a long tail as though a part of it had
> stayed a tadpole. At least, that's what it looked like when
> you held it away from you. Close up, each sketch was a
> mass of minute detail, much like the creatures I'd seen
> years before. "These two I did thinking they were made of
> metal," he said. "See, anything' s got shiny surfaces. But
> this one here, I thought I'd try making them rubbery…."
> (*Never* 241)

The frog is reproduced from the previous one but contains different shape and

surface. The frog with long tail as in-between being of frog and tadpole refers to the

clones who remain as children without the chance to become adults. More strangely,

even Tommy, as an artist, cannot fully control the artwork; after he creates, he realizes

that one of two frogs has a rubbery surface. What Tommy does corresponds with what

human beings have done; they created clones but cannot totally control them.

Creation and *poiesis* is to bring forth beings, not representation of originals; but, the

creation is also ethically problematic since what artists produce does not guarantee

the ethical truth. However, Tommy opens a new territory of art—the clones' art,

which raises question Agamben asks targeting contemporary art; "how is it possible

to attain a new *poiesis* (ποίησις) in an original way?" (*Man without* 64). This is

Ishiguro's hidden meta-question in the novel that I will try to answer and conclude

this chapter.

Truth and Art—Art for Truth, Artist for Happiness

In the end, Kathy decides to become a donor and die. She finally realizes that she does not want to be left alone, and that her life as animal-clone does not have any significance in human world. The novel ends with a beautiful and intriguing image of a piece of plastic rubbish that symbolizes the clones. Kathy narrates:

> I was thinking about the rubbish, the flapping plastic in the branches…and I half closed my eyes and imagined this was the spot where everything I'd ever lost since my childhood had washed up…the fantasy never got beyond that—I didn't let it—and though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn't sobbing or out of control. (287-88)

In fact, this is the first moment Kathy honestly expresses her emotions and cries though she cannot entirely abandon her restraint and accept the fact that she has emotions. Yet her restrained, elusive and stilted voice changes into melancholy one, delivering her imagination of "the flapping plastic" captured in the branches. Kathy finally achieves one final element of humanity besides emotion—imagination. Perhaps this plastic is a part of deflated balloon the clown held or this plastic represents the body as a husk that remains after Tommy's "completion." If so, this plastic rubbish represents clone's body without organs abandoned and stuck in "the branches," which also symbolize the anthropological machine and apparatuses that do not let clones free. Kathy lost everything; she lost her childhood, memory, her friends, and even her illusions. However, through her half-closed eyes and imagination, she suddenly sees "a tiny figure [that] would appear on the horizon the field, and gradually get larger until [Kathy would] see it was Tommy, and he'd wave, maybe even call" (288). Tommy is resurrected through her imagination. Kathy restores emotions and imagination when she admits her future death. She finally becomes a clone-Dasein who can find its own freedom by projecting herself into her death. For

this epiphany, Kathy needs the imagination she did not have, though Tommy and Ruth did. Kathy's narrative proves that only imagination for phantasmatic creation can make her an authentic being.

With Kathy's restoration of her authenticity via imagination, Tommy becomes a fantasy that is running to Kathy hailing "sham" or "fantasy." This is the moment when Ishiguro as a creator of these creatures intervenes with the question of fantasy in literature. Literature is about fantasy only through which readers can find truth. In a sense, fantasy is the interstice between philosophy and art. Through this interstice of fantasy, truth can finally be revealed; correspondingly, the philosophical ground of *Never Let Me Go* is unveiled.

As a way to explain this aesthetic meaning of fantasy and truth, Alain Badiou, in *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, discusses the process of disclosing truth in art. Badiou basically classifies "the linkages between art and philosophy" into three schemata (the didacticism, romanticism, and classicism) and proposes that all these schemata shares the "common" of "the relation between art and truth" (8); in this way, according to Badiou, "art *itself* is a truth procedure" (9; italics in original). Namely, art coexists with the truths and it is a singular way to find the truths, not truth itself. Badiou claims that a work of art is not a truth, but "an artistic procedure initiated by an event" or artistic configuration is a truth (Badiou 12). Therefore, it can be said that artistic truth is the process of artistic creation or *poiesis*. The end of creation means the end of truth.

Tommy becomes a fantasy that contrasts with the plastic caught in the branches. Only by becoming a fantasy can Tommy himself escape the material

confinement of a plastic body and become a truthful event from which truth emerges. Tommy is not just a clone-artist but also an artistic truth itself, and in this truth Tommy attains his ultimate freedom. Kathy, as an observer, a spectator and the narrator, delivers this story to other clones before she dies. In some sense, if Tommy is a clone-artist, Ishiguro is a human artist who create fantastical clone characters to make them live, die, and resurrect, while Kathy is a medium between them.

This Tommy as an artistic truth and its essence as freedom vis-à-vis becoming a fantasy can answer the last question I raised in the beginning of this chapter—why does Ishiguro omit his ethnic identity in his writing? In *Conversation with Kazuo Ishiguro*, a collection of interviews from 1986 to 2006, almost all interviewers ask the same question—how Ishiguro's Japanese ethnic identity and his immigration experience have affected his writing. His answers are metaphorical or at best elusive. Interestingly, in the 2010 movie, based on the novel and directed by Mark Romaneck, all three characters are white. The fact that all characters are white and that it is hard to find any Asians in the movie is disturbing because in *Never Let Me Go* characters' ethnicities and skin colors are not specified. In the movie, these colorless clones are painted white and Ishiguro's ethnicity is also erased. Admittedly, Ishiguro intentionally erases any specific information about the clones to make them figures only with outlines and without content. But again, why does he erase characters' ethnicities?

My hypothesis is that Ishiguro erases any personal traits including ethnicity because that is the best way to reveal the truth of beings. This is partly because of Paul Gilroy's argument in *Against Race* that race should be renounced in nano-

political world. In a nano-biological spectrum, race becomes obsolete. A more substantial reason is that by this intentional erasure, Ishiguro casts more fundamentally the ontological and ethical questions about humanity, animality, and beings. The fundamental ethics of fiction is not to actualize poetic justice, but to present those beings' ontological nudity by creating their worlds and form-of-life and showing how this creation in itself is a way to find a truth of art. Truth lies in a person's process of creation, and this creation goes beyond ethnic particularity because it is immanent and full of ontological questions of life, death, and rebirth. That is why Ishiguro's novels can gain universality and how his clones are more Japanese than any Japanese character created by a Japanese or Japanese English writer. To Ishiguro, Japanese does not mean a race but the signifier of suffering beings. My last chapter will reveal how this truth can be actualized by a trans-spatial writer's image of the bowl.

CHAPTER 5

BOWL OF ORIGINS: NAMING THE VOID AND THE COMING COMMUNITY:
THERESA HAK KYUNG CHA'S *DICTÉE*

It was her voice that made
The sky acutest at its vanishing.
She measured to the hour its solitude.
She was the single artificer of the world
In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,
Whatever self it had, became the self
That was her song, for she was the maker. Then we
As we beheld her striding there alone,
Knew that there never was a world for her
Except the one she sang and, singing, made.
(Wallace Stevens, "The Idea of Order At Key West" 130)

I was born in this world to live a poor and lonely, lofty and solitary
life.
And as I go on living in this world,
my heart fills up with many things
blazing or desolate, with love and with sorrow.
And once again, this time, as if comforting me or urging me to join
them,
these words come and go, signaling me with their eyes and shaking
their fists—
When Heaven let this world begin, to all those he cherished and loved
the most,
he granted a life of poverty and loneliness, loftiness and solitude,
full of love and sorrow—
like a crescent moon, a wild flower, a mountain bird, and a donkey,
and like Francis Jammes, T'ao Yuan Míng, Rainer Maria Rilke.
(Paek Sok, "On the White Wall" 86)

For all of the talk and appraisals of difficulties and lyrical obscurities of

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*, it is strange that the uncanny image of a bowl in its

formal clarity should encompass the philosophical and aesthetic impulse and

orientation of the work. For decades, *Dictée* has been the center of debates and contentions within Asian American literary studies as well as experimental poetry studies. Critics tip the balance of their inquiries either towards history and politics at one end of the spectrum or aesthetic innovation at the other end, producing a field polarized largely by politicized aesthetics[121] versus aesthetic politics, or identity versus subjectivity. After Cha's tragic death and the posthumous publication of *Dictée* and a long period of scholarly neglect, many critics attempted to edge to the core of this black hole through Cha's biography or historical contexts (Japanese colonization and political upheaval in Korea, etc.). The identity politics that influence these critiques have largely determined the theoretical sphere in Asian American studies, and they necessarily entail a tactical simplification of the complexity of the work. These critics fail to reckon that *Dictée* is not a book of representation or

---

[121] For example, Elaine Kim, who first founded *Dictée* scholarship, emphasizes Cha's national identity and the heritage of Korean American nationalism. To her, Cha's "exile space" is "a kind of third space" which "foregrounds a highly specific cultural context, inserting Korea, Korean women, and Korean Americans into the discourse, thereby opening the space for an individual search for selfhood as well as a non-reified, non-essentialized collectivity" (8). I agree with Kim mostly, But as a Korean, I doubt that her national, ethnic identity is a key to understand Cha's exile and *Dictée*'s experimental form. The first half of *Dictée*, mostly a collage of historical events and Japanese colonization, match with Kim's observation, but the second half, mostly consisting of Cha's poems and philosophical fragments about memories, theater, and other writings about Cha's inner life cannot be understood by Kim's identity politics. Against this trend, a group of scholars in Asian American literary studies started to claim that *Dictée* deserves more aesthetical approaches. Anne Anlin Cheng, in formalistic perspective, interprets *Dictée* as a text of anti-documentary desire. Cheng argues, Cha challenges "the documentary impulse underlying the ethnic or post-colonial *Bildung*" and disturbs "the academic tendency to conduct corrective re-readings and to have faith in the history lesson" (123). Cheng praises Cha's text which discourages any traditional prejudices about Asian American literature as autobiographical or historical writings that need to be interpreted by Westerners. Patti Duncan's *Tell This Silence* also interprets *Dictée* as the "third space", where "narratives of both Korean nationalists and Western feminists are refused (162)". More significantly, Shelley Sun Wong in "Unnaming the Same: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*," criticizes that Asian American identity politics have focused on representativeness and authenticity. Then, she claims that *Dictée* is not representative work. In her perspective, *Dictée* "with formal experiments and its insistent undermining of generalized understanding of representation and authenticity presented itself as enough of an anomaly within the context of the political and cultural orthodoxy of Asian America that it was never drawn into public debate" (103). With formalistic reading, Wong tries to rescue *Dictée* from cultural nationalists' interpretation based on "representation." Indeed, *Dictée*'s fertile spectrums cause readers not only to feel entrapped in an abysmal ineffability and renounce logical understanding of the work.

verisimilitude of Cha's life experience.[122] Indeed, Cha's life experience confuses

Dictée and produces unfathomable opacity. But postmodern or avant-garde poetic

criticism also struggles to come to terms with Cha's difference as epistemological *and*

as racial or ethnic. Shirley Wong claims that the impenetrable opacity in *Dictée*

comes from Cha's trans-spatial experience of "dislocations and border-crossing that

physical movement and state of mind become indistinguishable" (120).

In fact, as I argue, Cha's trans-spatial experiences cannot be represented using

conventional literary techniques, given its aims to encompass the immeasurable

spectrum of time and space the trans-spatial being (Cha) lives through. While

recognizing the key insights produced by such lively and sometimes antagonistic

debates, I propose that we go beyond the published scholarship precisely by

scrutinizing the more elemental and basic, and heretofore unaddressed—the formal

simplicity of the bowl as void. I will speculate on the poeticized—a concept also in

Heidegger and Benjamin—and show how Cha poetically creates language as a trans-

spatial being. I will focus on two dimensions, the first being language (body, names,

translation) and the origins of those languages (*Khora* and *Tao*). In turn, the *Khora*,

Tao, and the image of the bowl name the void that Cha perceives in both Western and

Eastern philosophical origins as the commonality or "commonplace" across the West

and the East.

---

[122] For example, Mukherjee utilizes Cha's biographical facts to look for commonplace themes of Asian American immigration such as "dislocation, hybridity, and the notion of an endangered Korean identity" (200). Mukherjee's clunky act of forcibly linking Korean nationalistic theme (Yu Kwon Soon as its female martyr) to Korean immigrants' status in the U.S. testifies how this kind of interpretation is exhaustive because Cha's identity as Asian American and Cha's past memories about her mother as the colonized may be connected loosely but cannot fully signify her utterly universal approaches to the issues such as humanity and aesthetic newness.

All the ideas in *Dictée* move erratically like stars, the same words—name, void, memory, and dream—twinkling in the different sky regions of the work with difference and parody each other to create a form of new language and a form of life—trans-spatial life. But this is not a cosmological phenomenon but instead chaotic and pulsates with the coextension of body and *Dictée*. *Dictée* is the poeticized linking body's life and language's life. The constellation aims to restore a kind of redemptive power to invoke the forgotten dead's voices and presences and to resurrect the dead language (Cha's mother tongue, Korean, Ancient Greek or Latin as well as poets' forgotten languages during exiles) as a new language of freedom. Cha looks for a pure, life language within dead languages to resurrect its world and origin. By translating her own writings into English, French, and Latin, she delves into the origin of all these languages to deconstruct their authorities and reshape them into her new language. This new language is the language of redemption to happen as the poeticized of Cha's life. And the void with the two names of Khora and Tao takes shape in the form of a bowl.

The First Moment: Therese Hak Kyung Cha's Trans-spatial Experience and the Poeticized

A composite of lyric, prose, drama, and visual media, *Dictée* is an artwork about language as such rather than a mere critique of national, linguistic, ontological demarcations. Mostly Cha's language renounces an easy interpretation and

understanding[123]; its language deters simple signification, even semiotic approach because it deconstructs the fundamental assumption of modern semiotics that language aims for communication and its system is arbitrarily contextualized in linguistic relationships between the addressee and the addresser via speech acts such as illocutionary, locutionary, and perlocutionary acts. This assumption ignores different languages that a literary work, especially a non-linear, non-informational, and non-unified experimental work, employs. Moreover, *Dictée* aims not to communicate with readers in the present tense but rather the future perfect tense of reading that requires readers' active participation in creating meaning out of transcending the limits of modern linguistics.

Nonetheless, this chaotic form and its opaque relation with Cha's life are productive because they present Cha's voice in multilayers which produce enormous potentiality. *Dictée* itself consists of a meta-commentary on Cha's experience of writing about her trans-spatial life experience. Meta-commentarial writing style relates to the first formal connotation of the title; *Dictée* is not Cha's personal memoir but rather positions Cha as medium or muse who dictates or transcribes others' words in order to create a poetics of relation across different times and spaces and the dead and the living. Cha's life and her writing about her life become two texts to be transcribed. Meta-textually, Cha is describing the phenomenological progression of her thought, reminiscence, and articulation that takes place as she writes.

In *Dictée,* this meta-cognitive process of Cha's self-reflection while moving, reminiscing, thinking, speaking, reading, and writing ensures plasticity in the mimetic

---

[123] In this sense, Frost points out that "*Dictée*'s pages are crowded with such instances of language that impedes signification; images whose figural content belie their hermeticism. Such impasses reveal the degree to which image and text in *Dictée* fuction as unreadable signifiers" (183).

relationship with, and not the representation of, Cha's life. The form of the poeticized is as plastic as life because it "render[s] all the elements of the universe plastic as the poem progresses" (Jennings 549). This meta-commentarial writing is possible because Cha speculates on her body's responses and inserts them into her writing to make her text physically alive.

Dictée creates its own languages and responses to Others' voices, and the medium between this life experience and language in *Dictée* is the conceptually interstitial space of body and book, which results in the form of a body-book or corporeal book, as Frost also observes.[124] Paradoxically, *Dictée,* as a body-book of life experience, is autonomous as well as mediated by the world around it. *Dictée* achieves its aesthetic autonomy by its highly sophisticated distance from the phenomenal world and its ultimate plasticity; in turn, it is mediated by and tied to Cha's moving body and its world. This ambivalent position creates a new poetics. The new and secret poetics of *Dictée*'s unconventional form is shrouded by the second formal connotation of the title. *Dictée* can be translated as "dictation" or "dictator" in English, but this translation hides a secret origin of the word, *dictée* in Latin, which Giorgio Agamben exposes. According to Agamben, "The Italian word *dettato* has kept, apart from the meaning dictation, a meaning deriving from the Latin, dictare, which towards the end of the Latin culture, had denoted to 'compose a literary work'…the Italian dettato corresponds almost exactly to the German *das Gedishtete*, the "Poematized" that both Heidegger and Benjamin use…to indicate the

---

[124] Frost explores the interrelation between body and text in *Dictée* and claims "*Dictée* is replete with verbal and visual image of body: Western and Chinese medical diagrams; accounts of political acts of bodily self-sacrifice; narratives of physical illness and healing; and detailed examples of materiality of speech and writing" (182).

essence of the poem" (*Idea of Prose* 51). As Agamben also references, "*das Gedishtete*" influences Heidegger's *Dicthung*[125] and Walter Benjamin's idea of "the poetized." Benjamin's "the poeticized" refers to relationship between poet's life and his poetry. According to Benjamin, the poeticized is the limit-concept placed in-between life and poem as concepts. Also, it is an epistemological concept that makes it possible for critics or readers to understand the poem because it discloses "a life-context determined by art" ("Two Poems" 21) corresponding with the mythos[126] hidden in a poem.

By and large, *Dictée* is a plastic universe of life, art, and philosophy, and its world is created by Cha's metacommentaried search for a language that can produce the poeticized.[127] This does not mean that there is no political aspect in *Dictée*; in truth, *Dictée* is a postcolonial text that subverts the core of Western discourse and languages to reveal the meaning of third world history. Yet this political aspect is not superimposed over the poetic aspects, nor does it focus on disclosing contradictions in Western discourses via its hybrid, postcolonial, postmodern structure. Rather, *Dictée* shows how a-political texts can be political insofar as it deals with political aspect of "life" *per se*. As Agamben argues, in bio-politics, "life," which has been

---

[125] Watkin explains about Heideggerian influence of Agamben's idea of dictation: *dictare* in Latin corresponds with Heidegger's *Dichtung*, originating from "*poiesis* (bring forth a being, creation) in ancient Greek, meaning "making, shaping, invention, etc." Through these origins, "dictation" signifies the "ontico-experiential basis of a work of poiesis describing, say, the events that led to the dictation of a poem, [which] is always written after the fact and so is obviously dictated by the already existent presence of the poem" (Watkin 35). The Heideggerian idea of *Dicthung* is a dictation or a poetics that reserves the ancient Greek meaning of giving birth to a form of writing as a poetics. However, as Agamben explains, Heideggerian origin pairs with Bejaminian origin.

[126] The poeticized, as a concept, is a way to find a mythic truth because it is about a form "within which the larger, metaphysical relationships which obtain in the world may be understood" (Jennings 548).

[127] Here I want to clarify about the genre of *Dictée*. Many critics tend to regard this work either as a novel or a mutli-genre artwork. I follow the latter side, but I argue that *Dictée*, because of its specific form of poetics, is closer to a long poem or artwork embedding bodily performance.

traditionally a-political subject, becomes a political realm. In the poeticized of *Dictée*,

its form, as a container, mimetically corresponds with life, death, and rebirth of

language, whereas its a-political life, in its veiled connectivity with the external

world, reflects the world where minorities' lives are appropriated and their presences

and collective voices lie dormant under the ruin of history.

In this respect, a form of art, as a form of life, presents a spectrum wherein the

seemingly unconnected words and life experiences form a constellation. This reading

does not romanticize Cha's trans-spatial experience of exile or diaspora; her

experience of "diaspora," which connotes "scattering" from its Greek origin, is

fragmentary and painful. The constellation in *Dictée* contains this fragmentary,

"scattering," and melancholy experience of pain, loss, and nostalgia devoid of a hope

to find her home. However, as Gilroy in his *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and

Double Consciousness* suggests, this kind of diasporic consciousness also has its

positive side because it transcends national boundaries and creates a new language, a

new poetics, and a new network of post-colonial spaces. The language of the network

reveals its utopian dream of freedom and true communication via a new language and

its poeticized.

In this sense, the poeticized as a form in *Dictée* resonates with Édouard

Glissant's poetics of relation, in which, as Oakley in *Common Places* well observes,

Heideggerian Being becomes Glissant's Relation in an allegorical constellation which

purports to regain the redemptive function of Relation as a poetics. Cha's collages

open a constellation not to build a contradictory hybridity but rather a poetics of

"Relation" which relays differential languages and their worlds as well as a hidden

ethico-ontological foundation of this Relation. As Oakley understands, Benjamin's

"allegory prefigures the redemption of the world, which presumably arrives at a

future time relative to the allegory's composition. Specifically, redemption is an event

of the future perfect tense: redemption will have arrived. Thus allegorical signs are

actually retroactively assigned their status as signs" (63). The desire in *Dictée* is for a

language of freedom and redemption that trans-spatial poets always dream of during

their exiles, and this language is also the language of the origin which is veiled, only

to be disclosed by the poeticized. But the fragmented words and unfathomable chaos

in *Dictée* show that this dream will have been actualized, not actualized now. The

utopian dream in the past at its origin implants a seminal seed of change in the present

to bring forth a utopia in the future because the power of the origin must be always

already in full potentiality, never to be actualized "now."

Benjamin's allegory and constellation represent the search for the lost origins,

but the origin is always in constant change so that it cannot be found "now" but has a

potentiality to be found in the future. In this sense, the poeticized's redemptive power

is simultaneously found with and against history. It renders Cha's life and other

dead's past lives to redeem in history, but it also deconstructs the teleological

worldview that the past is gone and the present is making the future. This is possible

because origins are shaped in the forms of lost names. In Cha's case, the names, as

ontological marks of the presences and the voices of the forgotten, are deleted in

Western, colonial history, and cannot be found now; nonetheless, their hidden origins

may be resurrected in the future by the invoking the dead and forgotten names. It is

not possible to invoke others into one's writing and speaking if the invoker's world is

filled with herself; she shamanistically has to empty out her writing and speech to invoke others. Invocation is a way to create the constellation of forgotten voices and presences, and this invocation must name those being's true names and their worlds. Thus, the ontological mood is melancholic over this nameless void in the present and lost connectivity to its origin as well as the hidden utopian dream of redemption of the freedom from "now."

In this context, Cha creates two ideas of *the name* and *the void,* the most frequent words in the work. These two words correspond with Cha's trans-spatial experiences and her dream of freedom during her exile from Korea and the U.S. Because language becomes a void, it can invite, invoke, and communicate others' voices and life experiences; the void is not nothingness but a space of full potentiality for the future actualization. At the core of Cha's poetics of spectrum, the void in the form of bowl stretches and contains the mysterious names of collective women in resonance with Cha's trans-spatial life experience. This is how the image of bowl as the aesthetic form of *Dictée* differs from John Keats's "Ode to a Grecian Urn" or Wallace Steven's American "Anecdote of a Jar," which emphasize their presences, beauty, and space around it rather than the void inside the container and its potentiality.

The Second Moment of Body-Language: Deconstruction of Dictation and Trans-spatial Dream

On the surface level, *Dictée* is a multilingual work; though primarily written in English, Cha seems to build a Babel in which French, English, Latin, and Korean

communicate with each other and are translated without demolishing the borderlines among those languages or ratifying these borderlines' national origins. By this linguistic palimpsest, Cha tries to express her trans-spatial feeling rhetorically as the narrator "begins the search the words of equivalence to that of her feeling. Or the absence of it. Synonym, simile, metaphor, byword, byname, ghostword, phantomnation, In documenting the map of her journey" (*Dictée* 140). But the transnational use of languages and translations cannot deliver her feeling due to the fixed nature of language systems within their national origins. The national languages she was forced to learn are irreconcilable[128]. Borderlines between languages are drawn rigidly and their linguistic agents require Cha, who crosses national, linguistic borderlines, to verify her linguistic, national identity. Cha refuses this identification and subjectification; this is also "an attempt to reveal and strip away the many ideological layers of language and fashioning a less alienating voice with which to speak and tell her stories" (Kang 78). Cha looks for her own new singular language with a less alienating voice. But Cha's onerous struggle to create a new language is exhausting and often confusing; as Kang points out, "to achieve some mutuality between enunciation and communication in language…language of *Dictée* is multiple and ever-shifting—words and voices are decentered, recalled from the margins, exclusive, unclaimed, indecipherable and then again viscerally clear" (78).

For example, Cha uses the meta-cognitive analysis of the language acquisition process as a way to find her own language. As a form of the poeticized, this relates to

---

[128] Naoki Sakai argues that in *Dictée* there is an irreconciliation between utopian desire of reclaiming national language—Korean and Korean history as her origin and efforts to foil "configuration of languages (38-9). Alongside Sakai's idea of "The irreducible ambivalence," Lamm understand this irreconciliation as "a manifestation of the exile's displacement, her continual status as an immigrant, both at home and away" (50).

Cha's own trans-lingual experience; emigrating to the U.S. from Korea, she had to learn English and French and, in doing so, forget her mother tongue—Korean. This also corresponds with her mother's experience when she was coerced to learn Japanese during Japanese colonization in Korea. Reflecting these experiences, Cha's treatment of the language acquisition process is philosophical and subversive. Cha scrutinizes language's bare registers—reading, speaking, thought process, and bodily expressions, which are immanent and transcendental to the semiotic exchanges of signifiers. She creates non-linear and chaotic language by mincing, dicing, and reshaping images and words to build a new language-world. The purpose of this reshaping is not an "intent on 'penetrating' the read, to double it and re-cite it, but rather entails an attempt to extend, disrupt and rework it" (Chambers 10).

By no means is the invocation of voices and presences didactic, for Cha denounces the didactic and heuristic functions of language for communication because these functions in truth are disciplinary. As Deleuze and Guatarri argue, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, language in terms of speech acts consists of essentially disciplinary commands; people use language to accomplish their tasks by ordering and commanding. Only poetic language escapes this normal function of language, and Cha aims mostly to deconstruct that control, order, and discipline.

Cha deconstructs didactic language in the first chapter of *Dictée* with the inclusion of a language worksheet for a French language class activity where an ostensible student does dictation (dictée or transcriber) from a paragraph in French to the one in English:

> Aller a la ligne   C'était le premier jour   point   Elle Venait
> de loin   point   ce soir au diner   virgule les familles

demanderaient   virgule   ouvre les guilemets   Ça c'est
bien passé le premier jour   point d'interrogation   ferme
les guilemets   au moins   virgule   dire le moins possible
virgule   la réponse serait   virgule   ouvre les guillements
Il n'y a q'une chose   point   ferme les guillemets   ouvre
les guillements   Il y a quelqu'une   point   loin   point
ferme les guillements

Open paragraph it was the first day period She had come
from a far period tonight at dinner comma the families
would ask comma open quotation marks How was the first
day interrogation mark Close quotation marks How was the
first day interrogation mark close quotation marks at least
to say the least of it possible comma the answer would be
open quotations marks there is but one thing period There is
someone period From a par period close quotation marks.
(1)

In this quotation, the student translates and transcribes each punctuation mark spoken

in French into English. Given that is not a mere word-to-word translation and

transcription, awkwardness comes from her misunderstanding of the dictator's

intention. Strangely enough, by this dictation, "content falls away and what emerges

is the spoken quality of exercise" (Park 133). One of the most common theoretical

understandings of Cha's awkward dictation is that it purports a subversive textual

practice.[129] This interpretation emphasizes post-colonial, post-structural aspects in

Dictée by regarding this dictation as a politically subversive act against national

language system and discursive power in which the dictator holds sway.

Yet, as I argue, a richer interpretation of this deviated form of dictation is

possible; the student in the passage problematizes the boundaries among different

registers of language—spoken and written languages in both French and English— as

---

[129] Lisa Lowe's argument is the epitome of this interpretation. She argues, "For not only does the logic of dictation itself provide a critique of the model of identical equivalence—in that the founding premise of dictation recognizes an initial incommensurability between the oral and the written, revealing the purported aim for that identical reproduction to be internally contradictory—but Dictée further exploits this contradiction through manifold deviations from the model" ("Unfaithful" 39).

well as the boundary between language and "ontological presence and its voice of a being" by awkward translation and transcription. Let's imagine the hidden prepositions of this dictation as a linguistic activity. In general, only written language needs punctuation marks to indicate something ineffable in written language, such as emotions, facial expression or gestures. Punctuations marks, being unnecessary in spoken language, are supplementarily added to the written texts to imitate such ontological traits of a speaker as the actual voices, emotions and bodily gestures during the writer's writing or citing other texts into a text. But the punctuation marks cannot fully embody the speaker's interrogative expressions on her face or mood. As such, punctuation marks' names and presences are hidden in writings. As soon as those punctuation marks are translated from French names and transcribed in English as names instead of symbols (i.e. !, ?,etc.), their names become "overnamed" and excessive in the sentences to disrupt an easy reading of the translated and transcribed passage. Moreover, the transcription of punctuation marks aggravates the confusion of dictation, which undermines the authority of translation itself. Deconstructing the normal language activities such as translation, transcription and dictation, this passage reveals the ontological foundation of language—voice as well as the bodily presence of the unnamed speaker, the dictator, and even the student, their voices untranslatable and inscribable in writing. In this sense, punctuation marks in this dictation are the ontological spaces of those voices and presences.

Ontological presences and the voices of beings erupt in a sentence in the form of overnamed, overflowing punctuation marks. Thus, the narrator says, "[the student] *would take on their punctuation. She waits to service this. Theirs. Punctuation. She*

would become, herself, demarcations. Absorb it. Spill it. Seize upon the punctuation.

Last air. Give her. Her. The relay. Voice. Assign. Hand it. Deliver it. Deliver" (*Dictée*

4; italics in original). Here, punctuation, as the speaker's presence and voice, come

into the writer's space. As a receptacle or a medium, the writer accepts their

presences and voices and passes them out to regain potentiality—to invite the coming

others. That is, writing becomes a space of deliverance and relay, shunning the

writer's thoughts and ideas. But this writing is not just for deliverance of different

agents in different syntax at the syntagmatic level; it also delivers agents at the

paradigmatic level across different times. The invocation across times is correlative to

speaking quotation marks in the quotation; in other words, state "quote" prior to

reciting words. About this function of quotation mark, Agamben explains, "What

does it mean, in fact, to put a word between quotation marks. . .The term put in

quotation marks is suspended within its history; it is weighted—and therefore, at least

embryonically, thought" (*Idea of Prose* 103). A sentence between quotation marks,

once told thousands years ago by someone totally forgotten, can be inserted in a text

and thus keeps its historicity and veiled presences as well as the voices of the

writer(s) by indicating that the quote between quotation marks has a different

orientation in textual history. Through creating a heterogeneous space in a sentence,

this insertion is capable of sustaining trans-temporal communication or a poetics of

relation with other historical texts embodying writers' ontological voices and

presences in writings.

In this way, forgotten voices and their bodily presences from history are

relayed by this function of quotation marks, and its overnamed presences form a

bodily, material totality that swarm "*Insider [diseuse's] void [though] It does not contain further. Rising from the empty below, pebble lumps of gas. Moisture. Begin to flood her. Dissolving her. Slow, slowed to deliberation. Slow and thick*" (*Dictée* 5; italics in original). Here, the forming totality and writing's void space, engendered by the limit of writing itself, become analogous to the articulation of condensing and slowly exhaling air with sound from body organs for articulation. This may also suggest giving birth to beings through laboring. In other words, these punctuation marks and their excessive names dissolve the speaker's subjectivity and identity to fill the consequential void with such material elements as flowing, amorphous moisture and gas, simulating both articulatory and reproductive organs that are ready for articulation or a fertile womb waiting to give birth to beings.

As this comparison of the linguistic act of articulation with ontological act of giving birth to a being or word implies, this desubjectification and invocation of others' voice presences is "gender-specific" as Trinh T. Minh-ha argues (27). Cha's language of dictation for invocation of presence and voices is gender-specific because she, like Minh-ha, understands general history as the teleological process of veiling women's ontological voices and their presences. In this way, this language does not so much function within the past as it bears and will have borne a life-form, the poeticized, and its utopian future as a female form of a history in the future perfect tense. Through agony and urgency engendered by symbolic laboring and articulating foreign languages, the poeticized of trans-spatial women's writing like *Dictée* gives birth to and restores ontological elements of collective voices and presences of those beings.

Let's return to the quotation about the dictation. When punctuation marks are used normally, the story is simple but erratic: the story without interruptions of translated names of punctuation marks reads, "It was the first day. She had come from a far. Tonight at dinner, the families would ask, 'How was the first day?' 'How was the first day' at least to say the least of it possible, the answer would be 'there is but one thing. There is someone. From a far'." (*Dictée* 1) The narrative is about a person's trans-spatial experience when she, "From a Far" crosses the borderline to come to the U.S. and meets a family, maybe an American family. To the family's hypocritical hospitality and concerns about her first day in the foreign land is, she erratically answers, "There is someone…From a far…." Cha's persona refuses to answer the question; instead, she starts her own story, renouncing any dialogic relationship with the family.

The dispersal of the speaker's authority as a speaker is related to Cha's denial of her role as the narrator of *Dictée*; she is the narrator only insofar as she becomes "someone" in multiple unnamed narrators. As Sue J. Kim points out, the effort to "identity the narrator as Cha" is not fruitful because "nowhere in the novel are we told that the narrator is named Theresa or that there is even a singular narrator"; rather, as Kim argues, "the text does not necessitate the union of its voices into one narrator" ("Narrator, Author" 164). This de-authorization and de-subjectification of the narrator corresponds with the anonymous woman in the story as well as the title of Cha's narrator in *Dictée*—the diseuse, which is French for a dramatic speaker—a stage actress. [130]

---

[130] This use of the diseuse as an unidentifiable mask of Cha is closely related to Cha's career as an avant-garde visual artist and performer as well as the element of performance in *Dictée*. Timothy in his

The diseuse describes her dream of coming to a ultimately free space that is devoid of any fixed identity and language after exile; the diseuse sings, "From A Far / What nationality / or what kindred and relation / what blood relation / what blood ties of blood / what ancestry/ what race generation / what house clan tribe stock strain / what lineage extraction / what breed sect gender denomination caste / what stray ejection misplaced / Tertium Quid neither one thing nor the other /Tombe des nues de naturalized / what transplant to dispel upon" (*Dictée* 20).[131] Here, the diesuse bluntly blurs any boundary, whether imaginary, symbolic or real, between nationalities, blood relations, classes, genders, humanities, etc. by the total negation of systems of demarcation or dichotomies, from the individual to the international level as well as across history and personal experience, in terms of the logic of double negation—"neither one thing nor the other." But this double negation does not lead to affirmation; rather, this double negation turns the demarcated or territorialized spaces into a differential space in which everything can be relayed negatively conserving their differences. This rhetorical negation of any demarcation or categorization for identity is a de-colonial effort, corresponding with the dictation of women's sufferings under and resistance against colonialism and patriarchy. In this space, any "thing" or any "person," which is "transplanted" or inserted heterogeneously into state apparatuses of identities and differentiation, must go into exile because it has to "dispel upon" these assimilations in reality; likewise, punctuations marks, which are

---

Race and the Avant-garde, traces the orientation of multi-genre in *Dictée* from language poetry and visual art and contextualizes *Dictée* with 80s literary landscape.

[131] Russell II regards this poem as "pivot for the text's numerous linguistic divisions"; and she points out, "[t]he deliberate division of "afar" into "a far" on several occasions enhances the myriad chasms that exist between migration/native, home/away, and divided/united, although these fractures are rarely simple binaries" (182).

translated, inserted, and are dispelled from the process of signification in the dictation. This double bind of transplantation/expellation creates a third space.

In addition, Cha in this quotation uses a Latin word, "Tertium Quid" meaning "the third space" or "the third estate" in English. This "Tertium Quid" is a liminal space that postcolonialist critics like Bhabha claim opens a deconstructive gate through which subversion happens and truth is revealed—Cha's trans-spatial utopia in *Dictée*. This third space, on one hand, in *Dictée* is a utopian "from a far" where no demarcation as source of subjectification and identity is possible. On the other hand, this space of "from a far" is a utopia in future perfect tense that connects to seminal origins in the past whose potentiality resides in a heterotopic space in the present, and will have redeemed the forgotten beings' voices and presences to produce a poetics of relation where everyone relays and relates while conserving differences. Though having a void form, this interstice between national languages and their apparatuses opens a way to create a new language. The first new language is a name language that can be attributed to pure, dream, and life language.

The Third Moment of Language: Name Language

After the introductory chapter in a form of a language workbook, three different phrases are arranged on page twenty-one in a form of repetition with difference: "IN NOMINE / LE NOM / NOMINE." "NOMINE" and "IN NOMINE" in Latin means "name" and "in the name of," while "LE NOM" in French means "the name." Each phrase or word encapsulates "name" in different languages, and "IN" functions as the designator of the "origin" of the name; that is, these phrases

juxtapose "a name" in Latin without origins, a name in French, and a name in Latin with its origin. Thus, name in French and name in Latin without origin are names deprived of their origins; these names without "IN" as indicator of "origin" are fixated within their names. Why does Cha problematize "names" with or without origins in different Western languages?

The first answer relates to the shamanic, magical function of speaking original names. Many fairytales or shamanic tales share the assumption that speaking the original names of things or beings has the magical power of giving life to things or resurrecting the dead; yet, in these stories, the protagonists experience a lot of hardships to find the original, mystic, and encrypted names of those beings or things. Likewise, in shamanism, the shaman, by speaking the original name of those beings and things, gains the power to look into their past. In this Shamanic context, Cha invokes names of people or things she wants to resurrect or incarnate via shamanic naming.

In *Dictée*, Cha obsessively invokes the proper names of the dead in history in order to reveal their names as pure language, which is purified from discursive structures. There are two kinds of names in *Dictée*. The first kind is comprised of names from Korean and Western history—Yu, Kuan Soon (a female leader of anti-colonial revolt against Japanese imperialism), Ahn, Joong Kun (the Korean who assassinated Ito Hirobumi, the first prime minister of Japan during colonization), and Joan of Arc. Contrasting these historical names, a name is continuously recalled from Cha's personal memory; the name of Cha's mother—Hyung Soon Huo. Through the invocation of these names, general history conflates with personal memory without

overshadowing the former's priority and generality. By this conflation, their names achieve their historical universality and personal singularity. Besides, this conflation occurs because of the similar backgrounds of these names that have all been deleted from male-dominating or phallus-centric history, with the exception of Ahn Joong Kun, a male anti-imperialist. Regardless, they fall prey to the martyrdom perpetrated by the state or patriarchal systems under the auspice of the general names and their discursive systems—such as the state, God, the nation, and justice.

So why call out these names? On the surface, calling names interpellates their subjectivities, but this interpellation is what Cha deconstructs. At the deeper level, Cha calls these names for the purpose of shaping her own pure language, thereby will she save the universal, singular substance of those names without their codification in national languages and systems that interpellate them so as to make them the mere names of national heroes or heroines. In this sense, pondering her mother's experience of abhorrent Japanese colonization and Cha's own experiences of the massacres perpetrated by two dictators in South Korea history, Cha says:

> Her name. First the whole name. Then syllabus by syllable counting each inside the mouth….Mere names only names without the image nor hers hers alone not the whole of her and even the image would not be the entire her fraction her invalid that inhabits that rise voluntarily like flint pure hazard dead substance to fire. Others anonymous her detachments take her place. Anonymous against her. ….Suffice Melpomene. Nation against nation multiplied nations against nations against themselves. Owns. Repels her rejects her expels her from her own. Her own is, in, of, through, all others, hers. Her own who is offspring and mother, Demeter and Sibyl. Violation of her by giving name to the betrayal, all possible names, interchangeable names, to remedy, to justify the violation. Of her. Own. Unbegotten. Name. Name only. Name without substance. The everlasting. Forever. Without end. (*Dictée* 88).

Though confusing at the first glance, two categories of names do emerge here: "mere names" and "unbegotten" names. The mere names are "not her names," but names analogous to "flint pure hazard dead substance to fire." These "mere names" ignite national, international conflicts; they are the names of macro-political systems that identify and register a person's subjectivity. Cha's imagination stretches from her mother's Japanese name during colonization, to the names of divided nations in the Korea peninsula (The Republic of Korea and The Democratic People's Republic of Korea), and the names of state apparatuses controlling people. These names are pretentious and oppressive because the institutions under these names claim they remedy the conflicts "to justify the violation;" what's more, these names are "interchangeable" because these names share one signifier—the master signifier.

In terms of poststructuralist, postcolonial theories, all signifiers are sutured to the master signifier or the pure signifier, meaning "a signifier without signified" (Zižek, *Sublime* 93). Taking on naming to explain the role of the pure signifier, Zižek demonstrates how "naming is necessary but it is, so to speak, necessary afterwards, retroactively, once we are already 'in it'" (*Sublime* 93); that is to say, a name can be given to an object or a being without any substance that correlates with that being, and this name retrospectively changes the properties of the being by suturing all other properties or signifieds into that meaningless pure signifier. For example, the name of a nation-state such as "The Republic of Korea" is a pure signifier "which gives unity and identity to [Korean] experience of historical reality itself" (*Sublime* 97). Other signifiers such as justice, freedom, humanity, etc. get sutured to this master signifier

only to call forth vicarious substitutions, instead of revealing the true substance of these names.

Against these mere names sutured into an master signifier for interpellation which constitutes one's discursive and bio-political subjectivity and identity, Cha discloses the hidden networks or a constellation between historical names of women—Yu Kuan Soon, Jean d'Arc, or Hyung Soon Huo—by calling their pure names. By this invocation of names, Cha endeavors to reclaim a "name" "of her. Own. Unbegotten," which contains the dream of life and rebirth. In general history, Cha's or other women's name(s) are constantly repelled, rejected and expelled from history and national languages. Ironically, only through these trans-spatial experiences of rejection and expellation can Cha and other women restore the origin of their names—Demeter and Sibyl. Sibyl is a mythical Greek prophetess. On one hand, Cha alludes to Heraclitus's reference[132] to Sibyl in order to show the name's subtext of the indelible voices of women poets or shamans; on the other hand, she alludes to T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" [133] in which Sibyl, doomed to live eternally, cries out her desire "to die." Her desire for the proper death contrasts with the symbol of Demeter—rebirth—in Greek myth; Demeter set out on a journey to the underworld to save her daughter caught by Hades. This association of life, death, and rebirth via the mythical origins of names restores the power of the heritage from women's history and mother-daughter relationships; this retroactive restoration and reorientation, in opposition to mere names' orientation from the state apparatuses,

---

[132] "Sibyl was first introduced by Heraclitus who says, "The Sibyl, with frenzied mouth uttering things not to be laughed at, unadorned and unperfumed, yet reaches to a thousand years with her voice by aid of the god."
[133] "The Waste Land" is prefaced by, ""I saw with my own eyes the Sibyl at Cumae hanging in a cage, and when the boys said to her 'Sibyl, what do you want?' that she replied 'I want to die'" (67)

aims to restore these women's common pure name. The pure name does not have meaning but can bridge other names without oppressive intepellation from various systematic apparatuses. Pure name is pure communicability as the full potentiality to open a zone of infinite invitations to forgotten names.

By the pure name, Cha's name language has the potency to reestablish the connection to the origin of the name and its power to communicate with beings and things in the world, which partly corresponds with Benjamin's idea of name language and pure name. Admittedly, there are disparities between Cha's and Benjamin's name languages because Benjamin's name language has its foci in the mystic function of names in terms of his redemptive criticism and exegesis of Bible, influenced by the Jewish tradition of Kabala. Cha's names are gender-specific and more historic as well as politically subversive. However, at its core, Benjamin's claim that "the language of poetry is partly, if not solely, founded on the name language of man" ("On Language as Such" 73) resonates with Cha. Benjamin's naming is not just calling one's proper names or words referring to objects in the world; rather it is metaphysical, philosophical, or, more specifically, ethico-onological disclosing of things, and the dead's hidden substance—their dream of freedom and resurrection. Naming one's true, pure name is to free it or her from the system of mere name and its master signifier of state apparatus and therefore resurrect them from patriarchal history stained by blood shed during war and colonization. This naming *in Dictée* is ethico-ontological because it can emancipate beings from the enthralling power of subjectivities.

Besides naming the dead, naming happens through portraits. The photos of portraits of women in *Dictée* require pure naming. In *Dictée*, photographs of historical figures (Yu, Guan Soon, St. Therese de Lisieux, a film still of Maria Falconetti as Joan of Arc (in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*) parallel with young and old portrait photos of Cha's mother. All these portraits share several similarities. Each portrait of women reflects each other's suffering during their physical, spiritual exiles as well as their hope of dialogism and resurrection. And, these photos represent different local locations and histories and create a global constellation of martyrdom as well as exiles. Geopolitically, these women's photos represent medieval and modern France (St. Therese de Lisieux and Joan of Arc) and colonized Korea in 1920s (Yu, Guan Soon and Cha's mother). This photographic parallel signifies the inter-women coalition of lives of suffering and resistance. Looking through the photos, viewers may perceive an aura that intimates sublime connections.

These effects originate from the gesture of the women in photos. In all these black-and-white photos, women's faces, except Joan of Arc, stare at readers. Agamben understands these photographs of staring people in terms of Benjamin's idea of naming and resurrection:

> Even if the person photographed is completely forgotten today, even if his or her name has been erased forever from human memory—or, indeed, precisely because of this— that person and that face demand their name; they demand not to be forgotten…The photograph is always more than an image: it is the site of gap, a sublime breach between the sensible and the intelligible, between copy and reality, between memory and a hope. (*Profanations* 25-6)

Here Agamben rereads and interprets Benjamin's essay, "A Little History of Photograph." In this essay, Benjamin traces the aura in portrait photos which leads

the viewers with an "unruly desire to know what [the person in the photo's] name was, the [one] who was alive there, who even now is still real and will never consent to be wholly absorbed in "art" ("Little History" 510). What cannot be absorbed in art is the life within the still life of the person in the photo who demands that her own name be called forth to be resurrected in our memory and history. This invocation is "covert enough to find a hiding place in waking dreams, but which enlarged and capable of formulation, make the difference between technology and magic visible as a thoroughly historical variable" ("Little History" 512). Cha's women in photos create an aura which is "a strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance of semblance of distance, no matter how close it may be" ("Little History" 518). This strange weave of space and time creates a montage or a constellation to deliver the meaning of naming and history in *Dictée*.

For example, Yu, Gown Soon's faces, whose photos are so time-worn that her faces are smudged mostly, confront viewers as if Miss Yu demands something from them. Likewise, in Cha's mother's two photos, the faces stare at viewers with "unmistakable historical index[es]," such as Japanese colonization and its oppression of Koreans, and demand viewers to remember their names and their worlds "thanks to the special power of gesture" (*Profanations* 25). But their faces and gazes do not just confirm their sacrifices and martyrdom. Rather, they ask what significance their sacrifice could be in the future; indeed, Cha's questions, "Why resurrect it all now. From the past. History, the old wound. The past emotions all over again. To confess to relive the same folly. To name it now so as not to repeat history in oblivion. To extract each fragment by each fragment from the word from the image another word

another image the reply " (*Dictée* 33). Those photos reveal the wound and trauma

caused by exile and historic atrocities, which is the main purpose of resurrecting those

women through their face images and names: "name it now so as not to repeat history

in oblivion" (*Dictée* 33). The anonymous but pure name of "it" is an empty signifier

through which memories of their lives can be disinterred, and this resurrection

inhibits the viewers from repeating violent history. The empty signifier is different

from the master signifier in that the former does not operate for apparatuses but just

opens an empty venue to bridge these names. Also, by calling for one's name into

each other's photos, each photo is relayed, facing not only the viewers but also each

other in the oblivion of history. This relay creates a poetics of relation via

congregations of faces demanding their original names.

  Yet interestingly enough, a white woman's portrait poses a different gesture.

The life of Joan of Arc is represented by a famous movie still from *The Passion of*

Joan of Arc (1928) directed by Carl Dreyer. It corresponds with Yu's life because

both sacrificed their lives for the emancipation of their nations from the imperial

powers of England and Japan, respectively. Yet, the portrait of Joan of Arc is

problematic since it is overcoded by Western faciality created by Christianity.

Regarding this movie still, Deleuze and Guattari assert that "the face is Christ. The

face is the typical European…Jesus Christ superstar: he invented the facialization of

the entire body and spread it everywhere (*The Passion of Joan of Arc*, in close-up)"

(*A Thousand* 176). According to Deleuze and Guattari, the still of Joan of Arc

simulates the European prototype of a face that is Christ's face in accordance with his

typical gesture of looking up the sky waiting for salvation. Joan of Arc's in this photo

looks up to the sky instead of looking at viewers. In some sense, she solicits naming from God rather than from the viewers. Her face is reflected by light from the sky, which shows how her subject is interpellated by Christianity. Joan of Arc's demand of her name and her salvation is limited to Christianity, an apparatus of "mere names."

However, in spite of this deviation, the women's faces share the hope of resurrection or redemption by the articulation of their pure names. Furthermore, this constellation of names expands into broader set of names of anonymous people in history. In *Dictée*'s portrait photos, women's faces are juxtaposed with photos of multiple people: Yu, Kown Soon's photo begins the chapter, "Clio/History" and ends with three anonymous men who are supposedly about to be executed by Japanese soldiers; in another example, the chapter, "Elitere/Lyric Poetry" begins with a photo of multiple Koreans from supposedly from mass demonstration in Korea against Japanese colonization (3.1 Uprising which Yu, Kown Soon participated as a leader of the revolt). In this sense, Cha's naming extends, in a broader sense, to the names of all "people" in permanent exiles or suffering from the state, national, imperial, and colonial violence, to revive the histories of those who have fought against these nation-state systems. This also relates to Cha's shamanic exorcism, purifying the brutal history of Korea: Japanese colonization and the 3.1 uprising in1919; the 4.19 revolution against Korean dictator, Seung Man Rhee in 1960; and the 5.18 massacre in 1980 perpetrated by the General Chun who killed thousands in Kwang-Ju area.[134]

---

[134] According to her biography, when she went back to Korea, Cha and her brother, James, "were harassed by suspicious South Korean officials who thought they might be North Korean spies" (Lewallen 10); this reflects the political situation in South Korea at that time; the old dictator, Park,

Names relate across history, ontological historicity of life and death, and individually and collectivity. But to resurrect the disconnections between bodies, memories, and history, name language requires another dimension of language—translating language. Translation, alongside name language, deconstructs national boundaries and opens up a zone of true conversations among Cha's multilingual experiences and pure language hidden under the national language.

The Fourth Moment of Language: Translation and Language of life, death and rebirth

Paolo Bartoloni, in his *On the Cultures of Exile, Translation, and Writing*, extensively explores the philosophical spectrum of translation and its connection to exile. According to him, ontology parallels translation because both focus on "potentiality" that also lies at the threshold of being and nothing, two different languages, two geographical points. Linguistic translation, as Benjamin in his "The Task of the Translator" argues, has its potential threshold, namely pure language, through which a word become another word; thus pure language is both origin and becoming (Bartoloni 10). Analogously, a body crosses borderlines into exile, and being moves from "being thrown to the world" to "being-towards-death."

In *Dictée*, translation occurs on three levels: bodies, different national languages, and ontological language of life and death. First, *Dictée* contains multi-lingual and multi-directional translations of French, English, Latin, and Korean. These translations share an analogy with bodily transfusions. In the chapter,

---

had died but political uprisings and the people's demonstration for the hope of establishing democratic government was suppressed by another dictator and his atrocious massacre in Kwang-Ju in 1980.

"Urania/Astronomy," ostensibly, Cha analogizes blood donation with writing. She

says that the purposes of both activities are:

> To contain. Made filled. Be full….Something of the ink
> that resembles the stain from the interior emptied onto
> emptied into emptied upon this boundary this surface.
> More. Others. When possible ever possible to puncture to
> scratch to imprint. Expel. Ne te câche pas. Révele toi. Sang.
> Encre. Of this body's extention of its containment" (*Dictée*
> 64-65)

In this bilingual passage, the human membrane symbolizes a boundary or borderline,

and bloodletting becomes a way to make the interior of the body "emptied onto, into,

and upon" this symbolic skin, in which filling happens simultaneously with emptying.

This paradoxical coexistence of emptying and filling corresponds with another

possible interpretation of this scene: tattooing. Tattooing and blood donation share an

instrument—a needle. The penetrating needle for extracting blood can conversely be

used to infuse ink into skin. In other words, across the boundary of skin, the needle

penetrates skin not only to extract blood but also to "puncture to scratch to imprint"

(*Dictée* 64) ink below the boundary. By this comparison of bloodletting and tattooing,

"something of the ink" resembles "the stain from the interior"—the blood. Alongside

these parallel bodily registers of bloodletting and tattooing, a body translation

unconceals of wordplay and "the emergence of body as pure language" in the passage

about blood donation—"Sang. Encre. Of this body's extention of its containment"

(*Dictée* 65). In French, *sang* is "blood," and *encre* is "ink." Then, diseuse calls forth,

"Révele toi," which can be translated into "unconceal you" in English. Cha show how

this unconcealment discloses "an anatomy of the body of exile trapped between

English and French" (*Dictée* 136).

On the geopolitical level, bloodletting and tattooing become parallel transfusions in opposite directions and symbolize trans-spatial beings' exiles and returning. Namely, if immigration, crossing a borderline, is to transfuse immigrant's body to another country, it also means scripting identity on one's body, while one's memory and language is to be taken away. On the philosophical level, Cha discloses the similarity and difference between textual inscription and bodily transfusion. Blood can connect two people by transfusion; likewise texts can connect the reader and writer. But this comparison is disrupted by an intentional neologism, "extention," (*Dictée* 136) which might be a combination of "extension" and "intention." In the philosophical tradition, "extension" has been associated with Descartes's term that refers to the space a body occupies, and "intention" has been the central topic of epistemology, especially phenomenology. Thus, "extention" is the philosophical hybrid term that mixes materialism and epistemology. Cha intentionally uses this neologism to deconstruct traditional philosophy's separation of mind and body as well as its containment that signifies the inhibition of flow. Therefore, "extention of its containment" implies discursive, philosophical restraints that limit the free flow of blood, thoughts, texts, and life.

Furthermore, the flow itself is reciprocal. Minh-ha explains "the association of blood, saliva, and ink [is] intensified in French by the resonance between *sang* and *encre* and *sans encre* (without ink)" ("White" 38). Bodily *sang* and textual *encre* has its potentiality of *sans encre*. Resonating with the philosophical association of "extention" as the deconstructed relation between body and mind and "containment" as restriction, the co-existence of "Being" and "emptiness" in both "ink" and "blood"

reveals the relation between "concealment" and "unconcealment." If something is concealed within containment, it will look like "emptiness," But if something is unconcealed, its truth or Being will be revealed. The transfusion of blood between two bodies and the transition of texts via ink share this philosophical correlation of "being" and "emptiness." In other words, this set of French words is paradoxically related to the double bind of "fulfillment," maximizing potential for future fulfillment, and "emptying out," making a space void. This parallels the process of translation as readers translate French into English or English to French, which in turn parallels the transfusion of blood and geopolitical movement of trans-spatial being.

Indeed, words do not flow between languages. We are not able to see the transitional phases between two languages during translation. Only through translation from French to English can the English speaker understand the implication of this word play as well as other phrases in French. We tend to think that words can be transferred across boundaries of national languages and keep their original meaning, but most post-Benjaminian translation theories deny this possibility. For example, the mere translation of "Sang, Encre" to "blood, ink" does not account for homonyms of "*sans encre* (without ink)," which unconceals a paradoxical space of words, bodies, and trans-spatial experience across linguistic, geopolitical, and ontological boundaries. Like ink and blood flowing between body and the needle for inscription on body, translation as the transition of something original between two languages hides the real process of translations. The role of translation is related to the emancipation and disinterment of the origin and its dream of freedom. In this way, translation is the mode of finding the origin of language or pure language because "if

on the one hand pure language is the essential, the origin, on the other it is also

becoming, the fluid, the incessant, and the indistinct" (Bartoloni 10). After Cha's

description of her blood donation experience, a lyric appears on the right page with its

translation on the left page in French:

J'ecoutais les cygnes
Les cygnes dans la pluie. J'ecoutais.
J'ai entendu des paroles vrai
Ou pas vari
Impossible a dire

I heard the swans
In the rain I heard
I listened to the spoken true
Or not true
Not possible to say.

La. Des annees après
Impossible de distinguer la Pluie
Cygnes. Paroles souveus. Deja dit.
Vien de dire. Va dire.
Souvenu mal entendu. Pas certain.

There. Years after
No more possible to distinguish the rain.
No more. Which was heard.
Swans. Speech. Memory. Already said.
Will just say. Having just said.
Remembered not quite heard. Not certain.
Heard not at all.

La pluie fait rever de sons
Des pauses. Exhalation.
Des affirmations toutes les affirmations.
….

Rain dreamed from sounds.
The pauses. Exhaltation.
Affirmations. All the affirmations.
….

La langue dedans. La bouche dedans
La gorge dedans
Le poumon l'organe seul
Tout ensemble un. Une.
….
La. Plus tard, peu certain, si c'etait
La pluie, la parole, memoire.
Memoire d'un reve
Comment cela s'eteint. Comment
l'eteindre.
Alors que cela
S'eteint.

Tongue inside the mouth inside
The throat inside
The lung organ alone. The only organ.
All assembled as one. Just one.
….
There. Later. Uncertain, if it was
the rain, the speech, memory.
Re membered from dream.
How it diminishes itself. How to Dim

Inish itself. As
It dims.

Morder la langue.
Avaler profondement. Plus
profondement.
Avaler. Plus encore.
Jusqu'a ce qu'il n'y aurait plus.
D'organe.
Plus d'organe.
Cries

To bite the tongue.
Swallow. Deep. Deeper.
Swallow. Again even more.
Just until there would be no more of
organ.
Organ no more.
Cries   (*Dictée* 66-69).

The first stanza is made up of synesthetic signs. Here swans are objects not seen bur rather heard. An obvious reference is that Cha is listening to Saint-Saens' "swan," thinking about her memory. Alternatively, as several scholars point out, "*cygnes*" in French has two meanings: "swans" and "signs." From this viewpoint, the diseuse hears "signs in the rain" rather than "swans in the rain." Strangely enough, the diseuse is actually reminiscing about "the spoken" by someone, hearing these "signs" or "swans," and wonders if what was spoken is true or not; she then confesses that she cannot decide. This wonder and doubt occurs through time. "Years after," still the diseuse cannot distinguish the rain from swans/signs, the speech from memory because it was "Already said. Will just say. Having just said. Remembered not quite heard" (*Dictée* 67). The rain is a cue that triggers the intentional association of swans/signs and someone's speech from her own memory. Because everything except "rain" dwells in imagination or memory, time loses its demarcations between the past, the present, and the future; thus, "rain dreamed from sounds. The pauses. Exhaltation. Affirmations. All the affirmations."

This mysterious passage deconstructs the marked differences between national languages (English and French) and affirms something that transcends boundaries between national languages. For example, a word is inserted in this passage, "exhaltation." "Exhaltation" is not a word *per se*, but a typo of exhalation or exaltation. "Exhaltation" can be pronounced as either "exhalation" or "exaltation." Those "h" or "t" functions like "a" in Derrida's *différance*, which shows how meaning is always deferred, and writing hides subversion against speech in both cases. Does this deconstruction operate as Derrida's *différance* to reveal the superiority of writing over the speech?

Partly yes and partly no, because there is another logic in these deconstructions. As Derrida claims, deconstruction creates a new language.[135] "Exaltation," "exhalation" and "affirmation" do not need to be translated from English to French or vice versa because these words are the same in English and French. French and English becomes one identical language at this time, which deconstructs the purpose of Cha's translation: to find a conduit to the pure language between two languages. "Exhaltation" may mean an "exalted exhalation" or happy articulation, in context with "affirmation." In this sense, Cha does not intend to reveal the hidden privileges of writing but to deconstruct the system of national language itself and show the equivalence and gaps between writing and bodily speech. The purposes of this double deconstruction and Cha's search for a pure language leads to two significant motives of this lyric: to restore and reveal a pure language that

---

[135] Derrida claims, deconstruction is to invent one's "own new language if you can or want to hear mine; invent if you can or want to give my language to be understood" (*Monolingualism of the Other* 57).

transcends the demarcations between writing and speech and the revelation of her mother tongue.

In addition, Cha employs parody and pun. This lyric parodies Baudelaire's poem, "Le cygnet."[136] In fact, the diseuse's "the spoken" refers to Baudelaire's poem, and Cha remembers his poem while listening to the rain and associating Baudelaire's swans/signs. This reference hides Cha's connectivity to Baudelaire's dream in exile. In the lyric, Baudelaire, as a *flâneur,* roams Paris and spots a swan drenched in filth. It symbolizes the disgraced poet in modern Paris. The swan's desperate but futile efforts to escape disgrace stretch Baudelaire's poetic imagination to an epic figure in a Greek myth who tried to exile herself—Andromache. The sound of the rain instigates Baudelaire's association of Greek myth and swan, and his dream of freedom; similarly, the diseuse imagines Baudelaire's swan listening to the sound of rain at a different time and place. Rain connects the two worlds of the diseuse and Baudelaire where swans become conjunctive signs sharing the same ideas—freedom and redemption.

By this parody hidden in translation, the diseuse's melancholic mood over the dream of freedom from her exile points to Baudelaire's across time and space. But the diseuse does not just identify herself with Baudelaire. The "affirmation" is not an affirmation of the repetition and the communicability between two worlds across different spaces and times (19th century Paris and an unknown place in 20th century),

---

[136] According to Park: "'[i]n French, langue' denotes both tongue and language equally; the poem goes on to demonstrate the swallowing of sentences, paragraphs, and ultimately, all speech…the exact echo of sound between 'cygnet' and 'sign' locks the swan into a devastating muteness; it is forced to become an image. The English, however, cannot register the homonym of swan and sign in French. Cha does add a couple of words to the line English ('Remnants. Missing.'), yet she does not attempt to compensate for the lost connection between swan and sign in French" (*Apparitions of Asia* 140).

but a stage for presenting another question about language itself and the communicability between languages. Why does Cha resurrect Baudelaire's swan and its world? Why does Cha translate her own lyric in English parodying Baudelaire's "swan" into French on the facing page?

The answer centers on "redemption," and "freedom" which are also Baudelaire's themes in the poem. Translation is redemptive act, which can be compared to breathing life into the body of a literary work. It is redemptive because it transmits something in the original that cannot be transmitted by a national language. It requires something that is immanent to and at the same time transcendental to the national languages, which Benjamin calls the pure language. According to Smerick, this pure language "lies at the heart of creation," and is analogous with Heidegger's "Being in beings" (49). In fact, parody is a mode of translation if it shares this pure language. The pure language in Cha's lyric is hidden under the dream of freedom which is the essence of the translation because "freedom proves its worth in the interest of the pure language by its effect on its own language" and "it is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is exiled among alien tongues, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of the work" (Benjamin, "The Task" 261). But by erratic translations and deconstructions, Cha emphasizes that the rebirth of language has to precede the death of language that corresponds with the life/language cycle of life, death, and rebirth of life. The death of language is hidden but related to the pure language. The dead language is her mother tongue.

In this sense, the diseuse sings, "Both time hollowing. Cavity. And germination. Both times. From death from sleep the appel. Both time appellant. Toward the movement. The movement itself. She return the word. She returns to word, its silence. If only once. Once inside. Moving." (*Dictée* 151). In this quote, "appel" and "appellant" are French words, meaning "call," and "calling." Without these translations, the meaning of this quote becomes ambiguous. Translation resurrects by calling "death from sleep" to resurrect and to return to its pure language. Translation takes the dead word (already written) in one language to resurrect in the translator's mind. In truth, the translator writes down the pure language in the different words of the future—as if translation awakes the dead to be resurrected. Now collective resurrection via ontological language—name language and translation—becomes chaosmological language to disclose the origins of these names.

The Fifth Moment: Creolization and Language of Redemption

As a multi-genre collage of letters, images and movie-stills, *Dictée* starts with a photo: a desert with rocks shaped like human faces. This photo as visual preface contains the core ideas of memory, writing and origins in *Dictée*. The photo of the desert depicts rocks in the shapes of human heads. This series of rocks shows that *Dictée* will consist of the repetition of similar themes and representations of those themes with qualitative difference. Yet, what else does this petrification of human forms signify? The answer lies in the meaning of "thingness" of "things/rocks" in the shape of humans within nature. In fact, the desert and the rock in a shape of a pyramid in the photo does not "mean" anything at all; they are just unnoticeable

background as voids filled with an unrepresentable, mysterious something, but these voids in fact foreground the rocks to create a constellation. This constellation suggests how humanity is a small part of "things" in universe. Then, what does the "things," the series of rock with human shapes, mean? These things correlate with a ring of people and their congregation for resurrection of the dead in the shape of constellation. Constellation changes as if it were women congregating and their circular dances.

For instance, in the chapter, "Terpischore/Choral Dance," Cha associates the image of choral dance as a rite for redemption or resurrection and a scene of genesis mixed with the scene of articulation. This connection between genesis and articulation counters Western *logos* because it spouts from the earth, commingling cosmological four elements (earth, air, sky and human); it also alludes to a register of ancient Eastern cosmology—"Ng Hang," meaning "Fifth, the five elements, Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, Earth" (173). The chapter starts with ten registers of Eastern cosmology in Chinese characters (154) and moves to a renunciation that "you remain dismembered with the belief that magnolia blossoms while even on seemingly dead branches and you wait. You remain apart from the congregation" (*Dictée* 155). The diseuse regrets that she did not believe in the rebirth and redemption in the future, and therefore remains apart from the congregation.

After this renunciation, the diseuse waits until "[she] can see through the dark earth the beginning of a root, the air entering with the water being poured dark earth harbouring dark taken for granted the silence and the dark the conception seedling" (*Dictée* 156). Darkness of the earth symbolizes silence, and the root symbolizes the

diseuse's tongue/ language (*langue*) that waits to articulate. This analysis of speech

and genesis continues to the total darkness as nothingness or a void without time and

space; the diseuse sings, "Affords no penetration. Hence no depth. No disruption.

Hence no time. No wait. Hence. No distance. Full. Utter most full. Can contain any

longer…Fulmination and concealment of light…The time thought to have fixed,

dead, reveals the very rate of the very movement. Velocity. Lentitude. Of its larger

time" (*Dictée* 156-57). As the diseuse sings, the darkness as a void space conceals

light, which moves slowly (*lentitude* 'slowness') and indiscernibly. This transition

from chaos to light is also a passage "to core. In another tongue. Same word. Slight

mutation of the same. Undefinable. Shift. Shift slightly. Into a different sound. The

difference" (*Dictée* 157). The passage from chaos to the open associates body and

language as well as brings forth Glissant's totality where "difference in and the

difference of similarity are brought to light" (Oakley, *Common Places* 35).

This relay of differences for the genesis and articulation of body-language is

possible not only because of the diseuse's communication with things or fundamental

elements on the earth but also the earth's potentiality to spout life and language. The

diseuse sings:

> You seek the night that you might render the air pure.
> Distillation extending breath to its utmost pure. Its first
> exhale at dawn to be collected…You stand a column of
> white luster, atoned with tears, restored in
> breath….*Maimed. Accident. Stutters. Almost a name. Half
> a name. Almost a place. Starts. About to. Then
> stop…exhale swallowed to a sudden arrest*…Earth is dark.
> Darker…Cry supplication wail resound song to the god to
> barter you, your sight. For the lenience. Make lenient, the
> immobility of sediment. Entreat with prayer to the god his
> eloquence. To conduct to stone. Thawing of the knotted
> flesh. Your speech as ransom…And you wait. Still. Having

> bartered away your form, now you are formless. Blind. Mute…Waiting. Scribe. Diving. In whiteness beyond matter. Sight. Speech. (*Dictée* 158-59)

This passage shows the constellation of the ideas of void, name, body, earth, writing, and speech. Here Cha's language initiates as "maimed" half a name, but its other half has potentiality to start from the dark earth, *chaos-monde*. The poet in the eternal exile "entreat[s] with" mystic language for the redemption of presences and voices of the dead buried under the earth. Ironically, the poet can restore the power of language for redemption because her language is made up of "the name, Half a name, Forgotten word leaving out a word," and this pure, earthlike, and corporeal language is "being broken. Speaking broken. Saying broken. Talk broken. Say broken. Broken speech. Pidgon tongue. Broken word…As spoken, To be said. Then speak" (*Dictée* 161). Significantly enough, Cha intentionally replace "pigeon" with a typo, "Pidgon." In "Pidgon" a letter "e" is missing; this lost "e" becomes a hidden caesura or a void of creolized language in which all beings lost in the diaspora abide and wait for the future redemption. This replacement or intentional typo correlates to Glissant's creolization.

Glissant's creolization originates from melancholy as the mood of trans-spatiality (exile and errancy); this mood emerges because "the exile readily admits that [trans-spatial being] suffers most from the impossibility of communicating in his language. The root is monolingual…the call of Relation is heard, but it is not yet a fully present experience" (*Poetics* 15). Glissant's creolization is not the denial of the root of language, a pure, name language of trans-spatial beings' redemption and freedom. "Pidgon" hides this creolization to retain its full potentiality under the veil

of a typo. That is to say, Cha's "beginning of a root" (*Dictée* 156) is thus the language of the origin which is creolized and presents a void and name as its ideas. The creolized void relates to the poeticized; Glissant's poetics of relation is in truth a philosophical speculation about the relation between his life experience as a trans-spatial being from the third world and his critical and philosophical theorization of ontological "Being" as poetic "Relation." Aesthetics and philosophy, as Heidegger also claims, are neighbors. The poeticized is the totality where aesthetics abuts philosophy and engenders its ethico-onological questions of the world and humanity. Language of the origin, in the context of name language, dream language, life language, and pure language are thus the borderline between life, philosophy, and art. All these are related, and all create poetics of relation as a constellation.

Cha is a trans-spatial poet, always in exile like the ancient Greek poets expelled from Plato's political utopia, the *trobar*, middle ages European bards, Baudelaire, who dreamt of freedom from filthy modernity, and all other trans-spatial poets in exiles. All these origins convolute around a concept—the name of a void or a "bowl." One of the primary forms of this new language in *Dictée* is mystic language and its writing which purports to create a void as a third space of desubjectification and the invocation of other forgotten women's presences and voices.

Sixth Moment: The Names of Void: *Khora* and Tao

As Bartoloni argues, Heidegger and Benjamin delved into the meanings of the origin deeper than other philosophers; yet, what they found is the "impossibility of returning". We lost our origin eternally, not because the origin cannot be found with

the help of archaeology or genealogy, but because it is either future-oriented (in case of Heidegger) or "philosophical mediator" (in case of Benjamin) (Bartoloni 39). Therefore, the origin becomes a future space of potentiality. Agamben argues in his "Absolute immanence" that potentiality is the subject of the coming philosophy where contemplation without knowledge can occur because "there will be little sense in distinguishing between organic life and animal life or even between biological life and contemplative life and between bare life and the life of the mind" (*Potentiality* 239). Life is a space of thoughts and a living body; thereby it is the space of infinite potentiality to make something new happen in its future. But this life as a space of potentiality must be void because nothing has to happen now. This space is also a potential poetic space where new language emerges corresponding with the living body and finally becomes the living space itself. Creative writing emerges from the mixture of mood, relations with things in the world, gathering of thoughts and inspiration to germinate something new. Ancient people in the West and the East knew this potent potentiality by naming them as *Khora* and Tao, and Cha's literary space is the *Khora* and Tao that also possess the form of a receptacle or bowl with a void inside.

In *Dictée*, this mysterious origin of void and name emerges in a cryptic passage:

> *Dead time. Hollow depression interred invalid to resurgence, resistant to memory. Waits. Apel. Apellation. Excavation. Let the one who is diseuse. Diseuse de bonne aventure. Let her call forth. Let her break open the spell cast upon time upon time again and again. With her voice, penetrate earth's floor, the walls of Tartaurus to circle and scratch the bowl's surface. Let the sound enter from without, the bowl's hollow its sleep. Until.* (123; italics in original)

Tartaurus, as both a deity and a space, represents the chaos before the cosmos

emerge. Mostly described in Hesiod's Greek classic, *Homeric Hymns, Epic Cycle,*

Homerica, and briefly mentioned in Plato's *Phaedo* and *Gorgias*, Tartaurus is both

the name of the deity who marries Gaea,[137] the great mother of the earth, and the

space of chaos in which the sinner will be judged. Tartaurus relates to the mysterious

object in the quote—the bowl. As Cha's allusion to Tartaurus proves, the well of the

origin in *Dictée* corresponds with Greek myths. The whole structure of *Dictée* is

significantly influenced by the Greek gender-specific name of void—*Khora.*[138] Like

Plato's chaotic space of becoming, *Khora* is the name of rebirth as well as void on

which *Dictée*'s poeticized centers.

Cha contemplates on the meaning of the void of the bowl obsessively because

it contains every memory and its future. The diseuse sings,

> All rise. At once. One by one. Voices absorbed into the
> bowl of sound. Rise voices shifting upwards circling the
> bowl's hollow. In deep metal voice spiraling up wards to
> pools   no visible light lighter   no audible higher quicken
> shiver the air in pool's waves to raise all else where all
> memory all echo. (162)

---

[137] Gaea marries Tartaurus and gives birth to Uranus, who becomes her second husband. After betrayed by Uranus, Gaea's other sons are incarcerated in Tartaurus, a dungeon, so that Gaea attacks and castrate Uranus to revenge. Cha intentionally appropriate this Greek mythology to connect literary space, creation, violence, suffering and redemption.
[138] In *Timaeus*, Plato talks about the mysterious space of *Khora* which means both receptacle and void. *Timaeus*, as the book of cosmology, is written in a form of dialogue, and its content is a mixture of mythos (myth) and logos (science). In *Timaeus*' cosmos, everything is in contradictory: "being" and "the same" coexist but contradict and sublate "becoming" and "difference." In this dialogue, Plato's being is also a permanently unchanging form of necessity and intellect (*nous*) as much as becoming is the changing form of the sensible. Yet, different from these two categories, *Khora* is something epistemologically incomprehensible but has a figure of "receptacle of all becoming—its wetnurse, as it were" (38); that is, *Khora* is an undefinable name with an attribute of femaleness. More strangely, Plato says, *Khora* cannot be named because "it is not correct to refer to…by their usual names" (Zeyl lviii). It contains other things but is also a space where "they perish" (Plato 39).

The image of "bowl" and its "hollowness" has its origin in *Khora* in the West. But whose voices are echoing in this *Khora* but the diseuse's which echoes all other women's voices. These collective voices from the diseuse's collective memory require the void within this bowl for full potentiality. Every woman's voice can be put in and put out simultaneously because this void is the space of pure taking-place. To maximize the potentiality, *Khora* must be a space of the void where everything can happen because nothing dwells in it but rather in transit.

Derrida also suggests the idea of *Khora* as trans-spatial poet's space. Derrida interprets *Khora* as the space of trans-spatial poets' songs and holds that trans-spatial poets resemble *Khora* because, like Socrates, one "situates [oneself] or institutes [oneself] as a *receptive addressee*…as a *receptacle of all* that will henceforth be inscribed" (*On the Name*110;italics in original).[139] *Khora* is the name of those trans-spatial beings' experience that cannot be transferred or contained but can be imitated. *Khora* only happens as "*as if*"—"a series of mythic fictions embedded mutually in each other" (113). It is a receptacle of "all stories, ontological or mythic … but … *Khora* herself, so to speak, does not become the object of any *tale*, whether true or fabled" (*On the Name* 117).

---

[139] After discussing the paradoxical aspects of *Khora,* Derrida, in the analysis of the structure of *Timaeus* in resonance with the meaning of *Khora*, moves to its meaning of absolutely erratic, errant Otherness. Othereness dominates not only a part of *Khora* but the whole narrative structure and identity of the narrator in *Timaeus*. The main speaker of this dialogue—*Timaeus*—is a trans-spatial philosopher; he is not a Greek citizen but an Italian. This corresponds with the fact that this dialogue starts with a story of a journey of Solon, a Greek politician, to Egypt. Solon's journey to a mysterious land resonates with Timaeus' story of pre-cosmos as a receptacle or a bowl that connotes chaos or space for "erratic, hence unintelligible and unpredictable" contents (Zeyl xxv). In reality, corresponding with its unnamable proper name and the female figure of receptacle as well as its full potentiality and Otherness, as Derrida claims, *Khora* is in lieu of those trans-spatial beings as erratic, wandering bards (*genos*) who do not have their race (*ethnos*) and so becomes Others. The diseuse's voice turns into trans-spatial poets' songs echoing forgotten women's voices in history.

The Bowl in *Dictée* also has another name in the East—Tao. Some *Dictée* scholars have argued that *Dictée* is immensely influenced by Eastern philosophy in its mystic writing style. In *Poetics of Emptiness*, Jonathan Stalling explores poetics of emptiness in *Dictée* by delving into influence from Taoism. Stalling argues, *Dictée* "makes available distinct cultural spaces conditioned by unique shamanic and Taoist cosmogonies left unaddressed by the growing field of Cha scholarship" (158).[140] One ostensible example is Cha's use of a Taoist diagram in *Dictée* "that traces the universe's cosmogonic origins from (and back toward) the void/emptiness" (Stalling 163). Like *Khora*, Tao does not have its specific name, while it holds a pure name for creation and redemption by its symbolization of female body[141]. In chapter eleven of *Tao Te Ching*, the bowl image is also compared with the ultimate potentiality: "[t]hirty spokes are unived around the hub to make a wheel, but it is on its non-being that the utility of the carriage depends" (119). In the image of a wheel, Tao is fully potential and potent because its emptiness is ultimately useful for future use; likewise the wheel can sustain its weight because it consists of thirty spokes with the void between them. Therefore, "Tao is empty (like a bowl). It may be used but its capacity

---

[140] The void or "Emptiness" is the core of Taoism no less than it is the center of Buddhism. In case of Buddhism, "emptiness" or "the void" "designates deprivation, in another fulfillment" (Conze 60). The connection via emptiness across these two Eastern religions happened; according to Conze, "when China Buddhism fused with Neo-Taoism, 'emptiness' became the latest potentiality from which all things come forth, and it beame usual to say, in cosmological sense, that all things go out of emptiness and return to it" (61).

[141]Like *Khora*, Tao has its name but this name is in its pure sense chaotic. In fact, Tao (or Dao) primarily means "the way" which is truth or law of the world. Tao does not have specific meaning, but it can be everything and nothing; like *Khora*, Tao is mystic from its beginning because it is not the name or word that has universality. The first four lines of the first stanzas of the *Tao Te Ching* shows mysterious "way" of Tao and why it is non-universal name; "The Tao that can be told of is not the eternal Tao; The name that can be named is the origin of Heaven and earth; The named is the mother of all things (道可道 非常道, 名可名 非常名.無名 天地之始, 有名 萬物之母)" (97). Oxymoron plays an important role here. Tao is name of universe or thing that does not have it specific name, but it is constantly changing its forms and naming everything in the world. More interestingly, the sexuality of Tao is not male but female. Tao is in some sense is like a womb or a receptacle that is able to contain and name everything, simultaneously emptying out and erasing the names of everything.

is never exhausted. It is bottomless, perhaps the ancestor of all things" (Lao Tuz 105). And this bowl is female like "The spirit of the valley […which] is called profound female" (Lao Tuz 110). Tao is a feminine bowl and has the Bartleby's logic of full potentiality; the oxymoron that the weakest is the strongest is possible because Tao is ethical ground of animal cry. The image of this bowl as full potentiality leads to the last chapter of *Dictée* that also repeats Western Tao—*Khora*.

The Last Moment: On My Way Home

  Dictée ends with a chapter of "Polymia/Sacred Poetry." Polymia in Greek means literary "many hymns." This *polymia* make the bowl of the constellation peal with collective hymns. In this chapter, a storyteller relates the story of when she went back home after her adventure to find medicine to save her parents and met a silent woman who dips water out of a well. The sound of dipping water out of the wall "becomes audible. The wooden bucket hitting the sides echoes inside the well before it falls into the water. Earth is hollow. Beneath"(*Dictée* 167). This hollow, void earth as the most extensive bowl has the full potentiality for making lives germinate. This image of Gaea as the bowl resonates with the image of the silent woman's "small porcelain bowl." The diseuse describes how the bowl with "chipped marks on it were stained with age, and there ran a vein towards the foot of the bowl where it was beginning to crack" (*Dictée* 168). This cracked bowl containing water alludes to the valley in *Tao Te Ching* that symbolizes the receptacle of life and female fertility: "The valley spirit never dies, / It is the mysterious female./ The gate of the mysterious female,/ Is the root of Heaven and Earth. /It exists forever in continuum, /And using it, it is inexhaustible" (61). Tao is the name and not name of the female body whose

metaphor is the valley and this valley is an "inexhaustible" "continuum" that "manifests the immanence of humankind" (*Dictée* 140). The concave form that holds infinite forms of lives is full of the potentiality that only women are able to sustain.

The girl drinks water from the mute woman's bowl and is invigorated in a pose: she "hugged her knees and her small palm wrapped perfectly the roundness of the bowl." Then, the woman instructs the girl that to save her parents the girl "must serve the medicines inside the bowl." The bowl is a shamanistic instrument to save the parents. With the bundle containing the bowl and ten pockets that symbolize 10 chapters in *Dictée,* the girl went back home and she sees "through the paper screen door, dusk had entered and the shadow of a small cradle was flickering" (*Dictée* 170). This dusk, sweeping back to the first chapter of this dissertation, echoes with the dawn in Heidegger's Occident. "I," the writer of this dissertation, is on the way home. Home, the home of *my* soul and *my* future. *Dictée* will accompany me in my trans-spatial journey.

CONCLUSION

MY TEACHING STORY
AND THE TRANS-SPATIAL DREAM OF A HAPPINESS

> I have achieved what I set out to achieve.
> But do not tell me that it was not worth the trouble.
> In any case, I am not appealing for my man's verdict,
> I am only imparting knowledge,
> I am only making a report.
> To you also, honored Members of the Academy,
> I have only made a report.
> (Kafka, "A Report to an Academy" 259)

> The contemporary is not only the one who,
> perceiving the darkness of the present,
> grasps a light that can never reach its destiny;
> the contemporary is also the one who,
> dividing and interpolating time,
> is capable of transforming it and putting it
> in the relation with other times.
> (Agamben, *Nudities* 18)

> Have you ever said Yes to a single joy? O my friends,
> Then you said Yes too to *all* woe.
> All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored;
> if ever you wanted one thing twice, if ever you said,
> "You please me, happiness! Abide, moment!"
> then you wanted *all* black.
> All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored—oh,
> Then you *loved* the world.
> (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 323; emphasis in original)

In 2012, five years after Cho Seung Hui's massacre on the campus of Virginia Tech, another Korean killer initiated a slaughter on a university campus. This Korean immigrant, according to the *New York Times*, killed seven people at "Oikos

University, a Christian college affiliated with a Korean-American church, Praise to God Korean Church…near Oakland International Airport where there are many Korean-American businesses" (Wollan & Onish). The killer is identified as "One L. Goh," which ignores the Korean naming system insofar as there is no middle name (his original name is Goh, One-Il but I could not find any media that name him correctly). This shooting shows an uncanny repetition of a Korean loner's monstrous transformation into an American gunman, the consequence of longtime suffering from alienation and others' ignorance. However, unlike the Virginia Tech massacre, this time most of the victims were Korean Americans or immigrants. Perhaps due to the ethnicity of its victims, this case did not catch Americans' attentions as much as Cho's case. But I feel more uncanniness than ever before. Maybe it is because I am ethnically closer to these victims and the killer.

Here is one unsolved contradiction of my dissertation: though I propose throughout this dissertation the necessity of the philosophical ideas of form-of-life and coming community as the fundamental philosophical and aesthetic approach to life and community, my dissertation is about Asian immigrants' experiences. Likewise, as I have been in an identity politics that defines me as a stranger during my time in the U.S., how can I solve this paradox? My answer is that this fundamentally ethico-ontological proposition is just the foundational work for future tasks. The limit of my dissertation is the starting point for future research on other possibilities of trans-spatiality and its potentiality. To this extent, rather than summarizing and cramming the whole of my dissertation into a small conclusion here, I will suggest one possibility for trans-spatiality via a narrative about my

teaching and learning in the U.S. My teaching experiences show how I Otherized

myself in order to escape the identity politics in which I was entangled, while at the

same time, demonstrate how I rethought the fundamental ground of my identity as a

trans-spatial teacher facing and creating *dissensus*. This narrative mostly comes from

the collaborative paper "Deconstructing Whiteliness in the Globalized Classroom,"

which transcribes my conversations with a white female teacher. This concluding

narrative has a very personal voice in order to deliver my own story without being

dubbed by others' voices, though I include several theoretical voices in order to

connect my narrative experience with broader ideas.

So, in this narrative, I am asking self-reflectively: who am I? What am I doing

in this Midwest city? My hypothesis is that what I am and where I am located share

one similar discourse—I am an Other.[142] This "otherness" is a cultural, racial,

linguistic, and even ontological discourse that defines the significance of my presence

as a teacher and as a learner. I use the word "ontological" because here my presence

itself becomes highly problematic, and on this foundational instability, discourses of

race, nation, and globalization are embedded. Pivoting on the question of the

connections between a teacher's linguistic, national, and cultural identities and

pedagogy, my voice and presence also saunters around an untraditional experience.

I am testifying here what I experienced as a desubjectified (racial and

national) Other meeting Others (American/other international students and

colleagues) in the swamp of unexpected conflicts mostly related to racism and

---

[142] As Homi Bhabha claims in the introduction of *Nation and Narrative*, "The other is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we think we speak most intimately and indigenously 'between ourselves'" (4); the "other" in my discussion does not refer to someone outside or beyond "me," "us," or "them." Rather, Others are ontological otherizations happening in-between ourselves.

globalization. The best analogous example that represents a similar experience to mine is *Entre les Murs* (*The Class*) directed by Laurent Cantet. In this movie, a French teacher is struggling with his internalized prejudices and racism, only to be locked in his own racial, gendered, and national wall by insulting and punishing an African student and a rude but dauntless white female student. Each time the instructor tries to avoid racism, classism, and other discrimination, he falls into a trap of self-righteousness. However, this movie is not stuck in blaming one's self or others. The best scene in the movie is when the teacher tries to keep a heated and precarious discussion, aimed for disagreement, going with his students. Though his position is unstable and his arguments get slippery and sloppy, he denies ending his endeavor to engage in discussion with his students.

In this respect, the movie presents a hard but positive truth that the classroom can be a space not of consensus but of dis-consensus and radical equality. The radical equality happens when a teacher courageously abandons his assumptions about his own authority and students' unrecognized unstable identities to get in a debate off guard with students. This can be possible only when the teacher discovers/realizes how his position is ultimately (over)determined by prefabricated layers of oppressive (racial, national, gender, etc.) formations on the state and global levels. Disorientation is a necessary pedagogical step in this sense, especially in the globalized classroom where culture shock, misunderstanding, misrecognition, alienation, and dislocation happen regardless of a teacher's assumed position.

In truth, I have experienced these kinds of quandaries several times while teaching in the U.S. and have had unexpected learning moments in these classes. I at

first felt disoriented because this radically shook the foundation of my being's "there" that I had thought I belonged to nationally, racially, linguistically, culturally, and ontologically. When I was in Korea, I was a racially and nationally unproblematic being; I was one of "we," namely, an ordinary Korean speaking Korean among other Koreans. Though I experienced class or regional discrimination sometimes, I was never exposed to racial issues and never thought of myself as a racial Other in Korea. But here in the U.S., walking, talking, sulking, and eating, I feel disoriented and sometimes discriminated against. It takes time to bear people's suspicious looks, pretentious kindness, hospitality hiding hostility, and the racial assumption that I am a shy, sly, and effeminate Asian male, the most prominent stereotypes of Asians. Yet, this disorientation and estrangement is not a negative experience. No, this was, is, and will be a positive trans-spatial experience. Going through this experience, I have been able to attain authenticity because of my experience of being an Other without a solid identity. In fact, I have been able to find a real "I" under the "otherization" that put my identity into more complex (racial, national, gender) discourses. Also, heterogeneosity and becoming an Other has uncovered my hidden *ethos* (dwelling place in Greek) where globalization is embodied. If I kept living in Korea as a being in a nationally, racially homogenous space, I could not have had this chance to speculate on potential alterity in my presence because I was inured to colorblindness and internal racism in Korea.

For the most part, my experience is a result of globalization. I can be here because I am a body moving across borders—a trans-spatial being. But, as Negri and Hardt posit, "Globalization must be met with a counter-globalization" (*Empire* 207).

In fact, the U.S. town where I belong to now is an un-global space, though it is slowly globalizing. In this Mid-West town, whiteness was and is dominating, albeit going through an influx of gaining more ethnically and nationally diverse people. For example, when I arrived, I inevitably noticed that my foreignness, like pollen from Asia, caused some to have allergic reactions such as "Why are you here? Studying English?" I tried to explain, but in many cases, those explanations did not satisfy questioners' curiosity since my position was recognized as an unconventional one.

Moreover, after I started teaching, all the contextual positioning of my presence in the classroom became more complex. Always, becoming an "Other" as a teacher in the classroom was not easy. For example, when I first entered the classroom to teach a first-year composition course, students looked at me, but they did not pay attention. One of them loudly said the instructor must be late. When I walked to the front seat and sat on the supposed instructor's chair, students stopped talking and looked at me with puzzlement. When I opened my mouth and spoke to introduce myself, one of the students loudly said, "Can you say that again?" I felt intimidated, though I knew (hoped) that she only wanted to catch clearly what I was saying. The hierarchical relations between students and me seemed to be reversed; I felt like I was an ELL student in front of all native English speaking teachers. Then, one of the students vividly asked, "When did you first come to the U.S.?" I answered without hesitation, "Five years ago." Facing a doubtful expression on her face, and sensing awkwardness in the class, I declared, "But you don't need to worry too much about communication with me. I can understand what you say mostly." I knew that "mostly" would not be convincing, but that was the limit of confidence I could have

offered. I perceived that this linguistic otherness determined my linguistic identity which led to determinations of my other national and racial identities. I was marked as a foreigner whose English was not his mother tongue.

From then on, while teaching a few classes, I sometimes could not resist the tempting desire to gain, amplify, and stabilize my authority in the classroom to escape from the unstable position I held. I tried to stand tall and speak with authority, which negatively disoriented me from my own pedagogical idea to create a democratic classroom. Not only did I try to articulate like a white teacher, but I also tried to erase my foreignness, clunky accent, and different facial expressions to show that I was qualified as a teacher in the context I was in. But the more I pretended, the less I felt confident and secured. My Otherness would not go away easily. Rather, what I found out, through painful self-reflections, were really devastating results. I endeavored to gain authority as if I were a white teacher. Clearing this mesmerizing effect of pretension was painful but revealed that I was an Other, which is truly problematic as well as fruitful.

By and large, I learned that I was an Asian Other in a classroom of American Others, but I failed to learn how to reflect on my own position in terms of others' positions. Among what I learned, related to my learning of the significance of the instability of my teaching identity as a (racial and national) Other in the U.S. academy, the most interesting things for me while teaching have been the moments when I have engaged with issues related to my quandaries—race and nationality.

To my surprise, many white students--and even some non-white students and colleagues I have met--told me that race or racism is played-out in the U.S. because

racism was a phenomenon of a historical phase that has since died out. For example, most of my colleagues in a class I took for first-year composition teachers said that they were avoiding racial issues in their classes because they did not know how to continue discussions, and it was awkward for them, as mostly white teachers, to discuss in their classes. Thus, when I said that I had tried to bring up issues of racism and xenophobia in my classes, they looked shocked and worried. One colleague even said that when she raised a racial issue, students, who were mostly white, stayed in a dead silence, showing embarrassment. As a result of her experience, this teacher doubtfully asked me how students could actively participate in discussions about race and racism in my class. The professor who led this class guessed that students might have actively spoken out their opinions about racism freely in front of me because I was a foreigner and an Asian.

Frankly speaking, I felt confused by these reactions. I thought the intentional, unintentional omission of discussions about race and racism in the classroom denied the possibility that each student has different perspectives about race and racism. My colleagues easily presupposed that students were ignorant because "they" looked hesitant to speak about race or racism. My experience tells that it is not true. The problems lie on how to approach these issues. As soon as a teacher holds on to a common belief that race is indifferent to him or her so that he or she can teach impartially, he or she falls into a deception and an unintentional complicity to systemic racial formation. Indeed, the differentiation of an authoritative subject position as a teacher with authority gained via his or her racial whiteness and nothing else is a constantly on-going deconstruction of unity and consensus; even difference

itself has to be differentiated in order not to be forcibly integrated into conceptual, ideological unity. Speaking in the voice of Jacques Rancière, a French philosopher, I claim that equality and difference, for this reason, is *dissensus*. And, *dissensus* is a way to actualize democratic justice in a racially hierarchical global classroom.

Race and racial issues are subject to *dissensus*,[143] which Rancière coined to explain how consensus is detrimental to political efforts to create a more democratic space. Rancière argues instead that disagreement as *dissensus* is important to make a real difference in politics[144]. *Dissensus* deconstructs the ideology of consensus and germinates radical equalities that deconstruct hierarchical, hegemonic structures; it destructs the hierarchical ideology in the classroom of "you have to agree with my idea because you are students, and I am the teacher." This does not mean that teachers are unnecessary, nor can Rancière's arguments be universally adaptable. Rather, the lesson I learned by my teaching is that most students already "know" TOO MUCH about race and racism in terms of consensus, and their racial experiences are already too realistic and unified to be discussed in the classroom only via fixed textbooks. What students and teachers need is to first *unlearn* their knowledge manipulated by media that promulgates racial prejudices so that they are able to explore the meaning of their own experiences in terms of whiteness and structural racism. Differentiation and *dissensus* presupposes unlearning in the classroom. And, this is a way to create

---

[143] Steven Corcoran's introductory explanation of Rancière's terms in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, states that "Consensus…is defined by 'the idea of the proper' and the distribution of places of the proper and improper it implies…By contrast, the logic of dissensus consists in the demonstration of a certain *impropriety* which disrupts the identity…." (2).

[144] Rancière's idea is simple but powerful. He claims that politics in itself is *dissensus* or disagreement against wrongs. Consensus, which founds the idea of a consensus democracy, is a state apparatus which Rancière calls the *police*. Rancière claims that modern politics is meta-politics that perpetually create radical equality in political spaces. This effort to create equalities entails acts to make the unsaid to be said, the unseen to be seen, the unheard to be heard, and so on. See Rancière's *Disagreement*.

radically democratic equality in the class so that everyone realizes they all are in the same position—*"I don't know, but I need to learn how I have a potentiality to become racist easily and how to disagree with these potentialities."*

Along with this theoretical frame of the linkage of difference and equality for desubjectified teachers' roles and their engagement with students' *dissensus* to bring up race and racism in the classroom, henceforth I also reflect on my own experience. These experiences demonstrate the endless search for ways to unlearn my prejudices and learn new perspectives about my trans-spatial position as an Other in the classroom and the complexity of creating a new space of equality. Class discussion was not easy in these moments. Sometimes, going through these moments, I felt vertigo, as if I was standing on a precipice looking down to the abyss of ambiguity of my positions and identities as a teacher. For example, in my second semester writing class, there were two African American students in the class and a Chicana student; the rest of the students were white. In this class, I read a paper written by Jewel[145], an African American female student. The assignment was a rhetorical analysis about a text students chose. Reading through Jewel's paper about rap culture in the U.S., I was dumbfounded by her African American English vernacular. The content of the paper was great; she intelligently analyzed the significance of rap culture as a resistance against the majority. However, based on my knowledge of prescriptive English grammar, her writing seemed to have too many grammatical "errors," and sentences were confusing and sloppy from my perspective. I, who had learned grammar in high school and struggled with mastery of my command of English, could not help but doubt my ability to grade her writing.

---

[145] Pseudonym

Though I learned about African American vernacular and its difference from so-called "standard" English and why this is historically relevant to racial justice in the classroom, I did not know how to handle Jewel's paper. Eventually, I decided to talk about this with her, but she, mostly shy and quiet in class, said she had not thought before that her writing used African American vernacular. I gave her a better grade than I thought I should at first, but still I am confused whether I did the right thing or not. Did I Otherize her because of my linguistic incapability to recognize vernacular differences? Did I racialize her? In another class, we discussed Fredrick Douglass's essay, "How I Learned to Read and Write." I asked an African American male student his opinion about racism and racist history several times, but he rejected talking about that issue and just said that the U.S. does not have racism today. I was also embarrassed.

Then I realized that it was "I" in the subjective, dominant position as a teacher that embarrassed these students; in truth, I could not abandon and unlearn my prejudiced belief that those students would like to talk about their ethnic identity and culture in a white-dominated, but globalized classroom where an international teacher was talking about race and racism based on his own prejudice. The realization happened when I was also Otherized. A few weeks later, while discussing Asian Americans' experiences in an essay by Amy Tan, a student asked me, out of curiosity, to speak Korean. This was another embarrassing moment to me, though I could not pinpoint exactly how and why I felt embarrassed. After a long hesitation, I finally translated part of the essay from English to Korean and spoke out loud (even though, in fact, Amy Tan is a Chinese American writer). Students listened carefully

and said that the sounds and pronunciation were much different from those in English. Then, one student asked whether I felt more comfortable speaking in Korean or in English; I said absolutely I felt comfortable whenever I spoke in Korean because it was my mother tongue. Discussing the meaning of mother tongue, I wondered in my deep heart why I had to feel awkward when I spoke in my mother tongue in front of these native-English speakers.

After I left school that day, I thought about my experiences with my African American students and my own experience, and I finally realized why I felt embarrassed and why they did also. I felt embarrassed because I had to declare my national identity in front of mostly white and almost all American students, uncovering my foreignness and Otherness. I felt naked because it made me self-realize that I was different. The cases with my two African American students and my own reversed situation revealed that I did not recognize that asking those questions created a hierarchical structure of assuming teacher's authority, which prevented further discussion and learning. I unintentionally endeavored to create a consensus, forcing those two African American students to articulate their thoughts about race and racism in front of their white classmates; I acted as if I had been a white teacher in a white students' class. In truth, I held firmly to an authority of racial dominance over those African American students—so that my position was overdetermined by whiteness, which is racial consensus in the classroom.

Denying my assumptions, those two African American students created *dissensus* against my hegemonic consensus. By their reactions, I could realize I did not go through unlearning my prejudices, and I was counting on my whitely authority

in the classroom. I had to unlearn those assumptions and engage with these issues by deconstructing my internalized racism, recognizing how my own lacks turned those two students into Others so as to conceal my own Otherness in the classroom. At the moment when I thought that I could pose those questions to these two African American students, I held on to the seemingly neutral position I assumed I held—Asian, foreigner, and a middle-aged male teacher. In fact, I painfully had to acknowledge that I became a racist at those moments and could not deconstruct my seemingly safe, neutral position. But this is not self-blaming. Self-blaming is a way to ascribe structural polemics onto an individual situation, which is bound to result in losing the chance to scan and map the constantly changing and heterogeneous global, racial discourses of whiteness my Otherized, and sometimes Otherizing, presence is situated in. My feeling was much closer to "shame," a shame that I could fundamentally feel.

All in all, in the broadest sense, all of us are singular, different beings in a globally racial system. I mean we are all trans-spatial beings in particular, but on the other hand, we are equally vulnerable, and we are on the verge of becoming Others and the victim of various systems. In the racial system—which is the framework for every social space in the U.S. formed throughout racial history—I am as vulnerable as my African American students who also possessed different positions. Those vulnerable positions also uncovered the ontological equality in race and national discourses.

Then, how can I create equality and *dissensus* in the classroom by deconstructing my position in the global context? All of my experience as a teacher

and a student convolutes around the problems of worldviews. Assigning biased

readings and writings, ignoring different writing styles and arguments, or putting

racial difference into judgments about students in my classes (as I did) are common

mistakes instructors make. Not a single space can be a racism-free safe zone not only

in the U.S., but also in the world. Trans-spatial classes are global classes since all of

us are connected to other spaces in the world where a more pandemic global,

differential racism works, regardless of our race and national origins. What is going

on in Korea, Tibet, France, and Africa are connected to seemingly insular classrooms

where teachers are teaching with the presence of international students, second or

third generation students from immigrant families, first or second generation

refugees, or from an international body like me. Global racism is equally prevalent as

much as each of us and our ontological, linguistic, and cultural positions are equally

different. Global racism is a trans-spatial phenomenon. ***Thus, "equally different"***

opens a possibility to create* dissensus *and unlearning to prepare for true learning.

….

Up to this point, I, a trans-spatial Korean teacher, have speculated on my own

trans-spatial experience of teaching racism in the U.S. This narrative, like the whole

dissertation, might sound like a monologue that I cannot escape. But I claim that I can

create a community of trans-spatial writers, their characters and animals, and myself

in the classroom. This community is possible because of my homelessness and

solitude, ideas that are the foundation of my dissertation. For me in the literary space

of dissertation "[t]his solitude is a grasp of the future, but a powerless grasp:

prophetic isolation which, before time, ever announces the beginning" (Blanchot

247). But that's it. I am suffering from fatigue; the fatigue that causes me to listen to Kafka's grandfather who, in "The Next Village," used to say: "Life is astonishingly short. To me, looking back over it, life seems so foreshortened that I scarcely understood, for instance, a young man can decide to ride over to the next village without being afraid that—not to mention accidents—even the span of a normal happy life may fall far short of time needed for such a journey" (404). My trans-spatial journey to this next village is almost over, but I am sure that there will be more villages like Kafka's grandfather was afraid of venturing to. Yet, alas, the trans-spatial life I had, have, and will have will not end until I die, though trans-spatiality will persist telling a story of a happiness.

Bibliography

Adorno, Theodor W. *Aesthetic Theory*. Trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor. Minneapolis: U
of Minnesota P, 2006. Print.

---. *Negative Dialectics*. Trans. E. B. Ashton. New York; London: Continuum, 2005.
Print.

---. *Prisms*. Trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981. Print.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience*. Trans.
Heron, Liz. London: Verso, 2007. Print.

---. *The Man without Content*. Trans. Albert Georgia. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999.
Print.

---. *Means without End: Notes on Politics*. Trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare
Casarino. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2000. Print.

---. *The Open: Man and Animal*. Trans. Kevin Attell. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004.
Print.

---. *Profanations*. Trans. Jeff Fort. New York: Zone Books, 2007. Print.

---. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. Trans. Daniel Heller-
Roazen. New York: Zone Books, 2002. Print.

---. *The Coming Community*. Trans. Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P,
2007. Print.

---. *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*. Trans. Karen Pinkus and Michael
Hardt. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1991. Print.

---. *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*. Trans. Ronald L. Martinez.
Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993. Print.

---. *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford:
Stanford UP, 1999. Print.

---. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen.
Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998. Print.

---. *Idea of Prose*. Trans. Michael Sullivan and Sam Whitsitt. Albany: State
University of New York Press, 1995. Print.

---. *Nudities*. Trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella. Stanford: Stanford California P, 2011. Print.

---. *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999. Print.

---. *What is an Apparatus? And Other Essays*. Trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009. Print.

---. "What is a Paradigm." *The European Graduate School*. The European Graduate School, Aug. 2002. Web. 13 May 2012. http://www.egs.edu/faculty/agamben/agamben-what-is-a-paradigm-2002.html

Ahearne, Jeremy. *Michel De Certeau: Interpretation and its Other*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995. Print.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1993. Print.

Aristotle. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. New York: Modern Library, 2001. Print.

Badiou, Alain. *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*. London; New York: Verso, 2001. Print.

---. *Handbook of Inaesthetics*. Trans. Alberto Toscano. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005. Print.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.

Bartoloni, Paolo. *On the Cultures of Exile, Translation, and Writing*. West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 2008. Print.

Baudelaire, Charles. *Paris Spleen, 1869*. Trans. Louise Varèse. New York: New Directions Pub. Corp., 1970. Print.

Baudrillard, Jean. *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*. London; New York: Verso, 1993. Print.

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1969. Print.

---. "On Language as such and on the Language of Man." *Selected Writings. Vol. 1, 1913-1926*. Eds. Marcus Paul Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Trans.

Edmund Jephcott. Cambridge; London: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1996. 62-74. Print.

---. "On the Concept of History." *Selected Writings. Vol. 4, 1938-1940*. Eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Trans. Harry Zohn. Cambridge; London: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2006. 389-400. Print.

---. "The Task of the Translator." *Selected Writings. Vol. 1, 1913-1926.* Eds. Marcus Paul Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Trans. Harry Zohn. Cambridge; London: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1996. 253-63. Print.

---. "Two Poems by Fridrich Hölderlin: "the Poet's Courage" and "Timidity"." *Selected Writings. Vol. 1, 1913-1926.* Eds. Marcus Paul Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Trans. Stanley Corngold. Cambridge; London: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1996. 18-36. Print.

---. "On the Image of Proust." *Selected Writings 2,1, Vol. 2, Part 1, 1927-1930.* Eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith. Trans. Harry Zohn. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. P, 2005. 237-47. Print.

---. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Tran. John Osborne. London; New York: Verso, 2003. Print.

---. *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. Ed. Peter Demetz. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York: Schocken Books, 2007. Print.

Bergson, Henri. *Matter and Memory*. Trans. Nancy M. Paul and W.S. Palmer. New York: Zone books, 1991. Print.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London; New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Blanchot, Maurice. *The Space of Literature*. Trans. Ann Smock. Lincoln; London: U of Nebraska P, 1989. Print.

Britzman, Deborah P. "On being a Slow Reader: Psychoanalytic Reading Problems in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*." *Changing English* 13.3 (2006): 307-18. Print.

Bromley, Roger. *Narratives for a New Belonging: Diasporic Cultural Fictions*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000. Print.

Caldwell, Elizabeth. "A Purely Spoken Monologue: The Poem and Heidegger's Way to Language." *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 23.4 (2009): 267-84. Print.

Carroll, Rachel. "Imitations of Life: Cloning, Heterosexuality and the Human in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*." *Journal of Gender Studies* 19.1 (2010): 59-71. Print.

Cha, Theresa Hak Kyung. *Dictée*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2001. Print.

Chambers, Iain. *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*. London; New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Cheah, Pheng and Bruce Robbins, eds. *Cosmopolitics : Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998. Print.

Cheng, Anne Anlin. "Memory and Anti-Documentary Desire in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*." *MELUS* 23.4 (1998): 119-33. Print.

Cheung, King-Kok. *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993. Print.

Chin, Frank. *Donald Duk: A Novel*. Minneapolis; St. Paul: Coffee House P, 1991. Print.

Chiu, Monica. *Filthy Fictions: Asian American Literature by Women*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira P, 2004. Print.

Chong, Sylvia Shin Huey. "'Look, an Asian!': The Politics of Racial Interpellation in the Wake of the Virginia Tech Shootings." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 11.1 (2008): 27-60. Print.

Colebrook, Claire. "Deleuze, Gilles." *The Agamben Dictionary.* Eds. Alex Murray and Jessica Whyte. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011. 55-7. Print.

Conze, Edward. *Buddhist Thought in India: Three Phases of Buddhist Philosophy*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1962. Print.

Dash, J. Michael. *Édouard Glissant*. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge UP, 1995. Print.

de Certeau, Michel. *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997. Print.

---. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1988. Print.

Dearing, Laura Ann, and Michael Graber. "An Interview with Li-Young Lee." *Crab Orchard Review* 4:1 (1998): 107-21. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2005. Print.

---. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986. Print.

---. *What is Philosophy?*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. New York: Columbia UP, 1994. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles. "Bartleby; Or, the Formula." *Essays Critical and Clinical.* Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997. 68-90. Print.

---. *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia UP, 1994. Print.

---. "He Stuttered." *Essays Critical and Clinical.* Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997. 107-14. Print.

---. *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*. Trans. Richard Howard. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2000. Print.

Depue, Roger L. "Appendix N: A Theoretical profile of Seung Hui Cho: From Perspective of Forensic Behavioral Scientist." *In Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech: April 16, 2007. Report of the Review Panel Presented to Governor Kaine, Commonwealth of Virginia* 13 August 2007. Web. May 2012. www.governor.virginia.gov/TempContent/techPanelReport.cfm.

Derrida, Jacques. "'Hospitality'." *Jacques Derrida: Basic Writings.* Trans. & Ed. Barry Stocker. London; New York: Routledge, 2007. 237-64. Print.

---. *The Gift of Death & Literature in Secret*. Trans. David Wills. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2008. Print.

---. "The Ends of Man." *Margins of Philosophy.* Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982. 109-36. Print.

---. *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991. Print.

---. *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prothesis of Origin*. Trans. Patrick Mensah. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998. Print.

---. *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. Trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes. London; New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.

---. *The Animal that therefore I Am*. Ed. Marie-Louise Mallet. Trans. David Wills. New York: Fordham UP, 2008. Print.

---. *On the Name*. Ed. Thomas Dutoit. Trans. David Wood. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995. Print.

Dreyfus, Hubert L. *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's being and the Time, Division I*. Cambridge; London: The MIT P, 1997. Print.

Duncan, Patti. *Tell this Silence: Asian American Women Writers and the Politics of Speech*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2004. Print.

Elder, Glen, Jeniffer Wolch, and Jody Emel. "La Pratique Sauvage: Race, Place, and the Human-Animal Divide." *The Spaces of Postmodernity : Readings in Human Geography.* Eds. Michael J. Dear and Steven Flusty. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002. 431-41. Print.

Eliot, T. S. *Collected Poems, 1909-1935.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936. Print.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. Print.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson Vol.7: 1807-1844*. Ed. Eleanor Marguerite Tilton. New York; Chichester: Columbia UP, 1990. Print.

Entre les Murs [*The Class*].Dir. Laurent Cantet. Haut et Court, 2008. Film.

Eng, David L. and Shinhee Han. "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia." *Loss: The Politics of Mourning.* Eds. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. Berkeley: U of California P, 2003. 343-71. Print.

Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* vol. XIV. Trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth P and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1917. 237-58. Print.

---. *The Uncanny*. Trans. David McLintock. New York: Penguin Books, 2003. Print.

---. *Civilization and Its Discontents.* Trans. & Ed. James Strachey. New York; London: W.W. Norton, 2005. Print.

Frost, Elisabeth A. "'In another Tongue': Body, Image, Text in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*." *We Who Love to be Astonished: Experimental Women's Writing and Performance Poetics.* Eds. Laura Hinton and Cynthia Hogue. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2002. 181-92. Print.

Galang, M. Evelina, ed. *Screaming Monkeys: Critiques of Asian American Images*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2003. Print.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993. Print.

Gilroy, Paul. *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*. Cambridge MA: The Belknap P of Harvard UP, 2001. Print.

Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2010. Print.

---. *Black Salt : Poems*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1998. Print.

---. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. Trans. J. Michael Dash. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1999. Print.

Goellnicht, Donald C. "Minority History as Metafiction: Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 8.2 (1989): 287-306. Print.

Goldman, Marlene. "A Dangerous Circuit: Loss and the Boundaries of Racialized Subjectivity in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and Kerri Sakamoto's the Electrical Field." *Modern Fiction Studies* (*MFS).* 48.2 (2002): 362-88. Print.

Gossett, Thomas F. *Race: The History of an Idea in America.* New York: Oxford UP, 1997. Print.

Haigh, Sam. *An Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing: Guadeloupe and Martinique*. Oxford; New York: Berg, 1999. Print.

Haraway, Donna. *The Haraway Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000. Print.

---. *Commonwealth*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2009. Print.

Harries, Karsten. "Language and Silence: Heidegger's Dialogue with Georg Trakl." *Boundary 2* 4.2 (1976): 494-511. Print.

Harrison, Patricia Marby. "Genocide or Redemption? Asian American Autobiography and the Portrayal of Christianity in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*." Christianity-and-Literature (C&L). 1997 Winter; 46(2): 145-68.

Harth, Erica. "Introduction." *Last Witnesses: Reflections on the Wartime Internment of Japanese Americans.* Ed. Erica Harth. New York: Palgrave for St. Martin's P, 2001. 1-18. Print.

Hayot, Eric. "The Asian Turns." *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 124.3 (2009): 906-17. Print.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. Arnold V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Writings: From being and Time (1927) to the Task of Thinking (1964).* Ed. David Farrell Krell. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993. Print.

---. *On the Way to Language.* Trans. Peter D. Hertz. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. Print.

---. *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996. Print.

---. *Being and Truth.* Trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2010. Print.

---. *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. Trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995. Print.

---. *Identity and Difference*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002. Print.

---. *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt. New Haven: Yale UP, 2000. Print.

---. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. New York: Perennical Classics, 2001. Print.

---. "The Self-Assertion of the German U: Address, Delivered on the Solemn Assumption of the Rectorate of the U Freiburg the Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts." Trans. Harries,Karsten. *The Review of Metaphysics* 38.3 (1985): 467-502. Print.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968. Print.

Hsiao, Paul Shih-yi. "Heidegger and our Translation of the Tao Te Ching." *Heidegger and Asian Thought.* Ed. Graham Parkes. Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1990. 93-101. Print.

Inada, Lawson Fusao. *Legends from Camp.* Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1992.

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Never Let Me Go*. New York: Vintage International, 2010. Print.

---. *The Remains of the Day*. New York: Knopf, 1989. Print.

---. *A Pale View of Hills.* New York: Vintage Books, 1990. Print.

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke UP, 1991. Print.

Jerng, Mark. "Giving Form to Life: Cloning and Narrative Expectations of the Human." *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas.* 6.2 (June 2008):369-93.

Kafka, Franz. "The Next Village." Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. *Franz Kafka, the Complete Stories*. Ed. Nahum N. Glatzer. New York: Schocken Books, 1971. 404. Print.

---. "A Report to an Academy." Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. *Franz Kafka, the Complete Stories*. Ed. Nahum N. Glatzer. New York: Schocken Books, 1971. 250-9. Print.

Kant, Immanuel. *Kant: Political Writings*. Ed. Hans Siegbert Reiss. Trans. H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge UP, 1991. Print.

Kim, Elaine H. "Poised on the in-between: A Korean American's Reflections on Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*." *Writing Self, Writing Nation: A Collection of Essays on Dictée by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha.* Eds. Norma Alarcón and Elaine H. Kim. Berkeley: Third Woman P, 1994. 3-30. Print.

Kim, Myung Mi. *Commons*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2002. Print.

---. *Penury*. Richmond, Calif.: Omnidawn, 2009. Print.

---. *Under Flag*. Berkeley: Kelsey St. P, 1991. Print.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*. New York: Knopf, 1989. Print.

Kishik, David. *The Power of Life: Agamben and the Coming Politics (to Imagine a Form of Life, II)*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2012. Print.

Kogawa, Joy. *Obasan*. New York: Anchor Books, 1994. Print.

Lamm, Kimberly. "Getting Close to the Screen of Exile: Visualizing and Resisting the National Mother Toungue in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*." *Transnational, National, and Personal Voices: New Perspectives on Asian American and Asian Diasporic Women Writers.* Eds. Begoña Simal González and Elisabetta Marino. Münster: Lit, 2004. 43-65. Print.

Laozi. *The Way of Lao Tzu (Tao-Te Ching).* Trans. Wing-tsit Chan, Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 1963. Print.

Lazenby, Roland. *April 16th: Virginia Tech Remembers.* New York: Plume, 2007. Print.

Leaman, George. "Strategies of Deception: The Composition of Heidegger's Silence." *Martin Heidegger and the Holocaust.* Eds. Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1996. 57-69. Print.

Lee, Chang-rae. *Native Speaker.* New York: Riverhead Books, 1995. Print.

Lévinas, Emmanuel. *Humanism of the Other.* Trans. Nidra Poller. Urbana; Chicago: U of Illinois P, 2006. Print.

---. *Emmanuel Lévinas: Basic Philosophical Writings.* Eds. Adriaan Theodoor Peperzak , Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996. Print.

---. *Time and the Other and Additional Essays.* Trans. Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1987. Print.

---. *Ethics and Infinity.* Trans. Philippe Nemo. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1985. Print.

Lewallen, Constance. "Introduction: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha—Her Time and Place." *The Dream of the Audience: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-1982).* Ed. Constance Lewallen. Berkeley: U of California Berkeley, 2001. 1-13. Print.

Li, David Leiwei. *Imagining the Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Consent.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998. Print.

Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics.* Durham: Duke UP, 1996. Print.

---. "Unfaithful to the Original: The Subject of *Dictée*." *Writing Self, Writing Nation : A Collection of Essays on Dictée by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha.* Eds. Norma Alarcón and Elaine H. Kim. Berkeley: Third Woman P, 1994. 35-69. Print.

Lukács, Georg. *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*. Cambridge: MIT P, 1993. Print.

Ma, Sheng-mei. *Diaspora Literature and Visual Culture: Asia in Flight*. London: Routledge, 2011. Print.

---. *Immigrant Subjectivities in Asian American and Asian Diaspora Literatures*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1998. Print.

Manning, Robert John Sheffler. "The Cries of Others and Heidegger's Ear: Remarks on the Agriculture Remark." *Martin Heidegger and the Holocaust.* Eds. Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities P International, 1997. 19-38. Print.

Manuel, Dolores de. "Imagined Homecomings: Strategies for Reconnection in the Writing of Asian Exiles." *Ideas of Home: Literature of Asian Migration.* Ed. Geoffrey Kain. East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1997. 39-47. Print.

McDonald, Keith. "Days of Past Futures: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as 'Speculative Memoir'." *Biography* 30.1 (2007): 74-83. Print.

Melville, Herman. "Bartleby the Scrivener." *Great American Short Stories : From Hawthorne to Hemingway.* Ed. Corinne Demas. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004. 109-44. Print.

Mignolo, Walter. *Local histories/global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000. Print.

Miki, Roy. *Broken Entries: Race, Subjectivity, Writing: Essays*. Toronto: Mercury P, 1998. Print.

Mills, Catherine. *The philosophy of Agamben*. Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008. Print.

Minh-Ha, Trinh T. "White Spring." *The Dream of the Audience: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-1982).* Ed. Constance Lewallen. Berkeley: U of California Berkeley Art Museum: U of California P, 2001. 33-50. Print.

---. *Woman, Native, Other:Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989. Print.

Miyoshi, Masao. "A Borderless World? from Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State." *Global/local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary.* Eds. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake. Durham: Duke UP, 1996. 78-106. Print.

Mukherjee, Srimati. "Nation, Immigrant, Text: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*." *Transnational Asian American Literature: Sites and Transits.* Eds. Shirley Lim, et al. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2006. 197-218. Print.

Murray, Alex. *Giorgio Agamben*. London; New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.

Negri, Antonio. *Negri on Negri: In Conversation with Anne Dufourmantelle*. Trans. Malcom B. DeBevoise. London; New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Never Let Me Go. Dir. Mark Romaneck. DNA films, 2010. Film.

Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *Race and Resistance : Literature and Politics in Asian America*. New York; Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.

Nizza, Mike. "Seung Hui Cho: Who is This Man?" New York Times, 30 Aug. 2007. Web. 13 May 2012.

Oakley, Seanna Sumalee. *Common Places: The Poetics of African Atlantic Postromantics*. Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2011. Print.

Okada, John. *No-no Boy*. Seattle: U of Washington P, 1981. Print.

Osborne, Thomas. "Faith, Philosophy, and the Nominalist Background to Luther's Defense of the Real Presence." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63.1 (2002): 63-82. Print.

Paek, Sok. "On the White Wall," *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Korean Poetry.* Ed. MacCann, David. New York: Columbia UP, 2004. 86. Print

Park, Josephine Nock-Hee. *Apparitions of Asia: Modernist Form and Asian American Poetics*. New York: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

Parkes, Graham. "Introduction." *Heidegger and Asian Thought.* Ed. Graham Parkes. Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1990. 1-14. Print.

Partridge, Jeffrey F. L. "The Politics of Ethnic Authorship: Li-Young Lee, Emerson, and Whitman at the Banquet Table." *Studies in the literary imagination.* 37.1 (2004): 101. Print.

Pensky, Max. *Melancholy Dialectics: Walter Benjamin and the Play of Mourning*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2001. Print.

Perpich, Diane. *The Ethics of Emmanuel Lévinas*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2008. Print.

Plato. *Timaeus*. Trans. Donald J. Zeyl. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2000. Print.

Pöggeler, Otto. "West-East Dialogue: Heidegger and Lao-Tzu." *Heidegger and Asian Thought.* Ed. Graham Parkes. Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1990. 47-78. Print.

Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Trans. Gabriel Rockhill. London: Continuum, 2004. Print.

---. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. Trans. Steve Corcoran. London; New York: Continuum, 2010. Print.

---. *Disagreement: Politics and philosophy*. Trans. Julie Rose. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999. Print.

Rand, Nicholas. "The Political Truth of Heidegger's 'Logos': Hiding in Translation." *PMLA.* 105.3 (1990): 436-47. Print.

Rieder, John. "Life Writing and Science Fiction: Constructing Identities and Constructing Genres." *Biography* 30.1 (2007): v-xvii. Print.

Robbins, Bruce. "Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism." *Cosmopolitics : Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation.* Eds. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998. 1-19. Print. The Social Text Collective.

Roffe, Jonathan. "Simulacrum." *The Deleuze Dictionary.* Ed. Adrian Parr. New York: Columbia UP, 2005. 250-251. Print.

Rosen, Stanley. *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay.* New Haven: Yale UP, 1969. Print.

Runes, Dagobert D. *The Dictionary of Philosophy,* New York: Philosophical library, 1942. Print.

Russell II, Keith A. "'From a Far': Unifying Divisions in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*." *Moving Migration: Narrative Transformations in Asian American Literature.* Eds. Johanna C. Kardux and Doris Einsiedel. Münster; Piscataway: LIT Verlag, 2010. 181-97. Print.

Russon, John Edward. *Reading Hegel's Phenomenology*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2004. Print.

Sakai, Naoki. *Translation and Subjectivity: On Japan and Cultural Nationalism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997. Print.

Salzani, Carlo. "Coming Community." *The Agamben Dictionary.* Eds. Alex Murray and Jessica Whyte. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011. 44-6. Print.

Swaim, Don. "Don Swaim Interviews Kazuo Ishiguro." *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro*. Eds. Shaffer, Brian W. and Cynthia F. Wong, Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2008. 89-119. Print.

Shih, Shu-mei. "Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition." *PMLA*. 119.1 (2004): 16-30. Print.

Smerick, Christiana. "'And G-d Said:' Language, Translation, and Scripture in Two Works by Walter Benjamin." *In Shofar: An Inter-Disciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, West Lafayette: Purdue UP, Spring 2009;

Song, Min Hyoung. "Communities of Remembrance: Reflections on the Virginia Tech Shootings and Race." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 11.1 (2008): 1-26. Print.

Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003. Print.

Spahr, Juliana. *Everybody's Autonomy: Connective Reading and Collective Identity*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2001. Print.

Spencer, Nicholas. *After Utopia: The Rise of Critical Space in Twentieth-Century American Fiction*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2006. Print.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Other Asias*. Malden: Blackwell Pub., 2008. Print.

Stalling, Jonathan. *Poetics of Emptiness: Transformations of Asian Thought in American Poetry*. New York: Fordham UP, 2010. Print.

Steinbock, Anthony J. "From Phenomenological Immortality to Natality" *Rethinking Facticity*. Eds. François Raffoul and Eric Sean Nelson. Albany: State U of New York P, 2008. 25-40. Print.

Stevens, Wallace. *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

Sunahara, Ann Gomer. *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War*. Toronto: Lorimer, 1981. Print.

Suvin, Darko. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*. New Haven; London: Yale UP, 1980. Print.

Toker, Leona, and Daniel Chertoff. "Reader Response and the Recycling of Topoi in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*." *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 6.1 (2007): 163-80. Print.

Tourino, Christina. "Ethnic Reproduction and the Amniotic Deep: Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 24.1 (2003): 134-53. Print.

Ueki, Teruyo. "*Obasan*: Revelations in a Paradoxical Scheme." *MELUS* 18.4 (1993): 5-20. Print.

Virno, Paolo. *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*. Los Angeles; Cambridge: Semiotext(e), 2004. Print.

Watkin, William. *The Literary Agamben: Adventures in Logopoiesis*. London; New York: Continuum, 2010. Print.

Werbner, Pnina. "Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity." *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism.* Eds. Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood. London; Atlantic Highlands: Zed Books, 1997. 1-26. Print.

White, David A. *Heidegger and the Language of Poetry*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1978. Print.

Wollan, Malia and Onishi Norimitsu. "Gunman Kills 7 in a Rampage at a Northern California U." New York Times, 2 Apr. 2012. Web. 13 May 2012.

Wong, Shelly Sunn. "Unnaming the Same: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*." *Writing Self, Writing Nation: A Collection of Essays on Dictée by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha.* Eds. Norma Alarcón and Elaine H. Kim. Berkeley: Third Woman P, 1994. 103-40. Print.

Wu, Frank H. *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*. New York: Basic Books, 2002. Print.

Wyile, Herb. "Making a Mess of Things: Postcolonialism, Canadian Literature, and the Ethical Turn." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 76.3 (2007): 821-37. Print.

Xu, Wenying. *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature*. Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 2008. Print.

Yaeger, Patricia. "Editor's Column: The End of Postcolonial Theory? A Roundtable with Sunil Agnani, Fernando Coronil, Gaurav Desai, Mamadou Diouf, Simon Gikandi, Susie Tharu, and Jennifer Wenzel." *PMLA* 122.3 (2007): 633-51. Print.

Yamashita, Karen Tei. *Tropic of Orange: A Novel*. Minneapolis, MN; Saint Paul: Coffee House P; Distributor, Consortium Book Sales, 1997. Print.

Yu, Timothy. *Race and the Avant-Garde: Experimental and Asian American Poetry since 1965*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009. Print.

Yuasa, Yasuo. "The Encounter of Modern Japanese Philosophy with Heidegger." *Heidegger and Asian Thought.* Ed. Graham Parkes. Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1990. 155-74. Print.

Zia, Helen. *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000. Print.

Žižek, Slavoj. "Melancholy and the Act." *Critical inquiry* 26.4 (2000): 657-81. Print.

---. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London; New York: Verso, 1989. Print.

---. *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*. Durham: Duke UP, 1993. Print.

---."The Ideology of the Empire and its Traps." *Empire's New Clothes: Reading Hardt and Negri.* Eds. Paul A. Passavant and Jodi Dean, New York: Routledge, 2004. 253-64. Print.

---. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London; New York: Verso, 2000. Print.